

Tracing the Tideway Walk



Plaque 1 marks the eastern side of the entrance to Paruparu Estuary. Early settlers called the Estuary 'The Tideway' and built a causeway across it to make access between the port and the town centre easier. It ran roughly along Halifax Street from this point. At the Haven Road end was Saltwater Bridge which was completed in 1842. Anzac Park was originally known as Milton's Acre and in the mid 1800s fishing boats tied here. Captain Millton's land was purchased by the Nelson City Council in 1897 and by 1912 the area bounded by Haven, Halifax and Rutherford Streets was reclaimed. Following World War 1 (1914 - 1918) the reserve was dedicated to soldiers from New Zealand and Australia who had been lost in wars, and named ANZAC Park.

Plaque 2 is at the base of Matangi Awhio, the former site of a major pa and heart of Nelson for Māori. An information board here tells the history of Pioneers Park and its reclamation to become a reserve. The mural on Whakatu Dance Academy recalls typical vegetation found around the Paruparu Estuary in 1840s. Across the Park, beyond the colourful mosaic on the public toilets is **Plaque 3** on Washington Road, which was once an early route from the port to the city. **Plaque 4** at St Vincent Street was also on the southern edge of the Estuary giving an idea of how wet walkers could get at high tide as they headed towards Pikiimai/Church Hill.

St Vincent Street was where the early railway line ran. The line was proposed in the 1860s and permission was given in 1871 to start work on a track intended to meet up with the main trunk line linking Nelson to the rest of the South Island. Construction of the first 30.4km stage, from the city

to Foxhill, began in 1873 and it opened in 1876. The line followed St Vincent Street, at the time a controversial choice. Sadly the line was doomed never to be finished and was eventually closed despite public protests by 1955.

The naming of St Vincent Street and nearby Vanguard Street was done by an early street naming committee. The names link with Admiral Lord Nelson, after whom the city is named. Early settlers' names also were used for street names. Kerr Street and **Plaque 5** recall John Kerr, famous for ploughing the first furrow in Nelson in 1842. His bullock paddock was nearby this area.

Places along the small eastern inlet of the estuary are marked by **Plaque 6** at Pomeroy's Coffee House and by **Plaque 7** at Theatre Royal, which has an information panel next to it. The Theatre opened in 1878 and was refurbished to its former glory in 2010. Special trains ran for patrons on theatre nights during the 1880s. Drainage used to be a problem in this area, particularly at high tides or after heavy rain, with one memorable night for those in the orchestra pit playing in six inches of water.

The edges of the larger eastern inlet can be found along Bridge Street. **Plaque 8** is beside Wills Jewellers, a small historic building thought to date from 1855 and be the oldest commercial building in the central business district of Nelson. A fisherman's jetty once sat at the back of the building in Wakatu Lane. The building is also remarkable for being owned by five women spanning four generations of the one family over 96 years. Across Wakatu Square plaque **9** marks the other side of the inlet.

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In the 1840s the Paruparu Estuary was a mahinga kai (food gathering area) for Maori. It was flooded by the high tide, and fed by streams from the Toitoi Valley, Washington Valley and the Mahitahi (Maitai River) floodplain. European settlers called it 'The Tideway' and the area was bridged and gradually reclaimed. Follow the shoreline plaques to points of interest along what was once the Estuary frontage. When reading a plaque you are facing the direction where water would have met the shoreline.

Go to www.thePROW.org.nz for an extended audio version of this walk along with other stories about Nelson. More heritage information, and heritage walks and events can be found on www.nelsoncitycouncil.co.nz

