

Church Hill Walk

The **Cawthron steps** **1**, named after their donor Thomas Cawthron, create an imposing access to the hill. They replaced the three flights of wooden steps built in 1858 to ease access to Christ Church Cathedral. Cawthron generously funded the project and the Tonga Bay granite steps were designed by A.R. Griffin and opened in 1913. The steps continue to be a favourite meeting place for citizens.

A grant of 150 pounds was made by the Provincial Government to buy trees for Church Hill. Other benefactors also donated and cared for trees resulting in many magnificent specimens visible today. These include the large Sequoia that are found all over the hill and two of the coastal **Californian Redwood variety** **2** are seen either side of the steps. Another Sequoia, The **Wellingtonia** **3** also grow on the hill. Sequoia are one of the oldest and tallest species of trees in the world, though those in New Zealand don't attain the heights of those overseas.

Victorian gardens favoured exotic plants as well as the familiar English plants. The Victorian theme has been respected with **Phoenix Palms** **4** flanking the steps to mark a commemorative route. These were planted in the 1940s.

Five big **English Oaks** **5** can be found, one with a span of over 23 metres. Across Church Street **Fifeshire House** **6** and **Rutherford Hotel** **7** can be seen. The house was once the home of Joseph Auty Hartley, OBE, Mayor of Nelson 1947-1956. This is now commercial premises. The adjacent hotel complex occupies the former site of the one of the earliest established breweries in Nelson.

More recent plantings are Camellias and Rhododendrons, that thrive in the shade of the tall trees.

Beyond the impressive old Turkish Oak are more recently planted native Totara and Maitai. Through these trees see the site of **Nelson's Jewish Synagogue** **8**, one of the few built in New Zealand. An interpretative panel there tells the story.

The **Himalayan Cedars** **9** of great size and beauty are over 100 years old and flank the side steps up to the church. Across the drive a plinth marks the site of **Fort Arthur** **10** and the remnants of ramparts. The fort was named after Captain Arthur Wakefield. The 1843 fortified refuge was built to protect settlers from a feared Maori revenge after a confrontation at Wairau.

Interpretative signs **11** with extended information can be found by the cathedral entrance and in the lower gardens. Three **Italian Cypress** trees **12** are used by Monarch Butterflies to overwinter, and a copse of **Wellingtonia** (see **3**) flank a path to Nile Street. The Meeting House for the **Society of Friends (Quakers)**, who were very involved in the early settlement of Nelson, can be found here **13**.

Past a huge **Pohutakawa** **14** is the site of Bishop Selwyn's first service on Church Hill, held in the **New Zealand Company's surveyors' shed** 21 August 1842 **15**.

The **white marble Memorial** to the Fallen in World War 1 **16** has no names on it. These can be found on the cenotaph in Anzac Park.

17 This is the site of the 1903 Municipal Building which housed Nelson City Council administration until it was demolished in 1990 for earthquake safety reasons. It is now a public open space with stage for events and backed with a stunning mural by Chris Finlayson.



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This hill, known to Maori as Pikimai, became the focus of the city of Nelson. Church services were held here from 1842, firstly in temporary premises, then in a purpose built church. This was later transformed into the landmark cathedral of today. Nelson became a city by virtue of having a Bishop, hence the need for a Cathedral for what was a small settlement. A large number of trees were planted in 1861 and today the hill remains an oasis of tranquillity overlooking the city.

For more heritage walks, and information on heritage events and resources go to www.nelsoncitycouncil.co.nz/heritage

