

## LEISURE

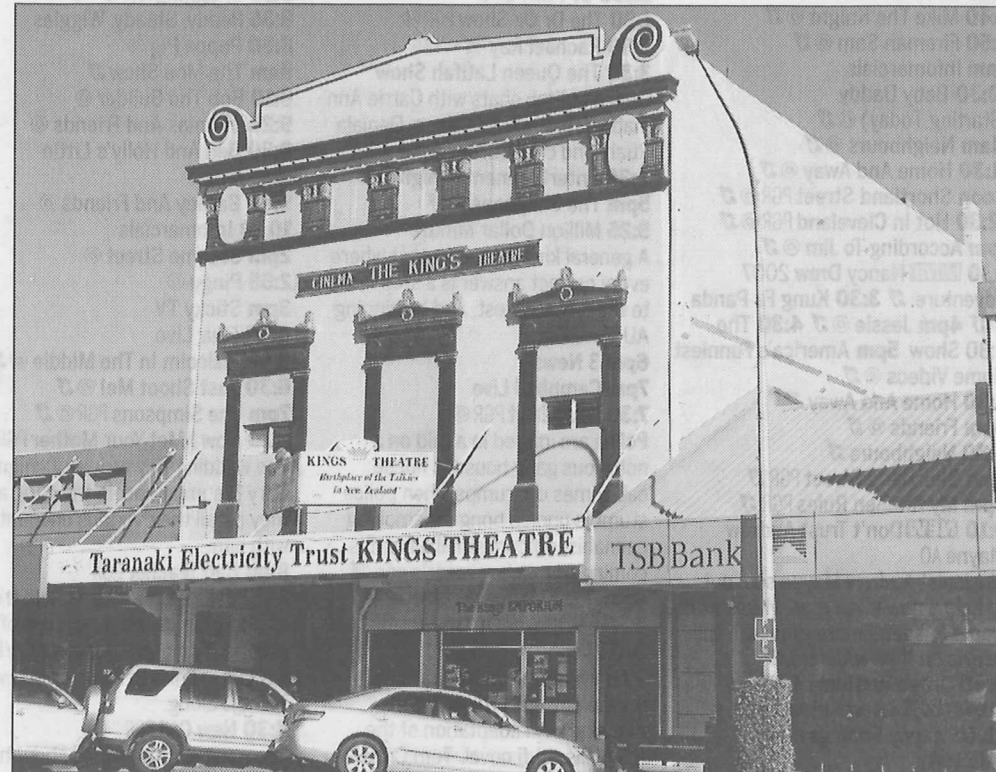
## Of passing interest

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

## TET King's Theatre, Stratford

One of the larger buildings on Stratford's Broadway is the TET King's Theatre. Opened on New Year's Eve in 1917 the idea for the theatre arose from a meeting in June 1916 after which four local businessmen formed Stratford Pictures and Amusements Ltd.

The building had marble stairs, ornate scrolls with plaster eagles, laurel wreaths and flaming electric torches along with a giant plaster dome in the auditorium. David Walter, in his Stratford Shakespearian town under the mountain,



notes that it was an "Edwardian masterpiece". As was the custom of the time, live music accompanied the screening of silent films. However, on February 2, 1925, the first

"talkie" to be screened in the southern hemisphere was shown in Stratford's King Theatre. This was thanks to the Stratford Pictures and Amusements Ltd chairman, William

Kirkwood, having the foresight to buy the Australasian rights to the Phonofilm system. It was to be another four years before talkies were regularly screened at the Stratford theatre. Over

the years, the theatre's fortunes have waxed and waned thanks to the quality of the films shown, advent of television and later home videos and DVDs.

By the mid-1980s the then-owners of the building, Pacer-Kerridge, virtually abandoned it. Fortunately, several people recognised the value of the facility and formed The Theatre Trust in 1991. Fundraising began with strong community support along with financial support from the Stratford District Council, TSB Community Trust and Lotteries, which allowed for the necessary building alterations to take place.

At the beginning of 1992, film screenings returned to Stratford.

When it reopened, the complex was known as Petrocorp Kings, acknowledging the energy exploration company's sponsorship. Later the naming rights changed to Fletcher Challenge Kings and in 2000 it became known as TET Kings after the local electricity trust assumed a major sponsorship role.