



Northern end of the rip-rap, edge of the Tug Wharf on the left, Kumutoto Park north in the distance.

Harbour Edge, Lambton Harbour

May 2020

1.0 Outline History

1.1. History

Private reclamation of Lambton Harbour began as early as the 1840s and the first official reclamation was undertaken by the Wellington Provincial Council in 1852. Reclamations took place regularly until the early 1900s, under the auspices of central, provincial and local government and the Wellington Harbour Board (WHB), after its formation in 1880. In the 1920s the WHB turned its attention to the north and undertook a large reclamation at Thorndon (Aotea Quay).

The WHB began planning new reclamations throughout Wellington after World War II. In 1948 it proposed, amongst other things, a major reclamation from the breastwork at Jervis and Customhouse Quays as far as the outer tee of Queens Wharf. This scheme did not proceed at that time and in that form but it set the scene for what was to follow.¹ Various iterations of this scheme were proposed over the next decade and a half.

The quays were one of the options investigated for a Wellington Urban Motorway by American consultants De Leuw Cather. Part of the reclamation would have been required for that. In the final report released in 1963, the route chosen was further inland on what was known as the foothills motorway.² Nevertheless, an entirely new main road was still planned on the reclamation east of the quays to carry traffic between Oriental Parade and Waterloo Quay.

From 1965, new schemes emerged, eventually nine in all. Three features were part of all of them – reclamation at Taranaki Street Wharf for a new roll-on/roll-off service to Australia, reclamation north and south of Queens Wharf (variations on the 1948 plan, complete with the new road) and a major reclamation alongside the Aotea Quay reclamation for the impending arrival of containerisation. The WHB and Wellington City Council (WCC) negotiated over the development, and assessed the options for many months, finally settling in July 1967 on a combination of two schemes (A and B), known as Lambton Harbour Development: Scheme H1.³ Costs were to be shared between the two entities, although these weren't settled for several years.

¹ See a series of plans in Reclamation: Wellington Harbour, 00009:22:173 Pt.1., Wellington City Archives (WCA)

² *Dominion*, 24 October 1963

³ Secretary, Wellington Harbour Board to Town Clerk, Wellington City Council, 26 July 1967, 00009:22:173 Pt.2. No plan is on this file showing the final form of H1, but a plan of the scheme as it stood 1971 was prepared (see image below).

Work could not proceed before the passing of the Wellington Harbour Board Loan and Empowering Act 1967, which gave the authority 'to reclaim land and to authorise and empower the Wellington Harbour Board to carry out certain harbour works and to borrow the sum of \$6,200,000'⁴ to undertake the work. The act was passed on 2 November.

Work on the reclamation was undertaken at Taranaki Street Wharf, beginning in 1967 and finishing the following year. Work soon began on the large reclamation on the other side of the harbour for containerisation, a project that became known as the Thorndon Reclamation.

Work to reclaim east of the quays was begun in 1969 but the issue of whether a road would ultimately be part of the final arrangement was not settled. The WCC would have to acquire the land, while the WHB could see no likelihood of work on the road beginning before 1980.⁵ Another vexed issue was the future sites of the Star Boating Club and Wellington Rowing Club buildings. In the meantime, the new land was to be made available for container storage. The first reclamation took place between the inner tee of Queens Wharf and the landward side of Taranaki Street Wharf,⁶ with the entrance to the latter used as the access point for trucks.⁷ Most of the water between these two points was gradually filled in, with the exception of a lagoon formed west of the northern end of Taranaki Street Wharf. The area just to the north of the lagoon was later turned into what became known as Frank Kitts Park; this started taking shape by late 1974. The WHB also dispensed with the row of timber sheds that lined Jervois Quay; they were demolished in 1973.⁸

Reclamation was also undertaken on the north side of Queens Wharf; by November 1971 it was extended as far as the Tug Wharf. A concrete walkway was built from Tug Wharf to Queens Wharf;⁹ with the port's gradual shift north to Aotea Quay, this was a concession to public use of an area increasingly less-used by shipping traffic. It was also an acknowledgement that there would be no road for some time. In one place, behind Shed 5 on Queens Wharf, the reclamation was formed directly behind the (landward side) of the building.

