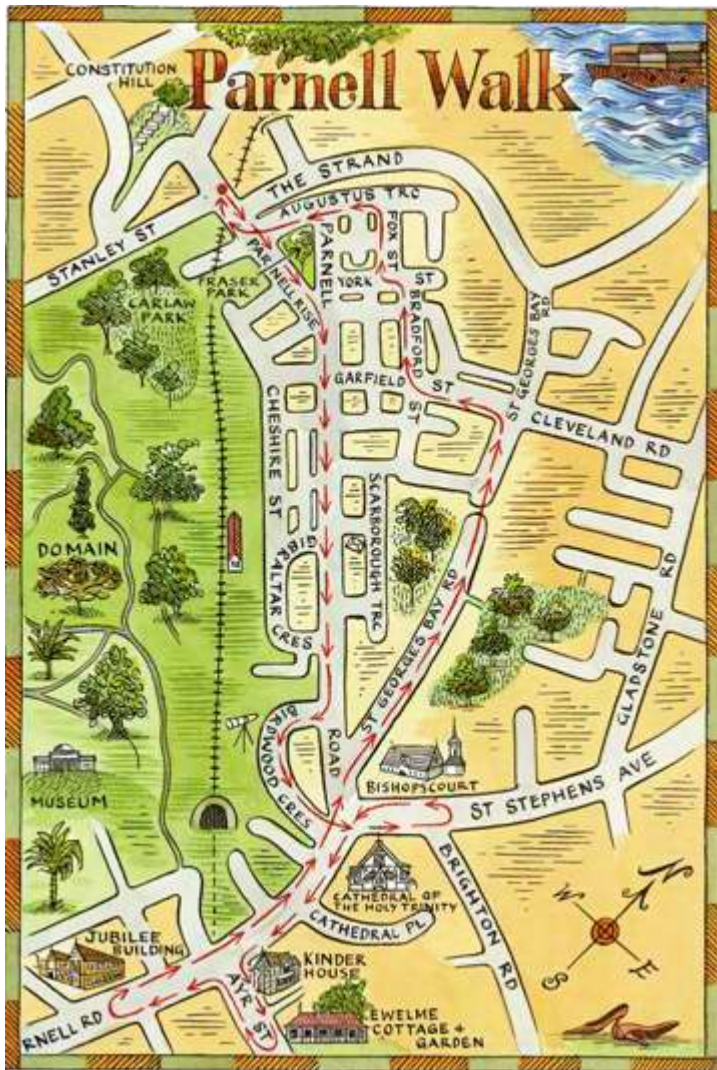


Parnell – Metro Magazine's walk

Auckland's Metro Magazine recommends a one-and-a-half-hour walk around Parnell, one of Auckland's most interesting and historic suburbs. (This article by Rose Hoare, appeared in the November, 2004 issue of Metro Magazine. Reprinted courtesy of ACP Media Ltd. Map courtesy of Anna Crichton.)



Before it achieved notoriety for its upwardly-mobile cricket-sweater set in the 1980s, or was disparaged as "Parn-hell" by Metro's late Felicity Ferret, Parnell, New Zealand's first suburb (proclaimed in 1841) was chiefly concerned with milling timber, stabling horses, the marine industry, interchanging transport, making bricks and rope, and nourishing souls.

If you were to stand at the intersection of Parnell Rise and The Strand prior to the 1860s, you'd be in danger of wetting your feet, as this was Auckland's original waterfront. The Strand runs roughly along the route of the old shoreline and, where it curves back inland, it marks out what was St Georges Bay, probably named for an immigrant ship. The bay has been reclaimed but further round the coastline, Judges Bay remains.

Judge William Martin and Attorney-General William Swainson both arrived here in 1841, forearmed with prefabricated house sections, to set up in what became Judges Bay. Swainson, history sources delight in reporting, had Moses, his white-suited Maori servant, row him to his city offices each day. It was a good anchorage and landing-point for waka.

Nearby, at the turn of the 20th Century, at the foot of Constitution Hill there was a Maori hostelry; mokoed women could be seen waiting for the buses and trams outside. To your right, on Stanley St, Donaghys had a rope factory with long corridors out the back for stretching rope. Tea rooms on The Strand catered to a large workforce from Mennie's biscuit factory, where you could fill a pillowslip with broken biscuits for thrupence.

