

Remember the hilarious story of the toilet in an obscure European town which was made into a film and shown on television a few years ago?

Well, New Plymouth had its own rival to "Clochemerle".

The strange-looking building (pictured) was a men's toilet in Brougham St, called in those days "the underground gentlemen's conveniences".

At the turn of the century the men of the borough had often found themselves caught short of adequate facilities.

The council came to their rescue, announcing it would erect suitable accommodation in the centre of town.

Tender womenfolk almost swooned at the thought of such a contraption, while the businessmen blushed.

Their blushes became rage. "Not here," they thundered. The council, however, im-

And speaking of underground, remember this ... ?

ported the necessary sanitary-ware in 1914, but then stalled on the project.

It deferred things again in 1919, expressing shock that the estimated cost had climbed to almost \$1000.

Rather unwisely, the council chose Brougham St as the site — several legal firms had offices there.

Soon the matter was taken to court but the judge refused the injunction concerning "placing a toilet equi-distant

between properties on either side of the street."

The council decided to let tempers cool. Three years later, in 1922, when it considered placing the toilet nearer one footpath than the other it was threatened with legal action again.

Ever prudent, the council tried unsuccessfully to have the Municipal Association fight the issue as a test case. Shortly afterwards the

council accepted a tender of \$1135 for the construction of the toilet, to be erected "on a site in Brougham St to be determined by a committee".

Construction started two days later.

New Plymouth's battle of the toilet was over, but it flared again briefly — this time because some people wanted it kept — when the city council decided in August, 1970, to demolish it.

The council announced it intended to carry out the demolition "forthwith" — and this it did.

In contrast, when the good womenfolk of the town sought central restrooms in 1934 the council quickly obliged.

There was no fuss about the site (over the town's original septic tank) and when the building opened in May, 1936, it was described as something that added "charm" to the commercial centre of town.