⁴ *Wellington Harbour Board Loan and Empowering Act 1967*

⁵ This date came to light in various communications between the two organisations in 1971. See, for example, 'Lambton Harbour Development and Waterfront Arterial Route (Scheme H1) – Basis of Agreement between Wellington Harbour Board and Wellington City Council (draft), 1 July 1971, 00009:22:173 Pt.2, WCA

⁶ Johnson, David 1996, *Wellington Harbour*, Wellington Maritime Museum Trust, Wellington p.389. The size of the Thorndon reclamation offered the future prospect of the

⁷ See image:

https://files.interpret.co.nz/Retrolens/Imagery/SN3185/Crown_3185_4234_13/High.jpg

⁸ See image 1/4-021362-F, Alexander Turnbull Library

⁹ See image: https://files.interpret.co.nz/Retrolens/Imagery/SN3496/Crown_3496_M_6/High.jpg

The reclamation fill came from a variety of sources, from subdivisions to specialist quarries. Much of it was free fill i.e. made available to the WHB at no cost bar the trucking. The finish to the seaward side of every section of reclamation during this period was rip-rap, which was composed of rocks that had to fit certain requirements. The rock was expected to be between 30 and 60 centimetres wide, 'hard, dense, durable, sound and free from uncemented joints. It shall be able to withstand the effects of all handling, marine abrasion and disintegration due to alternate wetting and drying by salt water. [...] Rocks are to be generally square, rectangular or oval in cross section with the least dimension not less than half of the greatest dimension.'¹⁰

The Kiwi Point Quarry, which provided some rip-rap to WHB reclamations, sourced its rip-rap from the rock that could not be crushed into a small enough size to fit through a 35-centimetre mesh. This leftover rock was usually much harder than typical greywacke.¹¹ The rip-rap in the inner-Lambton Harbour was entirely in place by the end of 1971. It has thus far proved durable and fit for purpose in resisting the sea and buttressing reclamation fill.

In the end, with most incoming and outgoing traffic using the new motorway (which opened as far as the southern end of the Terrace Tunnel in 1976) the road proposed for the reclamation did not proceed. The reclamations were not used for much more than car parking until 1989, when the southern portion of Lambton Harbour was handed over to Lambton Harbour Management, an arm of the WCC, following the disestablishment of the WHB as part of local authority restructuring. The waterfront was then gradually transformed through the removal, construction and restoration of buildings, and the provision of open spaces, sculptures, playgrounds and walking routes.

As part of this, there have been changes and additions to the rip-rap. In 2006, a Len Lye sculpture 'Water Whirler' was added to the rip-rap in front of Frank Kitts Park. In 2008, just north of the Meridian Building, the Kumutoto culvert was opened up and the fill and rip-rap removed to make way for a small inlet, landscaping and sculptures – Nga Kina by Michel Tuffery, added in 2012. The rip-rap also houses some of the sculptural quotations in concrete that form the Wellington Writers' Walk. Installation of these began in 2001.

Tug Wharf

¹⁰ Wellington Harbour Board Tender Notice, 'Thorndon Breastwork: Supply and Delivery of Rock Rip Rap, 31 October 1968, Supply of Material from Kiwi Point Quarry, Ngauranga for filling at Wellington Harbour Board Reclamation at Taranaki Street and Fryatt Quay, 00009:11:3/8/1 Pt.1, Wellington City Archives (WCA). This contract was different from the Lambton Harbour contracts but the requirements were essentially the same.

¹¹ Divisional Engineer to Town Clerk 'Disposal of "Rip-Rap" Rock: Kiwi Point Quarry', 30 May 1967, 00009:11:3/8/1 Pt.1, WCA

The walkway built in 1971 connected Queens Wharf with the Tug Wharf. This wharf was built in 1914 as Ferry Wharf No. 2, to relieve congestion at the neighbouring Ferry Wharf (now known as the Harbour Ferry Wharf). The wharf, of Australian hardwood, was built by Donald McLean & Co. Although it was built for ferries, the wharf was also used by tugs and other craft from the outset and by the 1930s it was generally known as the Tug Wharf.

