



# Settlement in Stoke

This walk highlights some of the historical background of central Stoke. It is a companion to the Saunter in Stoke walk which highlights natural features of the landscape.

Visit [www.theprow.org.nz](http://www.theprow.org.nz) for more stories about Stoke and the people who lived there. More free heritage walks can be downloaded from [nelson.govt.nz/heritage-walks](http://nelson.govt.nz/heritage-walks).



# Settlement in Stoke



Stoke was once a swampy area with numerous small streams. Covered with flax and raupo it was a mahinga kai (food gathering area for Māori). The earliest European settler was William Songer who arrived in Nelson in 1841 as Captain Wakefield's personal attendant.

He named Stoke in memory of in memory of his English birthplace. Settlers cleared and drained the land, planted crops and ran livestock.

The first Stoke School shifted a number of times but had a building in 1851 where St Barnabas Church now stands. At one stage it was near the infamous Company Ditch, a drainage channel which became so wide it needed a bridge.

**St Barnabas Church** **1** was opened on 22 August 1866 and was the first stone church built in the Nelson Diocese. The stones came from nearby Marsden Valley stream and the half acre of land was given by Thomas Marsden. It had a new nave added in 1971 which blends well with the original architecture.

**Isel House** **2** and **Isel Park** **3** were part of an original property of 930 acres purchased by Thomas Marsden. He was the community's biggest landowner, acquiring 376 hectares extending up what is now Marsden Valley.

He planted a great number of trees which still stand around the property today and this love of silviculture was shared by his son James, born in Nelson in 1844.

James was one of the first scholars of Nelson College, and lived most of his life in Stoke grazing sheep and cattle, and growing crops of barley, wheat and turnips. Visit Isel House to discover stories of the Marsden family.

**The Stoke Library** **4** has had many homes but is now situated in Neale Avenue. Established c1858 it first operated out of the primary school. By the 1920s books were held in store cupboards and cloakroom at what is now **Stoke Memorial Hall** **5**, and the service was run by volunteers.

The hall was a lively spot then, with old time dances and weekly 'sixpenny hop' dance classes held there.

Stoke's involvement in World War One is noted on a history panel by the gateway.

**The Railway Reserve** **6** is a notable feature of the Stoke landscape, now providing a pedestrian/cycle route following the old Glenhope to Nelson railway line. The first sod for the railway was turned in Saxton's paddock for the Nelson-Saxton section of the line.

The ill fated line opened in 1876 and was intended to join the main trunk line. Frustrating delays occurred, then competition from road transport led to suspension of rail services. Despite huge public protest the last train ran in 1955 and the line was dismantled.

One of Nelson's oldest residential buildings, **Broadgreen House** **7** is located at 276 Nayland Road Stoke. The charming cob cottage was built in 1855 for Mr and Mrs Edmund Buxton, and their six daughters. In 1855 Mr Buxton, originally from Derbyshire, founded the firm 'E. Buxton & Co. Merchants' in Nelson which sold "everything from firearms to sausage skins". His house was built on the 100 acre property he bought in Stoke, near Nelson in 1854.

**Samuels' Rose Garden** **8** established in 1968 contains 560 named varieties and over 3,000 plants. As roses are only native to the northern hemisphere, early settlers brought their favourite roses with them. The gardens are named after the late Mr S J Samuels, a rose nurseryman, who donated both the rose stock and bud wood, and undertook the budding assisted by his wife.

**Otumarama** **9** was the site of Charles John Rayner's homestead. He built there c1892 when he retired to Stoke from Temuka. Even though the original house is no longer standing, remnants of his garden are still there.

The site is now occupied by a rest home.