

Leading Lights

1. Nick Fisher/Andrew Hamer

Heart specialists Nick Fisher and Andrew Hamer have turned Nelson into a centre of cardiology expertise with their practice, Top of the South Cardiology. Fisher, the 42-year-old former Royal Navy surgeon and cardiologist for the British armed forces, and 48-year-old Hamer have created their own specialist department running parallel to general medicine. Fisher says he wants to make Nelson Hospital's cardiac care services world-class, while Hamer, leader of the National Cardiac Clinical Network, spends a day a week with the Ministry of Health on cardiac service development.



2. Lester Binns

Binns is extra proof that you don't have to be in a big city to create and run a successful national business. Binns is the founder and chief executive of MyTax, which runs a tax refund service and call centre out of Nelson, employing 20 staff. Binns says his business is better and more profitable than it would be in Auckland because retaining staff is easy, overheads are lower, Nelson is centrally sited for travelling and he enjoys a work-life balance he wouldn't find in a big centre.



3. Cameron Lawes

An unusual combination of barrister and ultra-marathon runner, Lawes is a Wellington-trained lawyer who worked in the UK for 15 years, becoming a senior equity partner in the London office of a top international law firm. But he has eschewed the high-flying life to return to New Zealand, creating the Nelson firm of Resolution Chambers. When he's not practising law, Lawes climbs mountains and runs through scorching hot deserts on ultra-marathons. He's run multiday ultra-marathons (250km each) across the Sahara, Gobi, Atacama, Jordanian and Namibian deserts. He and wife Nicki have also bought the Cable Bay café.



4. Christopher Rodley

Another of Nelson's bright minds, Rodley, a fourth-generation Nelsonian, was a finalist in the New Zealander of the Year innovation category in 2014. He's the founder and CEO of Snap Information Technologies Ltd (SnapIT) and drives the basic "ideas" for brother Andrew and father David to shape. The company has designed a camera that can record and display ultra high-quality, 360-degree images with no blindspots, and provide live images via the internet. The company is working to commercialise its technology worldwide.



5. JS Parker

John Shotton Parker may not be a household name, even in home-town Blenheim, but he is regarded as one of New Zealand's most important abstract painters and has been named as the 2014 Marlborough Living Cultural Treasure. Parker, 70, has been described in the AKL World Biographical Dictionary of Artists as "one of the most substantial New Zealand painters of his generation". He's best-known for his richly worked impasto oil paintings, his superb skill with colour, and his ability to capture the essence of light.



6. Joy Cowley

Celebrated author Joy Cowley, who lives in the Marlborough Sounds, has written 600 books for all ages, but is best-loved for her children's stories. She has written a remarkable range of children's books and stories, often illustrated by renowned artists. In 2005, Joy Cowley was made a Distinguished Companion of New Zealand Order of Merit for services to children's literature, and in 2010 she was awarded a Prime Minister's Award for Literary Achievement in fiction.



7. Leon MacDonald

In his fifth year as assistant coach of the Tasman Makos, the former All Black fullback seems destined for greater honours. "Rangi" has been learning his trade alongside master coach Kieran Keane, who he's known since playing for the coach at Marlborough Boys College. Keane has big wraps on his protégé and MacDonald's talents were recognised when he was appointed backline coach for the NZ Under-20s in the Junior World Cup.



8. John-Paul Pochin

Making a name for himself as a portrait, event and commercial photographer, J-P is perhaps best-known as co-founder (with Anne Rush) of Light Nelson, the fabulous illuminated installations that have enchanted night-time crowds in Queens Gardens, Albion Square and at NMIT for the last two years, gaining a huge following.



9. Jo Edwards

Edwards has been inspiring Top of the South bowlers for years, such is her consistent high performance on the world stage. Her latest winning feats were in Glasgow at the Commonwealth Games, where she claimed gold in the women's singles. Her United Bowling Club produced two other bowls medallists at the Games, Val Smith and Amy McIlroy.



10. Jamie, Natalia Harrington

Another couple who came to Nelson from Britain (in 2004), starting their Hybrid Homes & Living business to design a healthier, warmer and more affordable style of housing. With their emphasis on homes using eco-building materials and design, they've won numerous awards and have taken their business national.