Its incorporation into the walkway was afforded partly because the proximity of the reclamation meant that it was no longer possible to use the landward side of Tug Wharf. In 2008, a short portion of the walkway was replaced by a pedestrian bridge, built as part of the retail and public space re-development of Kumutoto Precinct (see above). In 2018, the creation of a park on the North Kumutoto site just to the north incorporated the wharf into that space via two short walkways. Vessels can still tie up to the seaward side of the wharf.

In 2018, the waterfront walk, including the hard, wharves and walkways, was officially named Ara Moana – ocean pathway.

Chronology, modifications

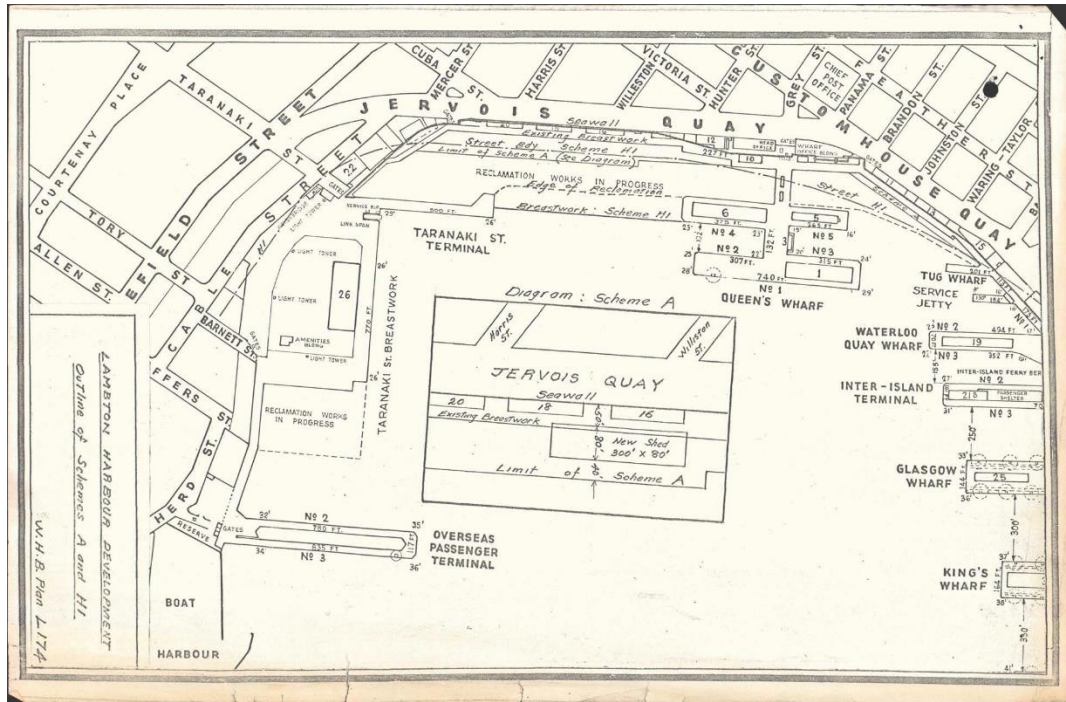
date	activity
1969	Work begins on reclamation between Taranaki Street Wharf and Tug Wharf
1971	Reclamation mostly completed and concrete walkway built from Tug Wharf to Queens Wharf.
By 1974	Reclamation finalised.
From 2001	Wellington Writers' Walk sculptures installed.
2006	Len Lye sculpture Water Whirl installed.
2008	Alterations to rip-rap at Kumutoto culvert exit as part of landscaping at the Kumutoto Precinct. Bridge inserted into walkway just south of Tug Wharf.
2012	Nga Kina sculpture by Michel Tuffery installed at Kumutoto culvert exit.
2018	Bridges built to link Tug Wharf to new park at North Kumutoto.



Above: Two details of an image taken in 1971 showing the formation of the new harbour edge, including the walkway from Tug Wharf (top). (EP-1971-5004-F 1971-1, Alexander Turnbull Library)



An aerial view of Lambton Harbour in 1971. (Courtesy of Retrolens)



Scheme H-1, as planned in 1971. (Wellington Harbour Reclamation 00009_22;173 Pt 2)

2.0 Location

2.1. Map



WCC Local Maps

2.2. Ownership

Owner: Wellington Waterfront Limited

Legal descriptions:

Lot 2 DP 436892

Lot 1 DP 490659

Part Bed Port Nicholson Survey Office Plan 34851 (Part Tug Wharf and walkway)

Lot 1 DP 440298; Lot 1 DP 66187; Lot 1 DP 66836; Sec 1 SO 34178 (walkway)

2.3. Listing

Not listed. (It is part of a Wellington Wharves Historic Area proposed for listing by Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga.)