Moving towards the corner of Parnell Rise and Augustus Tce, you can catch a glimpse of Carlaw Park, where Chan Dar-Chee, known as Ah Chee (whose grandson Tommy established Foodtown), ran a successful market garden until late in the 19th century.

Trudge up Parnell Rise (the road was originally named Manukau Rd rather than Parnell Rd), thinking wistfully of the tram "penny section" that took earlier travellers from Queen St up to the village, and pass Fraser Park, where the borough's first primary school was sited until 1933. (Parnell District School was then moved to the corner of Gladstone and St Stephen's avenues). The **WINDSOR CASTLE** at **144 Parnell Rd** (now occupied by Gault's restaurant) is an old Georgian-style hotel and pub, with an Italianate façade slapped onto the front. In 1997, a careful examination revealed parts of the building that were 50 years older than was thought, indicating that the pub had been constructed around 1850. In the 1970s, another unexpectedly old Auckland icon, Peter Urlich, played his first gig with Th' Dudes here.

Move further up, passing **Heard Park**, named for the lolly manufacturer, beloved of local children, which once had a sweet shop across the road, and arrive at the **corner of Scarborough Tce**, where the **CATHOLIC CHURCH OF ST JOHN THE BAPTIST**, designed by Edward Mahoney and formally instituted by Bishop Pompallier in 1861, is the only Catholic church in Parnell and the oldest Catholic church in the city. The Sisters of Mercy had a convent here and a Catholic primary school ran for a century, until it closed due to falling rolls in the 1950s.

Cross at the pedestrian crossing, and move up the hill, wandering down the several brick alleyways that lead into the dainty-quaint Parnell Village. Property developer Les Harvey is credited with saving and enhancing the gingerbread proportions of



the cluster of Victoriana here (some of which Harvey moved onto the site), galvanised by his distress upon discovering the demolition of Partingtons Mill in 1950 and beginning by buying the old British Laundry behind Cherry Lane.

Across the road at **350 Parnell Rd** is **HULME COURT**, the oldest house in Auckland still being used as a private residence. Around here, turn into Birdwood Cres to visit the **KNOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH** at **4 Birdwood Cres**, named after Elizabeth Knox, whose 1908 bequest set up the Ranfurly veterans' home and hospital. The neighbouring rust-red gothic-style Sunday school hall was added in 1906 and Sunday school was superintended, for a time, by the perennially black-suited Scottish funeral director William Morrison, who must have been an awe-inspiring prospect for a child.

Continue around the crescent, perhaps stopping around 8 Birdwood Cres to admire the great view of the **Auckland War Memorial Museum**.

At the end of the crescent, cross at the lights and you've arrived at the edge of Selwyn country. George Augustus Selwyn, a strong swimmer and rower (he rowed for Cambridge in the first Oxford-Cambridge race in 1829), was offered the newly created Anglican bishopric of New Zealand after his elder brother declined it. He was consecrated in 1841 and arrived in Auckland, already to some extent schooled in Maori, the following year. He toured the country on horseback, foot and boat. His involvement in the country's history was intense and not always happy, and his reasons for leaving are varied, but he gave his last communion service here in 1868, and returned to England to take up the bishopric of Litchfield.

The original **ST MARY'S CHURCH** was built across the road from the present site, to succeed the smaller St Barnabas in 1860. With parish numbers growing and the planned cathedral some way off, it was replaced by an even larger, Gothic Benjamin Mountford design around 1886, built out of kauri; timber was considered an inferior substance to stone for the building of churches but it was more readily available. St Mary's was designed by Reverend Frederick Thatcher, the first vicar of St Matthew-in-the-City, who was, like Selwyn, an ecclesiologist: he believed that churches should reflect the dimensions of faith itself and, as such, should conform to the English medieval Gothic style. The native style that evolved, evinced in Howick's All Saints' Church and Selwyn Court and various other churches of the time, is known as the Selwyn Gothic style.

St Mary's altar is decorated with a pair of 14th Century pollard oak candlesticks which were gifted and regifted until they ended up, in 1841, with Bishop Selwyn. Some felt that their beauty gave the altar an uncomfortably Catholic look. In 1953, Queen Elizabeth II attended a service here. The chapel was rolled across the road to its present site, in one piece and in one day, on March 6 1982, ostensibly to enable access betwixt the two as Parnell Road grew busier and more impenetrable.

