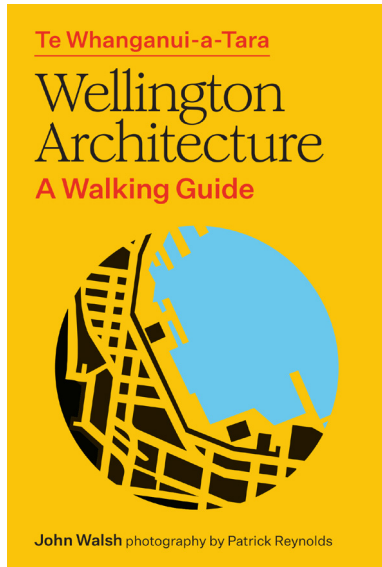


Te Whanganui-a-Tara Wellington Architecture

A walking guide

JOHN WALSH AND PATRICK REYNOLDS



\$37

CATEGORY: Non-fiction, Architecture

ISBN: 978-1-991309-17-4

THEMA: AM, WTH, 1MBN

BISAC: ARC000000, TRV004000

PUBLISHER: Massey University Press

IMPRINT: Massey University Press

PUBLISHED: November 2025

PAGE EXTENT: 312

FORMAT: Limpbound

SIZE: 178 x 119mm

RIGHTS: World

AUTHORS' RESIDENCES: Tāmaki

Makaurau Auckland, New Zealand

126 BUILDINGS AND FIVE ROUTES AROUND OUR CAPITAL CITY

The third in the series of popular and handy guides to our urban architecture by the well-known team of writer John Walsh and photographer Patrick Reynolds. Now fully revised, updated and enlarged, this handy pocket-sized book curates a series of city walks that take in Wellington's remarkably rich architectural heritage, guiding the reader from Oriental Bay through to Thorndon and many places in between.

It's the perfect guide for visitors to Wellington and also for locals who want to know more about their city, and a terrific introduction to a range of architectural styles and the careers of the architects who build this city.

'From historic buildings, churches, apartments, and business blocks, this well-thought-out book is a fabulous guide to old and new buildings in Wellington'
— Karen McMillan, NZ Booklovers

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

John Walsh is one of this country's best known writers about architecture. He is the author (with photographer Patrick Reynolds) of the major books *New Zealand Houses*, *Home Work*, *Big House Small House*, *City House Country House*, *Auckland Architecture: A Walking Guide* and *Christchurch Architecture: A Walking Guide*.

Patrick Reynolds is one of New Zealand's best architectural photographers.

SALES POINTS

- A lively pocket guide that brings a new dimension to a visit to Wellington
- Expertly written and beautifully photographed
- Accessible price makes this an easy-to-carry memento of the city
- A terrific introduction to a range of architectural styles
- Route maps makes navigation easy
- Fully revised, updated and expanded to encompass major new building projects and restorations since the first 2022 edition

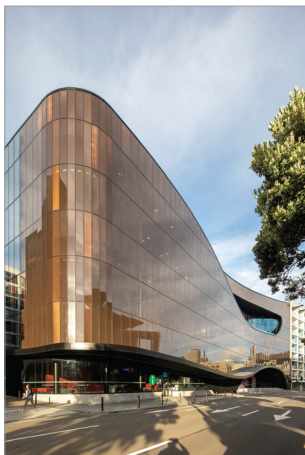
ISBN 978-1-991309-17-4



Massey University Press
Albany Campus, Private Bag 102904,
North Shore 0745, Auckland, New Zealand

Email editor@massey.ac.nz
Phone +64 9 213 6886
www.masseypress.ac.nz

Media contact
Rebecca Simpson, Fantail Communications
Email rebecca@fantailcommunications.co.nz
Phone 021 955 942



Tākina

50 Cable Street and Wakefield Street
Studio Pacific Architecture, 2022

Like any city, Wellington is composed of built quadrilaterals. Economy and efficiency dictate a default to the rectangular box. It doesn't have to be this way, as evidenced by Basil Spence's circular Beehive (pages 256–57) and Jern Utzon's Sydney Opera House (1973), "a spherical solution [that] pushed design boundaries to their analog limits. Latterly, the practice found by Iraqi-born British architect Zaha Hadid (1950–2016) has flamboyantly realized the geometric potential of digital technology, pushing, pulling and kneading buildings into sinuous, fluid forms. While "parametric" architecture has flourished in countries where design ambition is represented by a national flag, where the design has appeal of this planar abstraction, the architecture of a nation still does not

