

Heritage Walks of Devonport

Victoria Road – Town Centre

Approximately 1 hour to walk

Please respect the privacy of owners
by not entering their properties

Explore North Shore

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and all the residents of Devonport who have contributed
to the development of this project

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Don't miss these three additional walks which explore other areas of Devonport's development

Devonport Waterfront

King Edward Parade to Torpedo Bay highlights some of Devonport's
late Victorian and Edwardian homes, as well as early commercial buildings,
memorials and sites of important events.
An optional walk up North Head can be included.

Cheltenham – Fort Takapuna

Starting from Torpedo Bay, this walk continues along
Cheltenham Beach, up Vauxhall Road to Fort Takapuna and loops back
beside the Waitemata Golf Course and Tainui Road.

Our Neighbourhood

This wander through established residential streets highlights homes of early
Devonport residents, as well as the first power station, the Mount Victoria
cemetery and some of Devonport's early churches.
The Devonport Museum and Mount Victoria are optional loops.

Fact or Fiction?

Local Folklore & Fanciful Anecdotes

- The Moreton Bay fig tree in Windsor Reserve is fondly known as 'Old Albert' (planted from a seedling via Albert Park in Auckland city). It was planted in 1883 and is also known as an Australian Banyan tree.
- The metal musical notes on the band rotunda in Windsor Reserve represent bars of 'God Save The Queen', but are wrongly sequenced.
- The Esplanade Hotel (built 1902 – 03) is one of the oldest on the North Shore. The bar is in its original position in the pub.
- The first asphalt footpath to be laid in New Zealand, on 12 February 1883, was put down from the Esplanade Hotel to Clarence Street, at a cost of 3s 6d per square yard.
- The new \$7.8 million Devonport Library, designed by Athfield Architects, opened February 2015, to replace the original 1953 building. Our library houses a \$100,000 silk curtain designed by artist Judy Millar. Memorial statue coming soon for much-loved library cat, Benjamin (who died in 2017).
- Flagstaff was the name originally bestowed upon Devonport. Victoria and Albert Roads were named after Queen Victoria and her husband Albert. Edward Street (now Calliope Road) and Clarence Street were named after their children.
- The bubonic plague scare in 1900 prompted the Devonport Council to offer free rat poison to encourage the slaughter of rats, and included a bounty for each dead rat produced.
- The youngest New Zealander to have won an international Grammy Award, Lorde grew up in Devonport and attended Belmont Intermediate School and Takapuna Grammar.
- O'Neill's Point Cemetery in Bayswater contains the remains of both Mrs McDonald (died 1902) and Charles Stone (died 1920). Mrs McDonald was the first European female child born in New Zealand and Charles was the first European male child born in Auckland.



The establishment of a commercial area on lower Victoria Road was prompted by a ferry service connecting Devonport with the city and the development of a wharf and hotel at the foot of the street in the 1860s. By the 1880s, Victoria Road had become the leading commercial centre of the North Shore. By the 1920s the western side of Victoria Road was lined with fine Victorian and Edwardian commercial premises. Today Victoria Road has one of the most intact collections of Victorian and Edwardian commercial buildings in Auckland. Several of these buildings have been listed by Heritage New Zealand and the Auckland Council.

Victoria Road Town Centre



Start from the Ferry Terminal and walk across the road to the Esplanade hotel



1 The Esplanade Hotel cnr Victoria Road and Queens Parade

There has been a hotel on this site since the 1860s when the original Flagstaff Hotel was established. Officially opened in June 1903, when it was named the Esplanade, the present hotel building has been the dominant feature of this part of the waterfront for well over a century. In 1903 the Auckland Star wrote approvingly: 'The hotel is a very fine building, erected on up-to-date lines with a view to catering for the travellers who visit this city from other parts of the colony and beyond. It has been as sumptuously furnished as it is imposingly built. An air of luxury and comfort pervades the whole building.'