3.0 Physical Description

3.1. Setting

The setting of the harbour edge, from the Ferry Terminal Building in the north to the pedestrian bridge that leads over to the outer end of the Taranaki Street Wharf, is as varied in its make-up as the edge itself. It consists (from the north) of open space for pedestrian use and carparking; sheltered tables and seating; timber decking; sculptures, the Meridian Building; the buildings of Queen's Wharf; Frank Kitts Park and children's play area; a wide promenade, and finally a lagoon. Encircling it all is the heavily trafficked Aotea Quay and high rise buildings that line it on the seaward edge of the central business district.

On the seaward side of the edge is the open sea of the inner harbour and the distant hills of Mt Victoria and the outer harbour.

3.2. Rip-rap, Tug Wharf

The harbour edge as defined here is basically the rip-rap that forms the outer edge of the land reclamation of this portion of the inner harbour,

The rip-rap has a chequered journey along this harbour edge, sometimes fully hidden under wharves, sometimes partially or fully exposed. It can be divided conveniently into three sections.

The northern section (see cover and photos 1 and 2), is visible alongside the Tug Wharf running to the sculpture of the giant green sea eggs known as Nga Kina, the work of Michel Tuffery, 2012.) The central section (see photo 3) runs alongside the Meridian Building and disappears under the Foxglove restaurant and then the grillage behind Shed 5 on Queens Wharf. The southern section (see photo 4) is a long straight length forming the outer edge of the promenade alongside Frank Kitts Park, clear of any wharfage. The Len Lye sculpture (Water Whirler, 2006) runs out into the harbour from near its northern end; the pier that supports the sculpture was designed by Athfield Architects. (See photo 5.)

The rip-rap varies somewhat in its make-up, but as described in the history section, its main component is large, angular and suitably durable rocks; they are not manually shaped or worked in any way, being loosely placed by machine. The colours, shapes and textures of the rocks vary, but altogether they make a suitably robust water's edge, resisting the action of the waves and vessels using the inner berthages. Sea birds and the occasional seal make use of the sheltered sanctuary of the rocks, and pohutukawa trees flourish in some places despite the apparent botanical bareness of the environment. (See photo 6.)

Generally, these loose rock 'structures' are formed in a pyramid shape on the sea floor; we see the seaward side but the landward side has been filled over or is otherwise hidden.

Also under consideration as 'harbour edge' are several of the structures that stand over the water. These include (adjacent to the northern section of rip-rap), the Tug Wharf; the two bridges joining the Tug Wharf to the landscaped area of Kumutoto North park to its landward side, and a third bridge (of 2008) joining to the breastwork to the east of the Meridian building.

Adjacent to the middle section of rip-rap is a length of breastwork running parallel with the Meridian building and including berthage for the Harbour Ferry, while the Len Lye sculpture is the only structure seaward of the southern section.

4.0 Evaluation of Significance

The assessment of significance that follows is based on the criteria in Policy 21 of the operative Regional Policy Statement (2013).

4.1. Historic Values

These relate to the history of a place and how it demonstrates important historical themes, events, people or experiences.

The line of reclamation, as represented by the rip-rap, has modest historic significance as the most recent extent of reclamation in Lambton Harbour. It has also served its purpose as a defence against the intrusion of the sea since it was formed.

The Tug Wharf (1914) is the smallest of a row of finger wharves on the north side of Lambton Harbour and has some historic significance for its century and more of use and its heavy timber construction. It is somewhat compromised now by the changes to its form and setting, particularly its incorporation into the waterfront walkway and Kumutoto North park, although this has added another layer to its history.

The walkway, built about 1971, is approximately the same age as the rip-rap, with the exception of the Kumutoto bridge (2008) and so has been in place now for some 50 years. It has some historic value for this period of use and the many people who have used it to move around the waterfront.

4.2. Physical Values

Architectural Values

The place is notable for its style, design, form, scale, materials, ornamentation, period, craftsmanship or other architectural values.