Recently, the Wellington buildings have graduated from sexy parametric rendering to actual steel-and-glass structures: No. 1 Whitmore Street (pages 256–257), and Takina, the Wellington Convention and Exhibition Centre, (It is to No. 1000, Takina can be seen in the foreground of the top of page 257). The buildings between apartment buildings on busy Cable Street, copacetic altogether less singular Te Papa. (It also faces a dispiriting stretch of Wakefield Street.) The sheer of Takina's bronze glazing, especially on its north-facing Cable Street side, is reminiscent of the shiny chrome of the toilet of the 1960s TV series *Thunderbirds* (see *Go, Inside*, 6-level Takina is a series of functional corridors and exhibit spaces). The building was designed to include a film museum featuring movie posters and posters of Jack's collection of cinema memorabilia. When Jackson withdrew from the project, the trajectory of city council-owned Takina was tweaked towards the nebulous realm of pure architecture — a jargon that is understood by the council, but in hope as spectators: build and, *guyss*, crossed, they will come.

Route 1-11

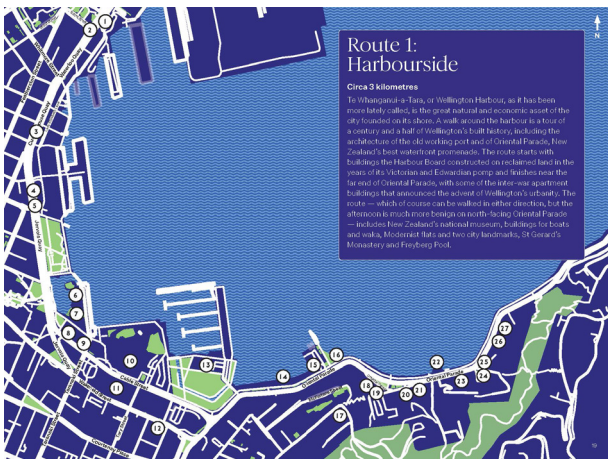
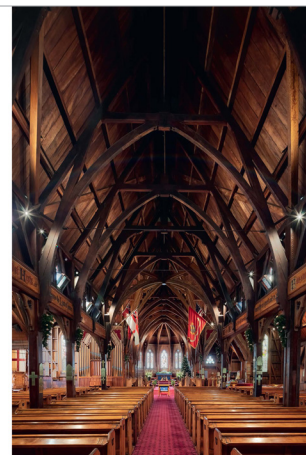
44

as an architect, designing numerous small wooden 'Selwyn' churches around Auckland. After some years back in England, he returned to New Zealand in 1861, serving for several years as vicar of St Paul's in Wellington, and, again, as Selwyn's architect. (He resettled in England in 1868.)

In 1862 Thyer designed a new church for St Paul's parish on a lot that had been bought by Seelye and augmented by Gray's grant of some land set aside as Micri reserve. Thatcher did what he usually did, and did well: he designed a church that ideally, for an ecologist, would have been made of stone in the timber materials locally at hand. As it turned out, the substitution was serendipitous. Thatcher designed a rectangular building, aligned east-west, with the entry at the west, under a spire. A baptistry, nave and aisles led to the altar at the liturgically correct east end of the church. The straight forward plan, it transpired after the fact, was a good idea. The building was made of stone, but the building's form made it vulnerable to Wellington's winds. In the first of several interventions by leading Wellington architects of their day, Christian Julius Toward designed two tethers attaching the north end of the church to the ground. The first was completed in 1868, the south completed in 1874. Frederick de Jersey Cressy extended the baptistry and designed some other alterations in the 1880s, and William Gray Young added a women's

restory in 1944. It is the wooden realm of its interior that makes St Paul's one of New Zealand's most important buildings. Kauri, rimu and tōtara may not have the implacable timelessness of stone, but Gothically-deployed as piers and vaulting the timbers convey the same message of calm transcendence in a warm tone. St Paul's was effectively Wellington's Anglican cathedral for 166 years until enough of New St Paul's (see pages 274–75) became visible in 1964. A strong heritage campaign was mounted to save Old St Paul's when the building was deconsecrated. The Ministry of Works subsequently restored the church, with architect Peter Sheppard, through a practising Brutalist (see pages 280–81), demonstrating considerable sensitivity as he supervised the preservation of St Paul's Gothic Revival integrity. Old St Paul's is now managed as a historic site by Heritage New Zealand.

1



Route 1: Harbourside

Circa 3 kilometres

Te Whanganui-a-Tara, or Wellington Harbour, as it has been more lately called, is the great natural and economic asset of the city founded on its shore. A walk around the harbour is a tour of culture and a hall of Wellington's built history, including the architecture of the old working port and of Oriental Parade, New Zealand's best waterfront promenade. The route starts with buildings the Harbour Board constructed on reclaimed land in the years of its Victorian and Edwardian pomp and finishes near the far end of Oriental Parade, with some of the inter-war apartment buildings that announced the advent of Wellington's urbanity. The route is not, as you might be called to believe otherwise, a one-off attraction; it is much more than a national museum. Oriental Parade includes New Zealand's national museums, buildings for boats and waka, Modernist flats and two city landmarks, St George's Monastery and Freshwater Pool.



