

TON 26 MAY 2014

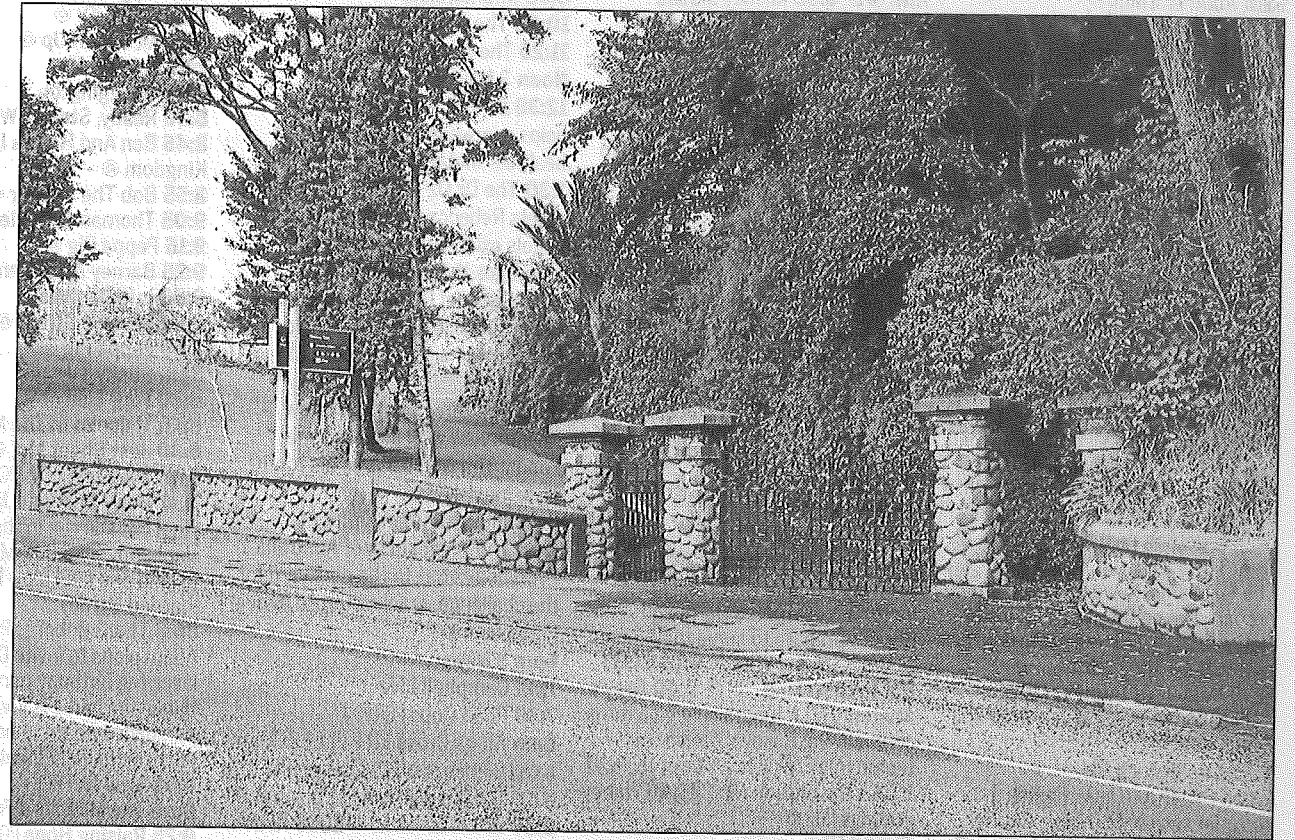
Of passing interest

Historical features in our landscape observed by the director of Puke Ariki
Kelvin Day.

Western Park, New Plymouth

Many of the amenities that the New Plymouth community enjoy began as the result of the work of a small, dedicated group of citizens. Places such as the Huatoki Domain, Barrett Domain and Lynmouth Park fall into this category. Another is Western Park.

In 1904 the Western Park Committee was established to develop an area of land between Morley St and Cutfield Rd. The area had originally been set aside as an Education Reserve, but surveyor William Skinner arranged for it to be swapped for the land known as Poverty Flat, where Central School is now situated. His brother, Thomas Kingwell Skinner, who was also a surveyor, laid out the plan for the park. Over the years various fundraising events were held for development work at the park. In September 1906 there was a brief period of excitement when a prisoner working on the park



escaped from his work gang only to be captured a few hours later.

Two years later New Plymouth architect Frank Messenger designed gates, estimated to cost £45, to Western Park from Morley St. They were paid for from subscriptions and fundraising events. In the 1920s the greens of the bowling club were

established and in 1922 unemployed labour was used to undertake further development.

On March 15, 1930, a crowd of between 6000 and 7000 gathered at Western Park to witness the boxing match between Waitara's Tommy Donovan and American Pete Sarron. The fight ended

controversially when Donovan was declared the winner despite having been repeatedly knocked down by his opponent.

Eventually the park was taken over by the New Plymouth Borough Council. In more recent times the high point was named Churchill Heights.