Continue walking up the left-hand side of the road



2 Former Post Office/Council Chambers 3 Victoria Road

This building was opened in March 1908 as Devonport's first purpose-built post office and was used for this purpose until the new post office was opened in 1938 on the opposite side of Victoria Road. While it was a definite improvement on the earlier post office facilities that were housed in a local store, the deficiencies of the building quickly became apparent. The living accommodation upstairs was insufficient to meet the needs of the postmaster, Mr Turner and his family of eight children. Working conditions below were far from perfect. There was insufficient ventilation in the rear of the building, where women working in the telephone section had to put up with stifling conditions. Meanwhile, the entrance area suffered from the opposite problem with the wind frequently whistling in the front door and blowing money and papers about. The exterior finish of the building also caused problems but this and other issues were resolved in 1939 when the building was substantially altered to meet the needs of the new occupants, the Devonport Borough Council (see mounted plaque).



3 Oliver Mays Building/The Arcade 5-19 Victoria Road

This impressive row of two-storey shop buildings was built between 1880 and about 1890. The two shops at the northern end were built last, the original buildings on this site having been destroyed in the Victoria Road fire of 1888. The brick wall of the Oliver Mays building stopped the fire from extending further down the street. The building features a charming arcade through its centre, with displays relating to various aspects of Devonport's history.

Cross the road at the first pedestrian crossing, and look at the statue

4 War Memorial



Unveiled in April 1923, the Devonport War Memorial was one of a large number of memorials erected to the war dead after the First World War. They served as surrogate tombs for the families and friends of the many thousands of men and women who died in the conflict and were buried in foreign lands. The memorial features the figure of a soldier designed by Frank Lynch, the winner of a design competition for the memorial. The bronze figure, known as the 'untidy soldier', is unusual for its informality and realism. Plaques were subsequently added to the memorial to remember the fallen from the Anglo-Boer War and World War II.

Carry on up Victoria Road

5 Windsor Reserve

This small section of land has long been a focal point for Devonport. During the nineteenth century it was used for naval purposes but in 1894 a deal was struck whereby the Triangle, and Windsor Reserve opposite, were handed to the Devonport Borough Council. The Triangle was the site of the original Council Chambers and the site has retained an important role in the municipal, recreational and commemorative functions of the area. Over the years it has been adorned with a band rotunda, a library and several memorials including the South African War Memorial 1899–1902. Look for the magnificent Moreton Bay fig tree (also known as an Australian Banyan tree), planted in 1883.



Walk to the corner of the reserve by the fountain, and look diagonally across at the group of three buildings on the corner of Clarence Street and Victoria Road



8 Johnston & Noble Building 49 Victoria Road Verran's Building 53-55 Victoria Road plus 57–59 Victoria Road

The three buildings north of 8 Clarence Street were built between 1898 and 1906. In 1898 a fire broke out in Victoria Road destroying several shops just beyond the corner of Clarence Street including a saddlery, grocer and bootmaker. Soon after the fire, the building at the northern end with the arched windows was erected and housed the Edinburgh Bakery business operated by George Johnston. It is likely that the building to the south of this was also built around the same time. The building on the corner of Clarence Street and Victoria Road was built a few years later, and housed the Johnston and Noble grocery business and Antonio Martin's confectionery shop.



10 Former Bank of New Zealand 14 Victoria Road

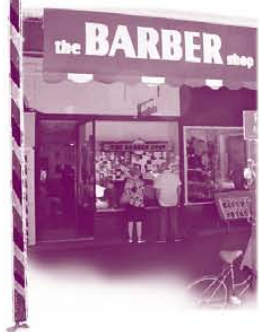
The 1920s was a prosperous time for the banking industry and it was in 1925 that work began on the Bank of New Zealand building at Devonport designed by the well-known architectural firm, Edward Mahoney & Son. The grand Stripped Classical building was in stark contrast to the earlier premises occupied by the bank which consisted of a single storey commercial space attached to the front of a house.

As you continue walking up the road, you will notice the house at 24 Victoria Road — it is the oldest existing house in Devonport, begun in 1842 and much altered; the rear of the building is the most original area. It is the last remaining house of a number of professional rooms and residences that once lined the eastern side of the road

Look across the road to the western side of the street, to view the following buildings

6 The Barber Shop 27 Victoria Road

Established in 1878, this is the oldest remaining barber shop in New Zealand.



