

Finding Wellington's walking paths

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Paths for walkers

For the walker, Wellington is city of connections. Numerous pedestrian paths connect streets in the central business district and the suburbs, providing shortcuts and quiet interludes for those who get round on foot. Some of the paths are easy to find because they are well signposted and marked on maps. Others, however, lack signposts, have entrances that appear private, and are not on maps. Wellington could become even more walker-friendly by increasing the visibility of these paths. In this document, which arose from a talk I gave to Living Streets Aotearoa Wellington in March 2007, I suggest ways this could be done, using examples mainly from Karori. I confine my topic to urban paths -- that is, those connecting streets -- rather than the hiking tracks in the surrounding hills.



A path joining Hathaway Avenue and South Karori Road crosses the Karori Stream.

Signs

The key way to find the paths is to see them as you walk around. Some paths, such as those on Victory and Sunshine Avenue, have excellent signs, saying "Pedestrian access to ...". More often, though, paths are not signposted. And where a path comes off a street that is a dead end for motorists, there is an off-putting No Exit sign.



From Bourbon Terrace, steps take you to Croydon St, but this notice at the intersection of Campbell Street and Bourbon Terrace implies a dead end for both motorists and walkers.

Maps: hard copy

You can also find paths by looking at maps. An excellent hard-copy map for this purpose is *Kiwimaps: Wellington 2007*. This marks most paths, at least in Karori, but as the paths are mostly not named or indexed, you have to look closely at the maps to find them.



Excerpt from KiwiMap's map of Karori. I have ringed a path that connects Hazlewood Avenue to South Karori Road.

For Newtown and Berhampore, a walking map has been prepared, sponsored by Living Streets Aotearoa, Wellington City Council, and the Health Sponsorship Council. A link to an on-line PDF file of this map is at

<http://www.livingstreets.org.nz/wellington.html#maps>



Excerpt from the Newtown & Berhampore walking map. This marks pedestrian routes, distinguishing between those that are sealed (solid green line), unsealed (dotted green), and stairs. It also marks Wellington City walkways (dotted green line on yellow).

Maps: on-line

In contrast to Kiwimaps, the on-line maps I found are more oriented to motorists than walkers, and generally do not mark paths. They are, however, useful for such purposes, as documenting paths you have found, and printing small excerpts to take with you while walking.

The Wellington City Council has links to several on-line maps:

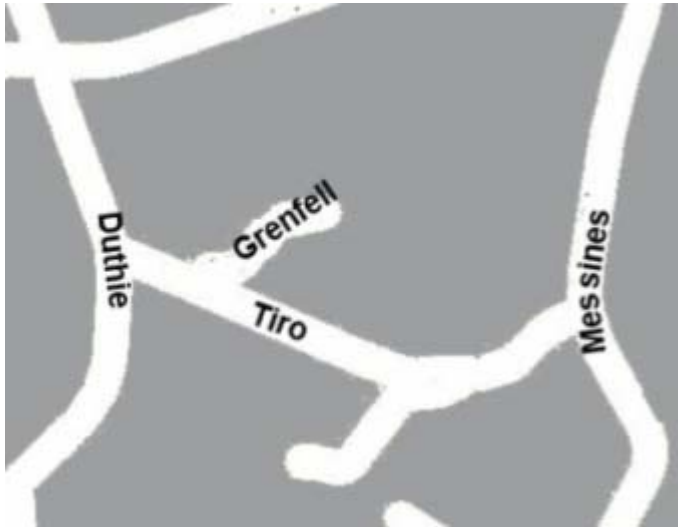
<http://www.wellington.govt.nz/maps/index.html>

Another useful on-line map is Smaps:

<http://www.smeps.co.nz>

You need to be aware that these on-line maps sometimes have errors when a street has pedestrian-only access in the middle, as in Tiro Street in Karori and Douglas Street in Mt Cook, Wellington. The maps incorrectly mark these streets as accessible to through traffic.

Excerpt from the on-line Smaps (below). The middle of Tiro Street is in fact a rough bush track (right).



Another set of on-line maps is the Wellington City Council's District Plan maps. These large PDF files are available at:

<http://wellington.govt.nz/plans/district/volume3/vol3.html>

These maps are difficult to use because of the size of the files, but they mark most paths, and provide information you can't always easily get elsewhere, such as the names of streams.

How can the visibility of Wellington's paths be improved?

Signs: Perhaps the most important way the visibility of our paths could be enhanced is through enhanced signage. Paths should have signs at each end, and those signs indicating a street is dead-end to motorists should be revised.



A mock-up of the signs that could be placed on Bourbon Terrace where it joins Campbell Street. The middle sign indicates that there is a path from Bourbon Street to Croydon Street. The lowest sign makes clear that "No exit" applies only to vehicles.

Maps: Maps could also be enhanced in a way that would give paths more status and visibility. First, on-line maps would include paths. After all, walkers as well as

motorists use the maps, and hence are exposed to the advertising that pays for them. Second, more walking maps, like the one for Newtown and Berhampore noted above, could be produced.

Naming paths: An approach which would increase the effectiveness of more and better signs and maps would be to name more of the major paths. Some paths in Wellington are already named, such as Allenby Terrace in the central city, and Irvine Street in Aro Valley. Karori has a number of paths that deserve a formal name. The most obvious is the combination of steps and sealed paths connecting Birdwood Street, Espin Crescent, Ponsonby Road and Messines Road. This, or at least its lower part, is commonly referred to as the Birdwood Street Steps, but this does not appear to be an official name, and does not appear on most maps.

Legal aspects: Behind the matters canvassed here lie legal issues -- for example, whether a path is official or informal. This is clearly a matter the Wellington City Council would have to consider if it takes up the suggestions here.

A list of Karori paths

Improving the status and visibility of paths for walkers as outlined here would take time and money. In the meantime, here is a list of over 30 paths in Karori:

http://www.livingstreets.org.nz/karori_shortcuts.htm

If you would like to amend this list or add to it, you can contact me at the email address included with the list.