1 Whitmore Street

Jasmax-2024

In 2019, a building constructed in 2006 on reclaimed land near the old Pipitea wharf was demolished after damage caused by the 2016 Kaikōura earthquake proved irreparable. (Earlier damage occurred in the 2013 Seddon earthquake.) The building had been designed by Jaxmap and was named for and substantially occupied by the Bank of New Zealand (BNZ). Evidently there were no hard feelings, for in 2024 the bank moved into, and bought naming rights to, a new building two blocks away, also designed by Jaxmap. (The city council and the engineers of the 2006 building are engaged in a liability dispute which promises to be lengthy lucrative for a couple of jump law firms.)

[illegible]

Route 4-94

217



Te Pātaka Toi Adam Art Gallery

Te Herenga Waka Victoria University of Wellington
Gate 3, Kelburn Parade
Athfield Architects, 1999

When he talked, eloquently, about what mattered in architecture, Ian Athfield (1940–2015) was just as likely to talk about the spaces between buildings as the buildings themselves. His belief in the importance of ‘interstitial’ spaces echoed that of the Dutch architect and theorist Aldo van Eyck (1918–1999). Van Eyck, who undertook a tour of New Zealand in 1963 (in pre-internet times, lectures from foreign visitors could have a profound effect), was an advocate for the architectural properties and possibilities of neglected or left-over spaces. Athfield agreed — voids are valuable.

In 1997, Athfield was able to put his interstitial thinking into practice when he won a competition to design the art gallery that would be Victoria University of Wellington's centenary project. A point of reference for the project's champions – Jenny Harper and Tina Barton of the university's art history department – was the Scharoun Goetz (1993), a private art museum in Munich designed by Swiss practice Herzog and de Meuron. That building, a narrow, rectangular box, is sited in a suburban garden. However, Victoria University's art gallery – named for benefactors Denis and Verna Adams – had to occupy 'its in-between' space where the Hunter Building (1966) of Old Dominion College and the Victoria Building (1968) of the University of New South Wales had stood. The site surrounded a disused stairway that ascended the three levels between the Hunter Building's ground floor and the student quad in front of the Rankine Brown Building, an area now rationalised as the Student Hub (previous pages).

Into this seemingly unpromising site Athfield Architects (project architect: Ashley Cox) cleverly inserted 350 square metres of multi-level exhibition space. The Adam's complexity must present cultural challenges but compensates with spatial drama. The gallery's main exhibition space is its most Samling-like element: a 30-metre-long, 14-metre-high, 4-metre-wide box with an exterior cladding of black zinc best appreciated from the front steps of the red-brick Hunter Building.

Route 5-104

1249



St John's

170 Willis Street
Thomas Turnbull, 1885
Historic Place Category

In May 1854, Thomas Turnbull-designed Presbyterian St John's Church on Willis Street, which was only nine years old, was destroyed by fire. (The nineteenth-century New Zealand way of death for buildings; for humans, it was drowning.) One year later, "a large number of ladies and gentlemen," reported *The Evening Post*, assembled to witness the laying of the foundation stone for a new church. "The presence of the representatives of 500 persons" attended the scissor celebrating the completion of the new St John's. This turnaround time for a significant building — the new St John's had seating for 800 worshippers — would be unthinkable now; even in 1855, it was recognised as extraordinary. Just getting the funding together so quickly was a momentous achievement, especially, as *The Evening Post* noted, in a place of "immense population" where the majority of the population consisted mainly of "Scotchmen," and "gentlemen of that nationality are not popularly credited with reckless profligacy."

As it turned out, observed the minister of St John's, the destruction of the 1875 church had 'provided a blessing to the congregation'. The Presbyterians received, again from Turnbull, 'a much comelier and handsomer' building that added to the 'architectural beauty' of the city, and, incidentally, may well have surpassed the Anglican church up the road (see previous pages). On the elevated site, Turnbull designed a very rustic Gothic Revival church, facing north to the city, clad in rufous sandstone with a weathered, 'rustic' exterior. The church was oriented to the needs of its shingled site, the other scatter, under its witch's hat — on either side of a Gothic-arched main entrance. On the east and west elevations buttresses bracket lancet windows. The interior, with its painted timber walls and kauri panelling, reveals Turnbull's stylistic eclecticism in such Classical elements as Corinthian capitals on the columns supporting the balcony.

Route 3-61

547