

Of passing interest

Historic features in our landscape observed by Puke Ariki heritage collections manager Kelvin Day.

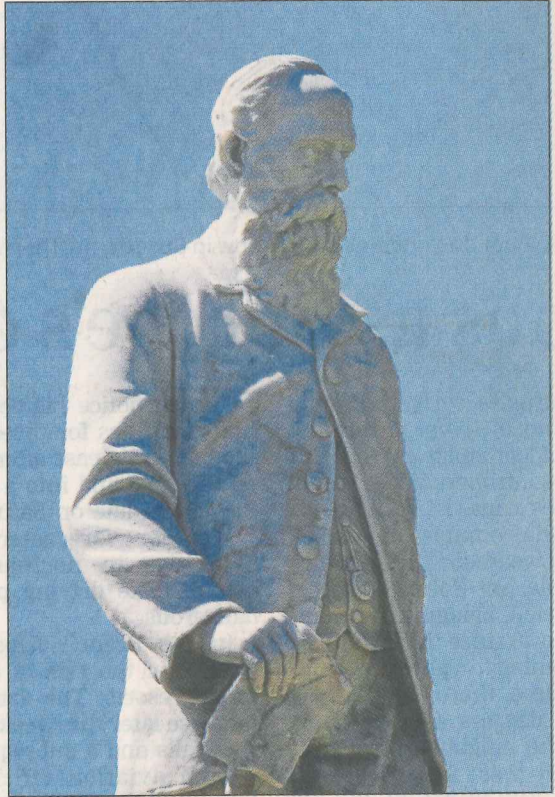
Arthur Albert Fantham statue, Hawera

Watching over visitors to Hawera's King Edward Park is a larger-than-life marble statue of Arthur Albert Fantham.

Fantham was born in the town of Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire, England, in 1842. The Fantham family migrated to New Zealand in 1851, arriving at Lyttelton. In early adulthood, Fantham established a name for himself as a breeder of quality shorthorn cattle.

Fantham, his wife, Mary, and their young family moved to a 320-hectare property near Cambridge in 1876. Here he continued to breed quality cattle and also allowed his property to be used by groups such as the Pakuranga Hunt Club and the Waikato Turf Club, thus ensuring he mixed with the gentry.

The family moved again in 1881, this time to a 400ha, well-developed property known as Egmont View on the northern outskirts of Hawera. He became an auctioneer, joined a number of organisations and tried unsuccessfully to unseat Major Harry Atkinson in 1884 from his parliamentary seat. He is also reputed to have introduced long-tongued bumblebees to Taranaki from



Canterbury so that red clover could be pollinated.

Fantham died unexpectedly on January 16, 1904, and was buried in the Hawera cemetery. Due to the high regard in which he was held, several local businessmen began raising funds for a statue of him, which was unveiled in 1907. The statue leans slightly forward and it has been suggested Fantham is trying to listen to the local gossip.