Te Whanganui-a-Tara

Wellington Architecture

A Walking Guide

John Walsh photography by Patrick Reynolds

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MASSEY UNIVERSITY PRESS

In memory of Gerald Melling,
1943–2012

Contents

Introduction

I was born in Wellington and grew up there, and the town, as compact and confined as a medieval city-state, intensely impressed itself on me, in the most impressionable part of my life. My mother had moved to Wellington, where she met my father, and they were married in the church at St Gerard's Monastery. I remember the Freyberg Pool, where I learned to swim; the summer lights strung on the Norfolk pines along Oriental Parade; and the council yard where my father worked, next to the Herd Street Post and Telegraph Building. My high school was near the old National Art Gallery and Dominion Museum; we'd be sent to Mass at St Mary of the Angels and, in blazers and ties, despatched from Wellington Railway Station on rugby expeditions into the hinterlands of the Hutt Valley.

My first part-time job was at James Smith's Department Store; I'd visit the Central Library, the old one, with its banks of index card catalogues, and Parson's Bookshop in Massey House, and the hippy stores in the shabby Edwardian buildings on Cuba Street. The first concerts I went to were in the Town Hall; I remember a Dadaist performance in the Hannah Playhouse. When I climbed up the steps on my way to university I'd pass Jellicoe Towers, designed by a friend's father. One of my sisters worked in the Departmental Building on Stout Street; my brother rowed at the Star Boating Club.

These buildings don't just have a remembered existence. They're still there, even if they're not all serving their original purpose. And, they're also in this book, a guide to the significant buildings constructed in central Wellington since the 1860s, and to the architects who designed them. The book is an overview of the architecture of the city and an introduction to the city through its architecture. It's a walking guide to a very walkable city — the city as seen from its footpaths, although many of the buildings on the five itineraries, none much longer than 3 kilometres, are open to public visitation or use. In the main, the buildings are urban-scaled. They were designed for banks, businesses and government departments. They're churches, clubs, courts,

libraries, museums, hotels, apartments, and a few are private houses. These are buildings that were designed with a public face to take their place in the city's streetscape, and its story.

Wellington's natural environment has given the city's architects a hard act to follow and challenging conditions to address. Its landforms are dramatic; its climate is, shall we say, bracing; its seismic circumstances are precarious; its harbour is wonderful but often windswept. It is a city of tempers and moods, sometimes foul, but often fair. Te Ahumairangi (Tinakori) Hill broods over the government end of town while Oriental Bay on a fine, calm day looks like a Mediterranean promenade. For a few blocks around Featherston Street, Wellington has the dense solidity of a an American downtown, while the Botanic Garden is a time-trip to the Edwardian era. The most harmonious interventions in the local topography are the public paths and steps, with their white wooden rails offering the puffing pedestrian safety and support, that ascend the hills on both sides of the harbour.

The human history of the place now known as Wellington goes back more than a thousand years to the arrival of the Polynesian navigator Kupe. Occupation probably dates from the twelfth or thirteenth centuries. The original name for Wellington was Te Whanganui-a-Tara (the great harbour of Tara), a title that recognises a son of the explorer Whātonga, a captain of the waka *Kurahaupō*, which landed on the Māhia Peninsula in Hawke's Bay. In the early nineteenth century, Ngāti Ira from Hawke's Bay was probably the dominant tribe at Te Whanganui-a-Tara, but the iwi was driven out from around 1820 by tribes from the north, especially from the Taranaki region. At the time of the signing of Te Tiriti o Waitangi in 1840 — the year after the arrival at Te Whanganui-a-Tara of the first European settlers in a ship sent by the colonising New Zealand Company — the inhabitants of the area around Port Nicholson — Pōneke — were mainly Te Ātiawa, Taranaki, Ngāti Ruanui, Ngāti Tama and Ngāti Toa. At this time, there were well-established pā near the harbour at Pipitea and Te Aro, and the first settler encampments coalesced around these sites.

With a tug of their forelocks, and profound indifference to Indigenous opinion, the settlers followed the direction of the

New Zealand Company and petitioned the most famous British imperial figure for permission to borrow his name for their town. Hence, Wellington. The first European buildings in the new settlement were rudimentary, and the architecture, to use a flattering term, of Wellington remained simple for decades. Two questions that have always been relevant and interconnected throughout the city's history immediately presented themselves: Where to build? And how to build?

