



The Waitara Hotel comes down after more than 100 years of serving up cold ones to the town's inhabitants.

Photo: BRADLEY AMBROSE

# Time called on Waitara Hotel

By **HARRIET PALMER**

[harriet.palmer@tnl.co.nz](mailto:harriet.palmer@tnl.co.nz)

THERE may have been a few tears shed as the ramshackle Waitara Hotel came tumbling down.

But as community board member and witness to the hotel's final moments Ken Bedford said, it's time the community looked to the future.

There were 30 or so people gathered at the site of the hotel yesterday morning as the structure, owned by the New Plymouth District Council, was demolished.

The hotel, which is more than 100 years old, has greeted people as they have driven into the town for as long as Mr Bedford could

remember. "It'll be a bit of a shock it not being there," Mr Bedford said.

"But it will be an improvement to the entrance way to the town."

Mr Bedford had sat at the bar a number of times, and said there were quite a few characters who would pop in for a cold one.

"Perhaps it could be called an icon of Waitara," he said.

"There may be some sad emotions but we are looking to the future."

The council bought the hotel last November after lobbying by the community board which saw it as an eyesore.

Despite the age of the hotel — it was opened in 1870 — it had been altered and moved too many times to be considered

historic. Council project manager Jeff Bondy said the demolition work was on schedule and the next task would be to empty and fill in a cellar that may contain pieces of asbestos.

"The contract finishes in 40 days but it's way ahead of schedule," Mr Bondy said.

Anyone thinking there may be a few treasures in the cellar would probably be disappointed.

"I wouldn't bet my socks on it," Mr Bondy said.

"There's just rubbish."

The site of the hotel would be cleared and grassed as an extension of the West Quay complex, with potential for development at a later stage.