The modern **HOLY TRINITY CATHEDRAL** adjacent to St Mary's was initiated by a 1935 bequest from Mina Horton, a spinster heiress of the newspaper publisher. According to the terms of the bequest, construction was to have begun by 1945. It finally began in 1959, and almost immediately the architect, Charles Towle, died. A decade on and the next architect had been dismissed, along with his plan for a nave which was in basic sympathy with Towle's original design. In 1992, the new mismatched nave, designed by Richard Toy, was constructed.

Across the road at **8 St Stephen's Ave** is **BISHOPSCOURT**, built in 1863 by Frederick Thatcher and occupied by Bishop Cowie, Selwyn's successor. It is still the residence of the Anglican Bishop of Auckland. At **12 St Stephen's Ave** is the early 20th Century Arts and Craft style **NELIGAN HOUSE**, which was intended to function as the new Bishopscourt for Cowie's successor, Neligan, and is now the Anglican Trust Board's office. Wandering further down, at **17 St Stephen's Ave**, you arrive at the old **DEANERY** built for Bishop Selwyn from stone taken from Rangitoto in 1857. It is now occupied by those high priests of Auckland's new religion, property valuers and consultants.

Turn around and head back onto Parnell Rd, facing south and passing "gateway pier", around **437 Parnell Rd**, which marks where St Mary's sailed across the road, and past one of the country's last remaining **HORSE- TETHERING POSTS** at around **463 Parnell Rd**.

At **2 Ayr St** sits **KINDER HOUSE**, built from stone in 1857 for the watercolourist and photographer of early New Zealand, Reverend Dr John Kinder. Kinder taught Greek, Latin, calculus and maths at the C of E Grammar school across the road and it's assumed that he learnt to make his wet-plate photographs while living here. The house has a lovable cottage garden and is now a museum (open Tuesday to Sunday, 11am to 3pm), with some of Kinder's possessions and works.

Only slightly further down the road, at **14 Ayr St**, is the shingle-roofed **EWELME COTTAGE**, built from heart kauri around 1863-64 to serve as the Auckland residence for the family of Vicesimus (meaning the 20th) Lush, a clergyman and diarist. Lush had heard Bishop Selwyn's farewell oration in 1841 and acted on these stirring words nine years later, arriving in New Zealand with his wife, Blanche, in 1850. By the end of that year, he was the first resident vicar of Howick, and was to eventually become Archdeacon of Waikato. The cottage remained in the family's possession until 1968, when it was sold to the Auckland City Council. Like Kinder House, it is now a museum (open Fridays to Sundays, 10.30 to noon and 1pm to 4.30pm) with a beautiful old garden.



If you've got the energy, continue a few blocks further along **545 Parnell Rd** to the impressive **JUBILEE BUILDING**, which houses Parnell's library. In 1890, after the 50th Jubilee celebrations of the signing of the Treaty had ended, there was a surfeit of about £100. It was decided that the money would go towards providing for the blind community. The Jubilee Building became a teaching and residential centre where Braille, piano and cane work was taught. The adjoining cane shop was notorious as the place where headmasters purchased their instruments of punishment.

Turn and make your way back down Parnell Rd until you reach St George's Bay Rd. You're now about to essay the charms of residential Parnell, a variegated sort of area that includes some of the borough's first houses.

At **42 St George's Bay Rd** is an immense ramshackle house that was a famously proper girls' school, Melmerley Collegiate School. Alumni include Princess Te Paea Herangi, Gloria Rawlinson and, until her family fell on hard times, Jean Batten. It's now known as The Big House and occupied by hippie greenies.

At **66 St George's Bay Rd** is a house that was built for harbourmaster Capt Carmichael. Immediately after this the road is blocked to all but pedestrians. Proceed through the walkway and up Garfield St, then turn right onto Bradford St and continue to the end. Here, alongside a driveway, you'll see a tennis court and, at the end, York St Recording Studios, where Auckland bands like Supergroove, Goldenhorse and Bailterspace have recorded albums. Over the fence, you can catch a peep of the Dilworth Terrace houses, but if you back up, wander down Fox St and turn right onto Augustus Tce, then at the cul de sac, you can look down their driveway. Designed by Thomas Mahoney and known as the "Seven Sisters", they were built in 1899 to provide income for the Dilworth School trust. Initially expensive rentals, attracting society types, then slums that housed criminals, prostitutes, hooch and drug pushers, they are once again highly desirable real estate.

Walk back down Augustus Tce and you're back on Parnell Rise.

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