The settlers' preferred town site at the comparatively sheltered south end of the harbour did not offer a lot of flat land. Reclamation was the answer to this problem, and Wellington has nibbled away at its harbour for 170 years since. The solution brought its own dilemmas because reclaimed land, less stable in any circumstance, is especially insecure in a city built upon a major earthquake fault. Consequently, the story of architecture in Wellington is also a seismic engineering story — a chronicle of caissons and concrete piles, steel reinforcing, base-isolation and retrofitting. The Modernist censure of building ornamentation was to an extent redundant in Wellington; architects soon learned that, on the city's buildings, anything decoratively attached — statues, balustrades, turrets, clock towers — was likely to be shaken loose.

Wellington's colonists were familiar with buildings made of stone and brick but in their new settlement issues of confidence and supply made masonry construction problematic. Earthquakes, such as the very large 1855 quake, left their mark on the civic consciousness, even if Wellingtonians have long been adept at repressing their memories of seismic incidents. Not only did inadequately reinforced masonry buildings present mortal danger, but the Wellington region also lacked stone suitable for construction. (Stone from other parts of New Zealand, and from abroad, was imported for sparing use on significant buildings.) Bricks were made in the city — the best by prisoners at Mount Cook Gaol — but they could not safely support structures more than a couple of storeys high.

For the first two generations of settlement, then, Wellington was predominantly a timber town. Wood was relatively cheap and easy to work, and a feature of Wellington's Victorian-era architecture was the timber expression of stone detailing. (The classic example of this design trait is the 1876 Government

Building.) But timber, too, had an obvious drawback in a city lit by oil lamps and candles and heated by open fires. Buildings burned down so frequently that in 1877 the generally laissez-faire city council mandated the cladding of new central-city buildings in 'incombustible' materials. For the next 40 years many buildings not captured by this ordinance — churches, often, but also, in 1907, Parliament House — went up in smoke.

Before, and even after, the advent of reinforced concrete construction around the turn of the twentieth century, Wellington's inhabitants showed remarkable resilience in the face of the existential threats to the city's fabric (and their persons). Buildings destroyed by fire were replaced with amazing alacrity. For the Victorians and Edwardians, 'build back better' was not a slogan but an expectation. Architecture, whether in replacement or novel form, was a barometer of colonial ambition. Its occurrence was a testament to the resolve of building owners and users, but also to the simplicity of building materials and technologies, the sufficiency of craft knowledge and skills, and the straightforwardness of what we now call the consenting process.

As the city grew it spread its footprint, following the roads and tramlines that extended around the harbour and into Te Aro. Before the First World War, the identity, and urbanity, of Wellington was becoming shaped by the strong and particular character of its main streets: Lambton Quay, which follows the old shoreline; Willis Street, which meets it, and continues south, eventually in parallel with Cuba Street, which itself almost intersects with Courtenay Place; The Terrace, rising above the CBD, and its antipode, across the harbour, Oriental Parade. These streets, along with harbourside streets such as Customhouse and Jervois Quays, and history-rich Tinakori Road, are the basis for the routes in this book. (One caveat about Courtenay Place: although interesting, even though, St James Theatre excepted, architecturally undistinguished, sections of the street demand a wide berth, especially at night.)

The development of the city can be traced in the evolution of its architecture. Because Wellington is the capital city it has important buildings, constructed for the government and for companies that wanted to be proximate to it. For much of the twentieth century these buildings were commissioned by

the organisations, public and private, that owned and occupied them. This made a qualitative difference. The government set an example through the work of its own design office, configured initially as the office of the Colonial Architect and then as the office of the Government Architect. Architects in the office, sometimes to the annoyance of private practitioners, designed a wide range of Wellington buildings — apartments, government agencies, post and telegraph offices, a police station, library, observatory, dental school, and Parliament House.

One result of the economic deregulation and bureaucratic restructuring that began in the 1980s — and saw the demise of the Government Architect's office — is that government departments have become building tenants, not owners. Corporations, too, now take out space in developers' buildings. Between the wars, the old regime produced the high-quality corporate head offices clustered in the neighbourhood of Featherston Street and Customhouse Quay, and in the 1960s and 1970s, the client-ownership model yielded well-built Brutalist towers near Parliament. Perhaps it's a coincidence, but since 2000, several large Wellington buildings constructed by developers and tenanted by government departments or corporations have failed within a decade of their opening.

Whether of private or public provenance, Wellington's buildings, from the start of colonial settlement to the First World War, were revivalist iterations of the Gothic, Classical and Baroque styles. (Such was the case in all contemporary colonial cities.) Between the wars, Art Deco, Moderne and Stripped Classical were the dominant styles. Modernism, in its International Style and Brutalist forms, came relatively late to Wellington but it also stayed relatively late. Modernist buildings were still being completed in the middle of the 1980s, even as Post-modernism was entering its second decade in the city. Of all the city's architecture, only the early Gothic Revival buildings, such as Old St Paul's, and Modernist buildings, such as Massey House, Clifton Towers and the Meteorological Office, could be meaningfully connected to a movement. Others, such as St Mary of the Angels and Sacred Heart Cathedral, were certainly located in a tradition. For many more buildings, though, design was less a matter of conviction than of mastering the various dialects of a pattern language.

