

Demon Drink Walk

1 In 1843 merchants Nathan and Joseph built large store rooms on land that is the current site of Westpac Bank. Alexander Perry converted the building to use as a public house, licensed as the Wakatu Hotel in 1845. The Colonist newspaper said “a visit to the Wakatu Hotel had been regarded by country residents as the one relief from their struggles, as they had always been sure of finding congenial company there”. The Bank of New South Wales bought the property and the buildings and their contents were auctioned off in July 1877. The buildings were purchased for thirty nine pounds by Thomas Harley, who had been born on the premises.

2 The Freemasons’ Arms was licensed on this site in 1842 and became a centre for members of the Oddfellows Lodge, and the name was changed to the Oddfellows’ Arms. William Akersten took the licence in 1858 and changed the name to the Marine Hotel, reflecting his interests at the Port, where he had a well-known chandlery. Charles McGee took over in 1859 and let the hotel in January 1864 to George Potter. The new licensee, gave the hotel a new name – the Coach and Horses. The building was replaced in stages, with the Trafalgar Street frontage in 1870 and Bridge Street extensions starting in 1877. The hotel had its final change of identity in 1906, when it became the Central Hotel. It closed in December 1972. The building still stands and is presently used as a backpackers.

3 The Royal Arms was licensed in a building at this site in 1851-1857, then in 1865 Charles McGee built the 17-room Nelson Hotel here. This hotel was destroyed in a disastrous fire in 1866 that started here and spread to all corners of the intersection, fanned by a strong wind. It was quickly rebuilt and the famous public meeting to form the Nelson Rugby Club was held here in 1868. During the 1890s the licence lapsed and the building was used by the Anchor Boot Company. Mrs Digby Andrews took it over and renovated it as the Ranfurly Boarding House. This accommodated sixty visitors and a balcony was added to provide a view of the Jubilee Day procession in February 1902. Mrs Andrews also operated a fruit and confectionery shop on the ground-floor in Bridge Street. In 1903 it changed owners to become the Metropolitan Private Hotel. In 1916 it once again became licensed, combining with premises next door in Bridge Street, to become the Royal Hotel. A hotel continues to operate at this site today.

4 The Mitre Hotel was built here in 1859. Another victim of the 1866 fire, it was rebuilt the same year and renamed the Criterion Hotel in the 1870s. It became the unlicensed Temperance Hotel by 1887, which lasted until 1912. When the intersection became known as Four Spirits corner it was because petroleum spirit was

being sold on site at the Silverton Service Station, rather than anything more intoxicating.

5 The Salvation Army Barracks once stood here. Members were strongly devoted to the Temperance movement feeling that alcohol was a root cause of social evil. Individuals were encouraged to sign the pledge to abstain from alcohol.

6 The earliest hotel at this intersection was Charles Harley’s Carpenters’ Arms in 1843, a popular location for balls and dinners. The licence appears to have lapsed in 1851, when Harley moved to the Wakatu (in Trafalgar St). The present Wakatu Hotel was licenced by Fred Vause in 1900, in premises built in 1866 for H.V. Phillips’ Beehive Stores. The new venture was an immediate success, and the building was extended along the Collingwood Street frontage early in 1902. This provided eight further bedrooms upstairs and a large room downstairs, suitable for supper parties.

7 The Miners’ Arms Hotel, built in 1855, and Henry Jasper was an early landlord. The hotel was rebuilt in 1883 by which time its name had been changed to the Panama Hotel. The Panama closed in July 1976 and the building is now used as legal offices and shops. Roughcast cement covers what was once a wooden exterior and a large basement cellar is a reminder of its early use.

8 A small brick building was built here in 1842 that housed the Commercial Hotel, licensed in 1851 by J. Winterburn. In 1883 this was replaced by a two storied wooden building. A brick extension was added to the Hardy Street frontage in 1907 and the wooden portion was replaced in 1936. Renamed the Hotel Nelson, it stood until 1986 when it was demolished. It had a number of famous visitors including the young Queen Elizabeth on her first New Zealand tour. It is now the site of the Nelson Provincial Museum.

9 The Victorian Rose, now known as the Vics Mac’s Brewbar, is a good example of adaptive reuse of a heritage building. Built in 1889 for the NZ Insurance Company, it was taken over in 1916 by solicitors and used legal offices until 1979 then as council offices. It was converted into a public bar and restaurant in 1992.

10 Fifeshire House was built circa 1911. Originally Fifeshire House was the homestead of the Harley family for over fifty years and called Raglan Villa. Charles Harley and his family eventually owned five hotels, a malt house, a brewery, a cordial factory and some hops plantations. Their Raglan Breweries was located right next door where the Rutherford Hotel now stands. Joseph Auty Harley, Mayor of Nelson from 1949 to 1956, and his family were the last generation to live in Raglan Villa.



Demon Drink Walk

Early Nelson was well served with public houses despite the vigorous agitation for abstinence by the Temperance movement. Patrons often had to travel long distances over difficult terrain and as well as having alcohol, hotels had accommodation, meals and popular meeting places in the community. The first publicans' licences were issued in Nelson in April 1842. This central city walk uses research by local historian Dawn Smith for the Journal of the Nelson and Marlborough Historical Societies, 1988.

For more heritage walks, and information on heritage events and resources go to www.nelsoncitycouncil.co.nz/heritage or ring Nelson City Council on 03 546 0200