The architectural values of the harbour edge are not significant. Looking a bit wider, it is considered that these have modest aesthetic values, for the colours, textures and patterns of the rip-rap stones; and for the weathered hardwood timbers of the Tug Wharf and the Meridian breastwork.

Technological Values

The place provides evidence of the history of technological development or demonstrates innovation or important methods of construction or design.

There is some modest technological value in the rip-rap, as an engineered structure against the waves and tides, and also in the Tug Wharf and Meridian breastwork for their heavy timber construction.

Integrity

The significant physical values of the place have been largely unmodified.

The physical values of the rip-rap and the Meridian breastwork are largely unmodified, while the Tug Wharf itself has been considerably modified over time.

Age

The place is particularly old in the context of human occupation of the Wellington region.

None of these harbour-edge structures are particularly old; the exception is the Tug Wharf, built in 1914, so over 100 years old.

Group or Townscape Values

The place is strongly associated with other natural or cultural features in the landscape or townscape, and/or contributes to the heritage values of a wider townscape or landscape setting, and/or it is a landmark.

The harbour edge and the elements that make it up are part of a waterfront landscape that has been heavily adapted and modified over time so that today it accommodates a mixture of uses (recreational, artistic, commercial) that are significantly different from the former maritime uses that once dominated the area. Nevertheless, some elements such as the Tug Wharf remain from an earlier era of shipping, while nearby there are many potent reminders of this period; these include Sheds 3 and 5, and Queens Wharf itself.

4.3. Social Values

Sentiment

The place has strong or special associations with a particular cultural group or community.

Wellingtonians feel strongly about the importance of their harbour edge, and make good use of it for recreational, artistic and commercial purposes.

Recognition

The place is held in high public esteem for historic heritage values or contribution to the sense of identity of a community.

The waterfront in general is a place recognised by Wellingtonians for its heritage values and sense of place. The harbour edge forms part of that, and is well used by the populace for walking, commuting, dining and recreation..

4.4. Surroundings

The setting or context of the place contributes to an appreciation and understanding of its character, history and/or development.

The wider setting of the harbour, including the structures on the waterfront and the backdrop of hills and city buildings, all combine to contribute to the unique character of Wellington's waterfront. The harbour edge as discussed here is important as the inter-face between city and sea.

4.5. Rarity

The place is unique or rare within the district or region.

There is no other city / sea interface in the region that is as well-used or as visually interesting as Lambton Harbour's. The rip-rap plays a part in defining that feature.

4.6. Representativeness

The place is a good example of its type or era.

The rip-rap is a good example of its type, although as described it is of a very basic nature. The Tug Wharf and the breastwork in front of the Meridian Building are good examples of wharf construction of their respective times. With the long period of growth and change of the area, its varied composition, and the recent modern landscaping of Kumutoto North park, it is hard to attribute it to any particular era: if anything, it is of the modern era.

5.0 Recommendation

The Harbour Edge, Lambton Harbour, as defined here, does not meet the criteria to a sufficient degree to justify listing on the Greater Wellington Regional Plan.

Rationale

The Harbour Edge is a disparate 'place', made up of adjacent but not necessarily integrated components within the mean high water springs (MHWS). These components are part of a much larger entity, the 1969-1974 reclamation of Lambton Harbour, the last reclamation in this area. While there are clear heritage values associated with the reclamation and associated seaward structures, it does not make heritage sense to define an area within the MHWS that excludes the bulk of the reclamation. The fact that the rip-rap, itself an integral part of the reclamation, is divided by the limit of jurisdiction of the GWRC mitigates against a coherent heritage place listing.

6.0 Photographs



1 A portion of the northern rip-rap, with new rock laid over old rock.
Kumutoto North park beyond.



2 The southern end of the northern rip-rap.
Kumutoto North park and Nga Kina on the left, the Tug Wharf on the right.



3 The central section of the rip-rap, running alongside the Meridian Building.



4 The southern section of the rip-rap looking north towards Queen's Wharf. Frank Kitts Park on the left and Shed 6 in the distance.



5 The Len Lye sculpture Water Whirler, part of the southern section of rip-rap. The pier was designed by Athfield Architects.



6 Detail of the rocks of the southern section of the rip-rap.
All photos, June 2020.