Some eras in Wellington's architecture have been stronger than others, and in a couple of periods the city led the nation. As mentioned, the inter-war years produced a crop of impressive institutional and commercial buildings, and also small apartment buildings. During the Depression, being the seat of government and the site of corporate head offices was beneficial to Wellington, as was the Keynesian orientation of the Labour Party that came to power in the mid-1930s. The other period of Wellington's architectural eminence was the decade from the mid-1960s, when Ian Athfield and Roger Walker sprang a series of Post-modernist surprises. Their architecture was a jolt to a staid city.

Over the first decades of the twenty-first century, several intersecting challenges have confronted the city and its politicians. Wellingtonians were reminded of their city's seismic vulnerability by significant earthquakes in 2013 (the Seddon earthquake: 6.5 on the Richter scale) and in 2016 (the Kaikōura earthquake: 7.8 on the Richter scale). Those earthquakes damaged not just Victorian masonry buildings, but also, and fatally, younger buildings such as Wellington Central Library (completed in 1991), and even office buildings less than a decade old.

The effect of these seismic events, and the building investigations they prompted, has been to increase the cost of new buildings, which must be constructed to higher earthquake-resistant standards, and to raise existential doubts about hundreds of heritage buildings across the city. Many, if not most, owners of historic buildings that give parts of the city, such as Cuba Street, their particular character will be unwilling or unable to finance the earthquake strengthening of their buildings. The city will have to make difficult choices about what buildings it wants to save. There is no shortage of controversial precedents for heritage decision-making. In the 1960s much of historic Thorndon was sacrificed for a motorway, and in the late 1970s and early 1980s the character of central Wellington was definitively changed when more than 180 older, at-risk buildings were pulled down. (The chief demolition advocate was the city's mayor, Michael Fowler, himself an architect.)

Given this history, it's not surprising that many Wellington citizens are sceptical about the heritage bona-fides of the city

council and its staff. On the other hand, the city offers salutary lessons about the unpredictable price of heritage conservation. For example, the campaign to restore, rather than replace, the Central Library (architect: Ian Athfield), succeeded, but at a cost of around $200 million, and the estimated cost of rehabilitating the adjacent Edwardian Town Hall rose from $30 million in 2012 to $329 million in 2025. This is at a time when Wellington's aged water infrastructure is failing. Seismic damage is partly to blame for this, but so are decisions made by local politicians, over many years, to defer essential maintenance that would have entailed rates increases.

Some of Wellington's challenges are the same as any other city, but on occasion, as with the related issues of affordable housing and urban intensification, they have local particularity. It can be difficult to get things done in Wellington, not because people don't care about the city, but because some people care so much about their bit of the city that they don't want Wellington to change. Inevitably, there is an inter-generational dimension to debates about the city's future, and the inheritance of the past.

That's the architectural story. What of Wellington's architects? In general, and over time, several distinguishing characteristics are discernible. One, very noticeably, is gender. Up until the last couple of decades of the twentieth century, most architects, especially practice leaders, were male. (Historian Elizabeth Cox has written numerous under-acknowledged women architects into the record in her book *Making Space* — see Sources and Further Reading.)

In this, architecture in Wellington and across New Zealand was similar to professions such as law and medicine. However, specific factors reinforced architecture's same-sex caste. In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the practice of architecture and the organisation of architecture offices was not so different from the guild system of the medieval building trades. Many architects in colonial Wellington were builders who had picked up sufficient design experience to unilaterally rebrand themselves. Another main route into architecture was via apprenticeship or pupillage, a process in which young men paid to be 'articled' to established architects or firms. Even when architecture became

more professional, as tertiary education became an entry-level qualification — Auckland University College started teaching architecture in 1926 but Victoria University of Wellington's School of Architecture didn't open until 1975 — the hierarchical structure of architecture firms echoed that of the ancient gendered guilds.

The architects, or the men who called themselves architects, in nineteenth-century Wellington were mainly immigrants from England and Scotland. That changed in the early twentieth century as Wellington architecture became more of a home-grown, even parochial pursuit. Several Australian architects, notably Llewellyn Edwin Williams, practised in the city, and clients occasionally called on the big-building expertise of Melbourne and Sydney firms. In the late 1930s, some very able European émigré architects, such as Frederick Newman and Ernst Plischke, worked in Wellington, usually for the Government Architect's office.

