

Observatory In King Edward Park Opened

Handed over to Hawera council.

More than 14 months of voluntary labour culminated last night in the official opening of the Hawera Astronomical Society's observatory. The director of the Carter Observatory, Wellington, Mr I. L. Thomsen declared the observatory open after the building and instruments had been formerly handed over to the Hawera Borough Council by Mr. N. R. Burrell.

The telescope, a five-inch reflecting instrument, together with its equatorial, was originally the property of the late Mr. A. W. Burrell, Stratford. It was donated to the borough council for the use of the society by his son.

Tracing the society's history, the president, Mr. D. G. Smart, said the whole project followed a series of lectures given 14 months by Mr H. Townsend, Hawera, an amateur astronomer of considerable repute. His lectures raised so much enthusiasm that the formation of the society followed and the donation of a telescope made the construction of an observatory desirable.

The Hawera Borough Council had made the disused bandstand in King Edward Park available together with certain materials and also made some alterations to the building. The society had provided the dome, which was constructed and erected by voluntary labour.

Asset To Community.

Mr Smart said he hoped the observatory would be an educational and cultural asset to the community and the young people of the district would take an active interest in it.

Mr Burrell described the telescope, the observatory his father had erected at Stratford and the construction of the equatorial. This latter instrument was so accurate that stars, the position of which were known, could be picked up in broad daylight.

The mayor of Hawera, Mr. L. H. Clapham, accepted the observatory on behalf of the council and citizens. He was sure the people of Hawera would be proud of what the society had created.

Mr Thomsen expressed the hope that the council and astronomical society would in time realise the tremendous public good that had been done. The observatory should provide for an essential part of the leisure of the people of the district.

It was not possible to use the telescope because of the prevailing weather conditions, and the evening concluded with an address by Mr. Thomsen on a trip to America on a scholarship and travel grant. Descriptions of the major American observatories he had visited were illustrated by lantern slides.