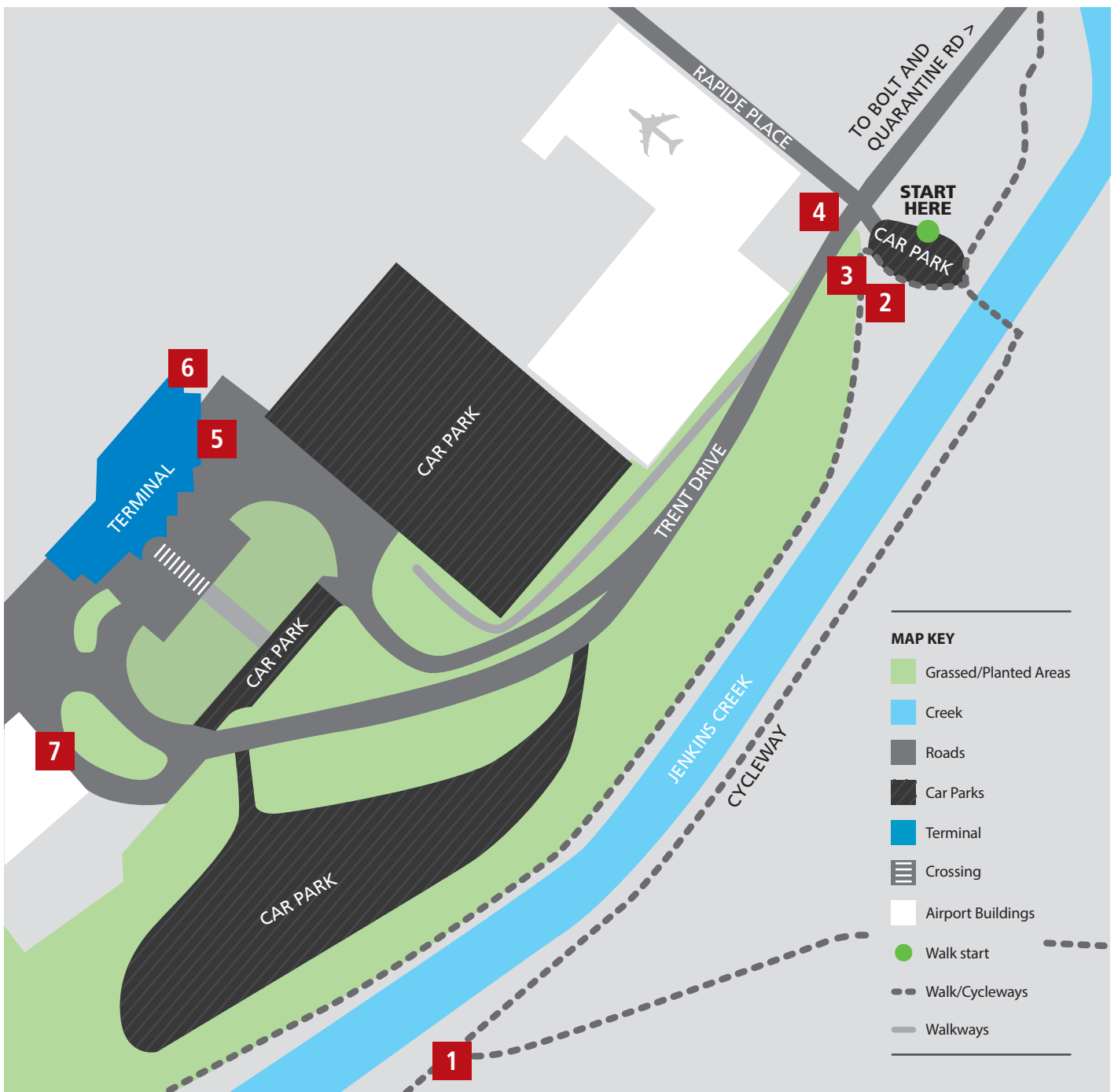




Airport History Walk

Nelson Airport is one of New Zealand's busiest airports serving more than 750,000 passengers annually. Nelson Airport celebrated its 75th anniversary in 2014. See the Story of Nelson Aviation by Richard Waugh and Graeme McConnell for a comprehensive history.

More free walk guides, such as Art at the Airport, can be found on the council website or in print at our Service Centre. More stories about our history can be found on www.theprow.org.nz.



Airport Walk



A history panel looking over the airport terminal and land **1** tells the story of the development Nelson Airport. Photographs on the panel include an image of the first aircraft to land in Nelson in 1921, chartered by Nelson transport pioneer Tom Newman of Newman Brothers fame.

When Nelson's new 'Class A' airport at Tahunanui opened in 1938, close to the city centre, it was a key milestone for the region's social, economic and tourism future. The Nelson airport is built across 800 acres of reclaimed land, after a stop bank was built at the northeast end of mudflats in the Haven.

It replaced a previous small airport at Stoke airport, where Cook Strait Airways pioneered the first air services to link the South and North Islands, and ran scheduled flights from 1935.

Flying was considered very safe. The first crash involving civilians and associated with regular passenger air services happened near Nelson. A Lockheed aircraft crashed into Mt. Richmond in murky weather. There were no survivors. See the memorial here **2**. Other crashes led to improved industry regulation, including more rigorous in-flight safety procedures for commercial pilots, and better aircraft and ground navigation aids. In 1948 a government commission recommended restructuring civil aviation.

The Trent memorial **3** tells the story of Nelson College old boy Leonard Trent, who was awarded the DFC for courage, determination and leadership during the battle of Flanders in 1940. Trent Drive is named after him.

Nelson airport was home to the Royal New Zealand Air Force (RNZAF) Station Nelson (1941-1946) remembered in a plaque **4** laid in February 2000. After war was announced in 1939, New Zealand government was in a state of emergency. Nelson Airport and civilian aircraft based there were taken over and a general air squadron was based here from 1940. Runways and buildings were constructed as a result. At the end of the

war, some useful infrastructure remained ready for use by the New Zealand National Airways Corporation (NAC), which was the national domestic airline of New Zealand from 1947 until 1978 when it amalgamated with New Zealand's international airline, Air New Zealand.

In 1956 a joint venture between Nelson City Council and the Government was signed to manage the airport. The third terminal was opened in 1975, in the position of the present terminal. The Airport has added artworks in successive upgrades, examples of which are Pacific Angel by Vincent Bhodhi, **5** and work by Darryl Frost which are near the side entrance and the stairs to the observation platform **6**. A good view of the runways and surrounding landscape can be enjoyed here.

Runway extensions are often talked about, as larger planes could increase visitor numbers and affect costs and efficiencies. In 1984 an extension proposal was approved but then it failed to get government funding approval as it was felt it was a considerable cost to Air New Zealand and the nation, and did not meet the 10% return on investment.

The fight over control of air routes is ongoing as recorded in the "History of Nelson Aviation". The number of airlines grew, especially after 1983, when the Government deregulated the airline industry. Air Nelson and Origin Pacific Airways both had their beginnings here. In recent decades Nelson Airport has become the main commercial aviation centre for the upper South Island and a base for New Zealand's largest regional airline. Important helicopter work is also based here.

Nelson-based Origin Pacific Airways operated 1997-2006 from terminal **7** and it was the first New Zealand airline to introduce ticketless travel which is now the norm for us today. The future for air travel looks bright in 2015 as the airport is set to welcome more regional airline services to operate from our airport.