For two decades from the mid-1950s, an expanding Ministry of Works imported architects from Britain. In the history of twentieth-century Wellington — and New Zealand — architectural practice, Māori hardly got a look-in; John Scott, architect of Futuna Chapel, was, for a few years, a rare Māori presence on the local architecture scene. Even the interventions of practices from other cities in New Zealand have been limited, although some have been notable: Auckland-based Gummer & Ford designed the National Art Gallery and Dominion Museum, the old Central Library and the State Insurance Building, and Jasmax designed Te Papa; Cecil Wood from Christchurch designed the new St Paul's Cathedral.

In their professional and personal lives, Wellington architects, for a century and a half, tended to have the unexceptional habits and interests of their class. Architects, especially in the decades before the Second World War, were clubbable, out of both social inclination and professional self-interest. (Networking brought clients.) They lawn-bowled — until golf became more popular — and they belonged to gentlemen's clubs; they enjoyed motoring — the attraction of architects to stylish cars is perennial — and gardening was a common passion. Yacht-ownership was a sign of professional success. Many architects were Freemasons, perhaps unsurprisingly, given Freemasonry's link to the old stonemason guilds. Some served as city councillors, especially in the decades before the First World War; one, Michael Fowler, served as

mayor (between 1974 and 1983). Military service was another shared experience of the city's architects in the first half of the twentieth century. Many careers were interrupted, affected or even definitively ended by war.

Before the Second World War, architects' attention tended to be confined to the individual building. Edmund Anscombe, who was very active in the 1930s, was exceptional in his concern for exhibiting architecture and proposing affordable multi-unit housing. The architectural focus widened from the building to the city in the 1950s and 1960s. Younger architects, returned from studying in America and Britain and visiting buildings by Le Corbusier and Mies van der Rohe, found an outlet for urban advocacy in the Wellington Architectural Centre. Two decades later, Ian Athfield stressed the importance of the spaces between buildings, not just the buildings themselves.

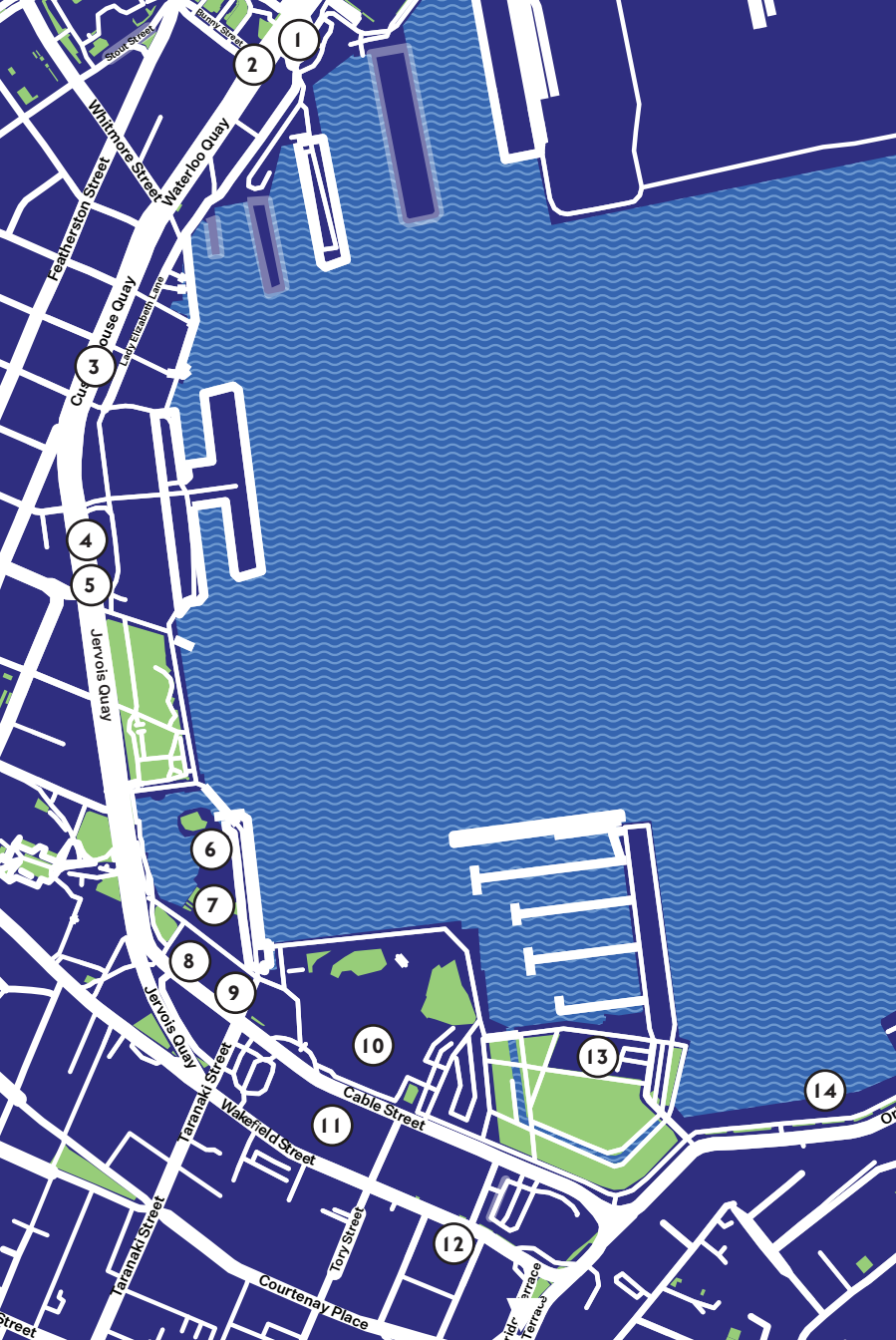
The practice of architecture now is complex, far more so than it was in the nineteenth century, and significantly more so than it was in the twentieth century. Projects require more collaboration and this is fostering, in architecture firms, greater diversity and inclusivity. On larger projects, it is not possible — or considered appropriate — to attribute a building's design to a single hand. Ian Athfield and Roger Walker were the last 'starchitects' in the Wellington design firmament.

