

# A Literary Ramble



The modern **Elma Turner Library** **1** opened in 1990 and bears the name of the woman who campaigned for decades for free and excellent library services for Nelson. The library houses, in its reference section, some of the early books from the first library established in Nelson by the Nelson Institute.

In Bridge Street is the attractive building of the **Nelson Mail** **2**. Robert Lucas started Nelson's first daily newspaper in 1866. Early newspapers were a vital part of colonial life. Papers Past, a database available free at the library, gives access to early papers such as the Nelson Evening Mail and The Examiner, the first newspaper published in the South Island in 1842. The first Nelson Mail building was destroyed by fire but a replica can be found at Founders Heritage Park on 87 Atawhai Drive, along with printing presses and other memorabilia.

Charles Elliott, publisher of the Examiner, opened the first bookshop in Nelson in 1842, one of the earliest in New Zealand. Jesse Hounsell and Robert Lucas were both selling books in 1865, and books were often sold alongside other merchandise. Oswald Curtis held book auctions in Trafalgar Street in the 1850s as did Alexander Aitken, who ran a circulating library.

In Trafalgar Street many booksellers can still be found. See *Turning the Pages* by A&M Rogers for their history. Local independent booksellers **Page and Blackmore** **3** are a result of a merger of Pages bookshop started in 1910 and the ABC Bookshop started in 1964.

In **The Nelson Provincial Museum** **4** is an interactive street map to take you back in time to trace early streetscapes. A Historic Places Trust Plaque by House of Ales marks **the site of the first library** **5** founded by The Nelson Literary and Scientific Institution in May 1841. The brainchild of Captain Arthur Wakefield, Frederick Tuckett, Alfred Domett, B.E. Duppa and

W. Curling who subscribed "*a sum of money which was directed back to London with directions for the selection of Books of a useful character which will thus form the germ of the Library of the Institute.*" Dommett also had a role in the establishment of the General Assembly Library and a street alongside the Maitai River is named after him.

Thomas Cawthron, a famous benefactor of Nelson, founded the Cawthron Institute. The Institute gave the The Nelson Provincial Museum the Marsden Paintings and Book Collection, a unique Book Collection dating from 1773 to the early 1920s which relates to natural history, discovery and exploration of the Pacific. It provided the nucleus of the research library collection at the Museum archives at Isel Park, Stoke. **Cawthron's gracious residence**, built in 1895 at 25 Examiner Street **6**, is now converted to motels.

David Monro, the first president of the Nelson Institute was the original owner of **Renwick House** **7** now part of Nelson Central School. Margaret Mahy's book *Crinkum Crankum* illustrated by Robyn Belton features a huge historic bouganvillea vine that still hangs on the northwest corner of the verandah. Maurice Gee wrote a vivid history of the School in 1978 and has references to Nelson in *The World Around the Corner* to nearby Centre of New Zealand.

**Nelson Marlborough Institute of Technology (NMIT)** **8** is the home to an innovative Creative Writing course founded by poet Cliff Fell whose forebears lived in the historic Warwick House.

The present imposing **School of Fisheries building** **9** built in 1911 was home for Nelson's library for 79 years. It replaced a wooden building on the site which housed the library from 1861-1906 before succumbing to a spectacular fire. The old wooden lean-to at the back was a remnant of the earlier building, and housed the children's library started in 1935.



# A Literary Ramble

Early European settlers who came to New Zealand wanted to improve their lot so they turned to books to satisfy their thirst for knowledge. Nelson is home to the oldest library in New Zealand and our Literary Ramble celebrates this and some of the people who helped make books accessible for all in the past.

For more information on any of these sites or other heritage walks go to [www.nelsoncitycouncil.co.nz](http://www.nelsoncitycouncil.co.nz) (search phrase heritage trails). Details of many of the people noted can be found on [www.theprow.org.nz](http://www.theprow.org.nz)