7 Buchanan's Building 33-39 Victoria Road

An 1888 fire in Victoria Road went largely unchecked due to a lack of efficient water supply. It finally burnt itself out after destroying nine shops and seven dwellings, including the buildings on these sites. The present buildings arose soon afterwards and were built with more fire resistant materials than the mainly timber buildings that formerly occupied this part of Victoria Road.



Cross Flagstaff Terrace and continue walking up the hill. On the right you will see the former Post Office



9 Former Devonport Post Office. 10 Victoria Road

Opened in 1938, and designed in the 'streamlined moderne' style fashionable at the time, it replaced 3 Victoria Road (refer 2) at a time when larger post office buildings were being erected throughout the country to accommodate a newly expanded range of functions. This Post Office closed in 1991. The site housed the Jackson 'Museum' of Transport, Sound and Victoriana for many years, before becoming the attractive multi-purpose mall it is now.



Look across the road to view the block of buildings on the western side of the street

11 61–85 Victoria Road, featuring Devonia, Alison's and Watkin's Buildings

Most of the buildings in this block were built between 1906 and 1912. The Devonia Building (now owned and used upstairs by the RSA) was erected in 1926 to a design in the Viennese Secession style in contrast to the buildings to the north which are variously Edwardian Baroque or Edwardian Free style. The building on the northern side of Devonia was erected in 1912 for Mrs Buchanan who

leased the shops just as the Alisons did. Next along is Alison's building, erected in 1906 for one of Devonport's leading business families. The small building next door was built in 1906 for the Auckland Gas Company. The company had been supplying gas to the people of Devonport since the early 1880s. The building on the corner of Fleet Street and Victoria Road was built in 1910 for the drapery firm Hayward and Co. Rising city rents had prompted the owners to move their business from Queen Street to Devonport. On the ground floor customers would find general household drapery, furnishings, a men's mercer, while the first floor contained the showroom where the making up and millinery departments were housed.

Continue walking to the corner of Rattray Street and Victoria Road to view the building on your right



12 The AMC Building
40 Victoria Road

The Auckland Meat Company was established in 1906 and gradually premises were opened in various parts of Auckland. In 1917 this shop became the new home of the Devonport Branch and retains the original tiling with the distinctive AMC insignia.

Cross Rattray Street and look across to the other side of the road



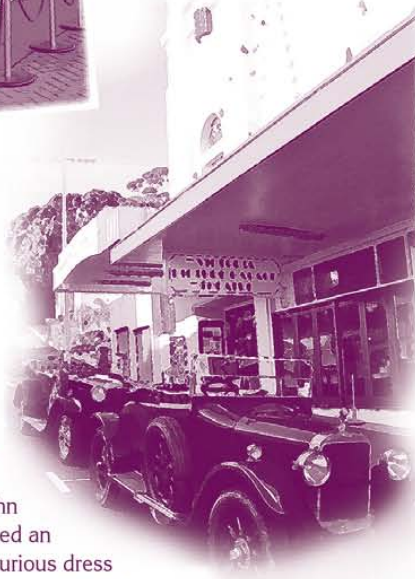
13 Princess Buildings 95 -103 Victoria Road

In 1910 the site of the Princess Buildings was purchased by Messrs Hardley and Hardley from Edward Bartley. The erection of the building two years later marked an extension northward of the existing commercial area. Designed by architect T W May the building included five shops with living accommodation above. The premises were rented out by Hardley and Hardley who ran a substantial plumbing supply company in Auckland.



14 The Victoria Picture Palace and Theatre
56 Victoria Rd

The oldest purpose-built cinema building still standing in the southern hemisphere, the Victoria Theatre opened its doors on 26 October 1912. Designed by architect John Walker, the cinema featured an opulent interior with a luxurious dress circle in the upstairs balcony. Originally known as Benwell's Picture Palace, the theatre was built by John and Mary Benwell who were from America. The Benwells had a taste for the unusual, keeping monkeys in cages above the verandah that occasionally escaped, causing friction with the authorities. In 1929 the theatre went through a significant change being remodelled in the Art Deco style by architect D B Patterson. The Victoria Theatre Trust now uses the building as both a cinema and live performance space, including film-making courses during the school holidays.



You could take an optional loop up Mount Victoria now, or walk back down the street and have a coffee. You've earned it!