This wasn't how things were arranged for most of the period covered in this book. Until the start of this century, design direction was ascribed to, and claimed by, the man with his name on the practice shingle. It is therefore possible to periodise — if not define — Wellington's architecture by reference to a series of outstanding architects who designed buildings that can still be seen from the city's footpaths: Thomas Turnbull, that eminent Victorian; Frederick de Jersey Clere, busy for more than 40 years on either side of the turn of the twentieth century; William Gray Young, at his height between the wars, when Edmund Anscombe and William Henry Gummer were also practising in the city; and Ian Athfield, from the 1960s through to the end of the twentieth century.

And this is not to slight the work of other architects who have contributed to Wellington's architectural legacy, architects such as Frederick Thatcher, Llewellyn Edwin Williams, Government Architects John Campbell and John Thomas Mair, Cyril Hawthorn

Mitchell, Ernst Plischke, James Beard, Bill Alington, Gordon Moller and Roger Walker. The list of good buildings in Te Whanganui-a-Tara is long, and no doubt will get longer, as the pool of people designing them becomes wider and deeper.

In this second, revised edition of *Te Whanganui-a-Tara Wellington Architecture: A Walking Guide*, some buildings have been added — 17 of them — and a few omitted. A city keeps changing. Since the publication of the first edition, some significant new buildings have been completed: Tākina Wellington Convention and Exhibition Centre, Ngā Mokopuna on Victoria University's campus, Heke Rua Archives and the tower at No. 1 Whitmore Street. Two important heritage buildings have re-opened after extensive renovation: Sacred Heart Cathedral and St James Theatre. There's been a loss, as well. In 2022, one of Wellington's little architectural wonders, Ian Athfield's idiosyncratic First Church of Christ Scientist, was demolished. (Consequently, it has been dropped from this guide.) The publisher's allocation of a few more pages has meant the West Side walking route now extends up Kelburn Parade, taking in more of the university, and along Tinakori Road in Thorndon. Even with more pages, spatial constraints dictated the omission (judicious, I hope) of several of the first edition's buildings.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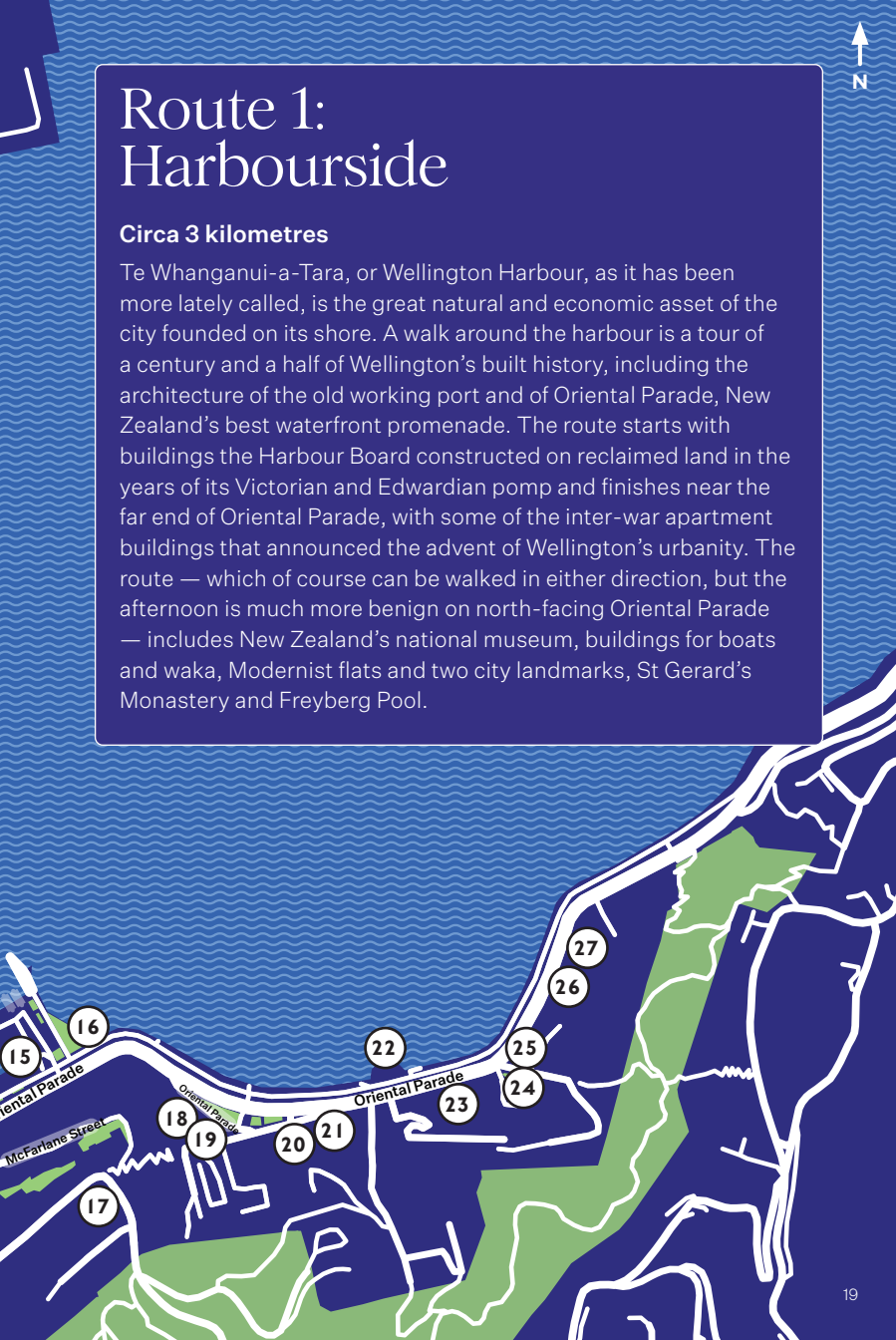
Route 1: Harbourside

