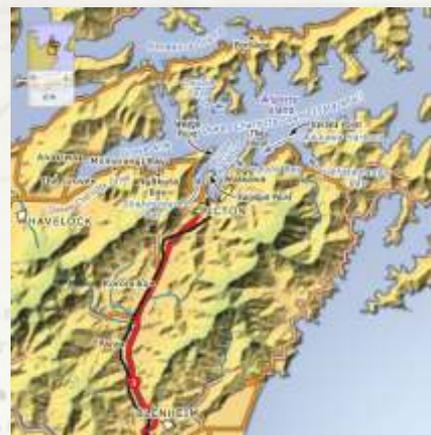## Picton

The picturesque seaside town of Picton is the South Island base for the ferry service that links the main islands of New Zealand. It's also the gateway to the marine, forest and island attractions of the Marlborough Sounds. Built around a very sheltered harbour, the town has an attractive seafront dotted with cafés, restaurants and various types of galleries. There's also a floating maritime museum and an aquarium. Local operators can take you cruising, fishing, dolphin watching or sea kayaking. The Queen Charlotte Track is a major local attraction; you can conquer it on foot or on a mountain bike

Picton is a town in the Marlborough Region of New Zealand's South Island. The town is located near the head of the Queen Charlotte Sound, 25 km (16 mi) north of Blenheim and 65 km (40 mi) east of Wellington. Waikawa lies just north-east of Picton, and is often considered to be contiguous part of Picton.

Picton is a major hub in New Zealand's transport network, connecting the South Island road and rail network with ferries across Cook Strait to Wellington and the North Island. The town has a population of 4,310 (June 2014 estimate),[1] making it the second-largest town in the Marlborough Region behind Blenheim.

The famous author Katherine Mansfield spent time in Picton where her grandparents, Arthur and Mary Beauchamp, and her father Harold, lived for some time when they came from Australia. She included a reference to the port in her short story "The Voyage" (in the collection The Garden Party), which is "an account of a trip to Picton from Wellington on the Cook Strait ferry".

Picton and harbour, circa1930s-1940s

William Fox painted the watercolour of Waitohi, now Picton, in 1848 (top image). In Fox's picture the two main arms of Picton Harbour (the harbour itself and Shakespeare Bay) are in the left foreground, and the Te Āti Awa settlement of Waitohi is at the head of the harbour (bottom left). The bottom picture, taken from the air in 2010, is oriented north rather than north-west, and the shoreline is much changed, but it is not difficult to make connections with the earlier image. Rail yards occupy what was one arm of Picton Harbour. A marina and domain occupy the other arm, and the town of Picton fills what was once open country.

New Zealand's – first motel opened in the summer of 1951–52; this one was photographed in 1958. New Zealand motel units, with their own kitchens, bathrooms and car parking, had amenities which the hotels of the time lacked.

Picton freezing works, 1902

Picton's freezing works commenced operations in the 1900–1 season and was a major employer in the town. Its harbour-front location was common for such works, facilitating the shipping of the frozen carcasses. The Edwin Fox sailing ship – the centre of a Picton museum in the 2000s – is visible in the centre of the picture. The boilers used in the freezing works came from the Edwin Fox. The works closed in 1983.

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The site of modern day Picton was originally a Maori Pa (fortified village) called Waitohi or Te Wera O Waitohi. The name Waitohi means Wai or water and Tohi - the Tohi ritual in which tohunga (Maori Priest) dipped Karamu branches in the sacred stream and brushed the right shoulder, of warriors before battle.
This rite was last performed on soldiers preparing to leave with the 28th Maori Battalion in WW2. Another, discredited explanation, recalls Te Weranga o Waitohi, Te Rauparaha's sister who is reputed to have died in a scrub fire.
It is believed that this village had existed for more than 300 years before Francis Dillon Bell and Sir George Grey (the then governor of New Zealand) purchased the land in 1844 and helped the local Maori re-locate their pa to Waikawa Bay.

Pukapuka a Ruri a te whenua i tikua ai e nga tangata Maori o Waitohi a te Quini Wikitoria 4 Maehe 1850.
[Map of the land given by the Maori of Waitohi to Queen Victoria, 4 March 1850] (Signed) M. Richmond, Supt. F D Bell, Resident Agent NZ Land Co.

The site of Picton was first surveyed in 1849 and the new town was called Newton. However, over the next ten years the town was known by many names, until finally its was named Picton in 1859 in memory of Sir Thomas Picton, a British Army general and hero of the Battle of Waterloo. Sir Thomas never came to Picton, nor had any links with it, but this way of naming places was typical of colonial times.

At the time Marlborough separated from Nelson and became a province in 1859, central Government decided to name the two main Marlborough towns Picton and Blenheim. Picton became the capital of Marlborough until 1865.

Marlboroughs first provincial hospital, built in Picton in 1865

Thomas Picton was born in 1758 in Wales and became a life-long soldier. He fought in the American War of Independence, in the West Indies and in 1801 became the Governor of Trinidad. He was thanked seven times by the English Parliament for bravery in the Peninsular War in Spain, and knighted for his services in the army. He conducted the siege of Badajoz in Spain, where many lives were lost. The Duke of Wellington, after whom Wellington is named, and who later was responsible for defeating Napoleon Bonaparte in the battle of Waterloo, wanted Sir Thomas Picton to join his forces. He considered him to be 'a rough-mouthed devil' but had confidence in his ability as a soldier and leader, and in 1815 gave him a high command in his army after Napoleon returned from Elba.

Long-winded
In 1865 the Marlborough provincial council debated holding its sessions in Blenheim, not Picton. Determined to keep the council in Picton, councillor Arthur Beauchamp, grandfather of Katherine Mansfield, engaged in an unsuccessful stonewall by speaking for 10 hours and 40 minutes, concluding by saying, 'With these preliminary remarks I will now proceed to speak to the matter under discussion.' At the end he collapsed and had to be carried from the chamber.

Seriously hurt two days before in an earlier battle, Sir Thomas kept his wounds secret because he wanted to fight at Waterloo against Napoleon. Sir Thomas Picton's uniform did not arrive in time for the battle so it is said that he fought in civilian clothes and a top hat. He was killed by a shot through the temple from a musket ball while leading his brigade to the charge.

The defeat of Napoleon at the battle of Waterloo in 1815 and his exile to St Helena allowed the British nation to gain supremacy for around 100 years following, and ensured a relatively peaceful Europe. Britain established an Empire including countries like India, Australia, Canada and New Zealand, all of which are now independent. Many New Zealanders are descended from English migrants and for years still thought of England as 'Home' and talked about the 'Old Country', especially during the South African ('Boer') War and World Wars I and II.
Picton's situation was revolutionised with the introduction of the roll-on, roll-off Cook Strait ferry in 1962. It became a 'station' on both the road and rail main trunk routes. This had less effect on the permanent population (2,315 in 1961, 3,220 in 1981) than on the transient population and on employment. On census night 2013 Picton housed 4,752 people, but had 4,053 residents. Over 40% of Picton's workforce worked in accommodation, transport, rental, hiring and real estate, compared with 12.7% nationally.

Picton is not the only town named after Sir Thomas Picton, there is also a Picton in New South Wales, Australia, and one in Canada.

Picton Fairgrounds, circa 1918