



## *Reclamations in Lambton Harbour*

If we look at a map of Wellington City some of its oldest streets – Lambton and Thorndon Quays – are seen to be some distance from the waterfront. Just how much of Wellington has been reclaimed from the sea becomes more obvious when a map of the wharves in Lambton Harbour also shows the 1840 shoreline as a dotted line:

Land was scarce in Wellington from the beginning, when 1100 town-acre lots were pegged out in 1840, with few spaces for public buildings or parks, and public access to the harbour restricted to the northern end of the town. The need for expansion out into the harbour was soon realised, although the small reclamations carried out in the early years were private concerns, as were the first wharves.

It was in the 1850s that the first sizable reclamations took place, starting in 1852 with a 360 ft x 100 ft extension below Willis Street built by C R Carter (who did much of the early reclamation and seawall work). By the end of the 1870s some 70 acres of land had been reclaimed by the government, provincial and city councils, using spoil from the hills behind Lambton Quay and from Wadestown Hill, and the new seawalls ran almost in a straight line from the bottom of Willis Street to Pipitea Point. The first deep water wharves had been constructed in the area that became Queens Wharf, the first pile being driven in 1862, but most of the Te Aro foreshore and its wharves remained privately owned.

The years from 1880, when the Wellington Harbour Board was formed, to the turn of the century saw some major developments, including reclamation north of Pipitea for railway land, and south of Queens Wharf the Te Aro area was extended seaward with reclamations carried out by the city council, removing the last vestiges of private ownership of the foreshore. By the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the 1840 shoreline had disappeared.

The following 30 years saw further reclamations for railways and harbour board purposes, additional wharves, the seawall at Oriental Bay built and the construction of a boat harbour at Clyde Quay.

The next and final phase of reclamation in Lambton Harbour took place in the 1960s and 1970s; when new methods of cargo handling – containerisation and roll-on/roll-off cargoes – required more land adjacent to ships' berths. Reclamation was carried out on both sides of Queens Wharf and, most significantly, the container terminal was created by a large reclamation at Thorndon (the first container ship berthed on 19 June 1971). Today the terminal has 24.3 hectares of back-up space capable of holding some 6,284 containers.

To trace the original shoreline in Lambton Harbour the Historic Places Trust has placed 14 plaques around the city, from the site of Pipitea Point (south side of Davis Street and Thorndon Quay, in the Railways shunting yards) along Lambton Quay, through Mercer Street, Lower Cuba Street, and Wakefield Street to Oriental Parade at the northern corner of Herd Street. A look at some of these plaques is a reminder of how much the

development of Wellington City owes to the reclamations carried out over the past 150 years.