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 a century and a half 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 — which of course can be walked in either direction, but the afternoon is much more benign on north-facing Oriental Parade — includes New Zealand's national museum, buildings for boats and waka, Modernist flats and two city landmarks, St Gerard's Monastery and Freyberg Pool.




BOGAZI
PROPERTY

Shed 7 (Former Wellington Harbour Board Wharf Offices and Woolstore)

Jervois Quay, 1 Queens Wharf and 63 Customhouse Quay
Clere, Fitzgerald & Richmond, 1896
Historic Place Category 1

In the New Zealand settler tradition of laconic nomenclature — North and South Island set the deadpan precedent — one of Wellington's most ornate buildings came to be called a shed. The building, when it was completed in 1896, was named the Wellington Harbour Board Wharf Offices and Woolstore; in the 1920s, it became Shed 7. The Harbour Board commissioned the building shortly after it had built the neighbouring Board Office and Bond Store (see overleaf), and again the architect was Frederick de Jersey Clere (1856–1952).

The mid-1890s iteration of Clere's practice was Clere, Fitzgerald & Richmond. Edward Richmond (1867–1896) was still on the firm's masthead in the year of his death from tuberculosis at the age of 29; the third partner was architect and engineer Gerald Fitzgerald (1857–1937). Chief Draughtsman John Sydney Swan (1874–1936; see pages 52–53) may have contributed to the design of the Wharf Offices and Woolstore, a far more decorative building than the earlier French Empire-styled Board Office and Bond Store. This time, Clere gave a neo-Classical Italianate treatment to a wedge-shaped building that curves to follow the bend of Jervois Quay and narrows at its north end to a rounded apex.

Above a rusticated base with semi-circular arches, Corinthian and Doric pilasters frame the windows in a façade featuring entablatures with friezes and cornices. (Rooftop ornamentation was removed, probably after the 1942 earthquakes.) The intention was to build with Ōamaru stone but this was 'value managed' down to brick. Shed 7's most distinctive element is the oriel on its south-east corner, a perch from which the wharfinger could observe the waterside workers. (The building was a backdrop to clashes in New Zealand's most significant industrial disputes, the 1913 General Strike and the 1951 Waterfront Lockout.) After Harbour Board assets were sold off in the 1980s, Shed 7 was converted to apartments (Fletcher Construction, 1994).


THE
BOATSHED

Star Boating Club and Wellington Rowing Club

Taranaki Street Wharf/Whairepo Lagoon
William Charles Chatfield (Star Boating Club), 1886; Clere & Richmond (Wellington Rowing Club), 1894
Historic Place Category 1

The two Victorian-era timber buildings that sit next to each other on the edge of Whairepo Lagoon seem quite settled on their site but are in fact relatively recent arrivals. The northernmost of the buildings (pictured at left) was constructed in 1886 for the rowers of the Star Boating Club, which had been founded 20 years earlier and had already moved premises twice to keep up with Wellington's harbour reclamations. Architect William Chatfield (1851–1930) future-proofed the new building, which was located on Customhouse Quay, by designing it on sleds. Just as well: only three years after it was completed another reclamation left Star's rowers high and dry. Their clubhouse was then dragged by steam engine to a new site on Jervois Quay, where it remained for a century. In 1989, the building was moved, again, to its current location. The Star Boating Club — now called The Boatshed — has been extensively renovated over the years but essentially retains its form as a domesticated gabled shed, with a viewing balcony along its west elevation, facing the lagoon.

The Wellington Rowing Club, sited to the south of the Star Boating Club, started life as a boat house for the Naval Artillery Volunteer Corps. (The gunner's octagonal lookout tower survives.) When constructed in 1894, to the design of Frederick de Jersey Clere (1856–1952) and Edward Richmond (1867–1896), the building was located at Jervois Quay, next to the Star Boating Club. The Wellington Rowing Club took possession of the building in 1931. By the 1970s, when the city council considered both rowing club buildings to be an 'eyesore in the centre of the Capital city', they narrowly escaped demolition. Like its neighbour, the Wellington Rowing Club was moved to man-made Whairepo Lagoon in 1989 and there restored.

Te Raukura/Te Wharewaka o Pōneke

Taranaki Street Wharf/Whairepo Lagoon
architecture+ and Mike Barnes, 2011

Numerous buildings around the Wellington waterfront testify to the colonial presence at Te Whanganui-a-Tara. Only one, Te Raukura/Te Wharewaka o Pōneke, explicitly acknowledges the history of Māori occupation. As its name indicates, the building, designed by local practice architecture+, is a whare for waka, and also accommodates a café and function centre. It is sited near what was the water frontage of Te Aro pā, a significant Māori settlement disrupted by European settlement and the 1855 Wairarapa earthquake, the largest ever recorded in New Zealand.

Along with the neighbouring rowing clubhouses, Te Raukura forms the eastern frame of Whairepo Lagoon, where the building's waka are launched. The rectangular building faces north over an ātea, the traditional space in front of the wharenui, or communal house, on a marae. At this end of the building, the decorated maihi, or bargeboards, are legible as the 'arms' of the building, in accordance with Māori anthropomorphic design principles.

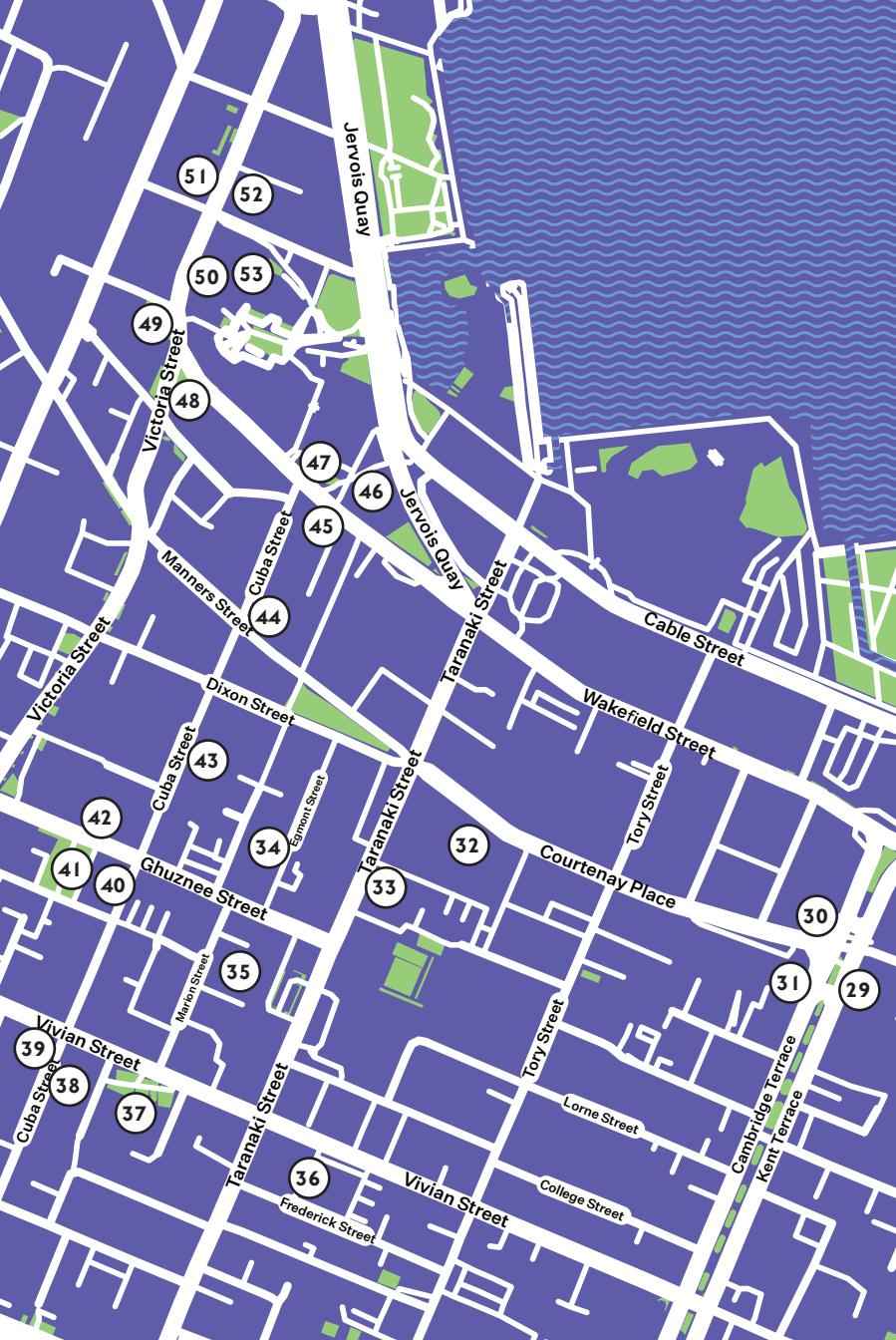
The building's most striking element is its roof, a steel skin pulled down over the structure in triangular facets or folds. The analogy, introduced by architect Mike Barnes (Ngāti Tūwharetoa), is to a korowai, or cloak, an appropriate allusion on the exposed shoreline of Te Whanganui-a-Tara. The concept resonates, too, with Te Wharewaka's praenomen: in English, Raukura means feather — korowai material, and a symbol of rank and also of the nineteenth-century peaceful resistance movement led by Te Whiti-o-Rongomai (?–1907) at Parihaka, in Taranaki, the region of origin of some Wellington iwi. On the other side of the ātea sits the bronze statue sculpted by William Trethewey (1892–1956) of the legendary navigator Kupe, his wife Hine Te Apārangi and the tohunga Pekahourangi at the moment of their sighting of Aotearoa.

Tākina

50 Cable Street and Wakefield Street
Studio Pacific Architecture, 2023

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 Jørn Utzon's Sydney Opera House (1973), a 'spherical solution' that pushed design boundaries to their analog limits. Latterly, the practice founded by Iraqi-born British architect Zaha Hadid (1950–2016) has flamboyantly realised 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 complemented by autocratic vainglory, the wow-factor appeal of this style cuts across national borders and political divides.

Recently, two Wellington buildings have graduated from sexy parametric rendering to actual steel-and-glass structure: No. 1 Whitmore Street (pages 216–17), and Tākina, the Wellington Convention and Exhibition Centre. (In te reo Māori, tākina can mean to connect or invoke.) Tākina stretches languorously between apartment buildings on busy Cable Street, opposite altogether less singular Te Papa. (It also faces a dispiriting stretch of Wakefield Street.) The sheen of Tākina's bronze glazing, especially on its north-facing Cable Street side, is reminiscent of the façade of the InterContinental Hotel (pages 204–05), although relating the two buildings is like comparing the CGI of the *Avatar* movies to the marionette puppetry of the 1960s TV series *Thunderbirds Are Go*. Inside, 6-level Tākina is a series of functional conference and exhibition spaces. The building was intended to include a film museum featuring movie-maker Peter Jackson's collection of cinema memorabilia. When Jackson withdrew from the project, the trajectory of city council-owned Tākina was tweaked towards the nebulous realm of venue architecture — a journey always undertaken as much in hope as expectation: build it and, fingers crossed, they will come.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