

# wednesday magazine



Before the pool work started, it was just a swimming hole . . . (left) Ray Sheppard, Alison Evans, Joyce Sheppard, Nancy Evans, Jean Tippens and Nina Tippens, about 1926. CENTRE: A camping ground was among later developments. RIGHT: The concrete weir outlet for the Huatoki Stream to flow on to the city.



# Huatoki revisited

AS THE SUMMER of 1929 drew to a close, the residents of leafy Huatoki basked in the pride of their new swimming pool.

It was surely the prettiest in the country, set into a steep hillside in the Vogeltown School grounds and planted out in trees to complement the native bush in the adjacent reserve.

Since February 23, when Education Minister Harry Atmore snipped the opening ribbon, the gully had echoed with the delighted squeals of children playing and competing in the pool, fed by the clear water of the Huatoki Stream which chuckled and splashed its way on downstream over an attractive weir.

Next year, and in the following years, said the pool's proud users and neighbours, they would grass the surrounding land, add a diving board and build changing sheds. And they'd build a toddlers' pool.

Tents sprouted around the site in the following summers and three decades of children fondly remember boisterous play in the cool waters and picnics in the sunshine.



Nelson (left) and Gerald James poolside in 1951.

Memories are about all that's left of the popular swimming spot now. The concrete structure is still there, but it's choked with weeds. Silt build-up has let the grassy banks invade the pool, leaving only a fraction of its once-generous width visible. Not many New Plymouth residents even know it's there.

The pool has not been used for swimming for more than 20 years — closed by rising bacterial count in the stream.

But that could soon change.

SIX HUNDRED Huatoki residents have signed a petition to the city council urging

that the pool should be restored.

One of the petition's organisers, Claire Harvey, says it will take very little to have the pool reopened. A resident of Huatoki St for nearly 30 years, she says all is needed is for the mud and silt to be cleaned out. The concrete dam is as sturdy as when it was first built.

Claire Harvey believes pollution levels, if they exist at all, are way down on the levels deemed risky 25 years ago.

"We've noticed trout in the river, so it must be getting cleaner."

She says the reopening of the pool will be of great benefit to the community. There would be no problem

with lack of patronage because apart from nearby residents, plans to develop facilities at the Huatoki Tennis Club will mean players will be looking for somewhere to cool off after a game.

And it would all be in the spirit of the original donation by the Government of the 1920s, which handed over to the Huatoki Domain Board an area to be used for the benefit of Vogeltown and Frankleigh Park residents.

The petitioners' door-knocking effort is now in the hands of the council's parks and recreation committee. At its last meeting, the committee deferred the matter until May, for reports on costs and pollution.

ELEVEN years ago, the committee recommended against a similar request by a group of nostalgic Huatoki residents. The committee then said the pool was too polluted for safe swimming and would cost too much — \$2000 a year — to keep it free from silt and weeds.

A report to the 1977 committee said the only way of eliminating the health risk was chlorina-

tion and this could have been carried out only if the pool were enclosed and the river flow bypassed.

It recommended that either a separate pool be built at the domain or that more use be made of the Vogeltown School pool, only 200 metres away.

In 1988, council parks and recreation director Alan Jellyman says removing the silt from the pool will still be the main cost in having the pool reopened and keeping it open — with the added complication of silt disposal.

"In the old days, we could just flush it down the stream." This is not accepted practice now, leaving the council with the problem of regularly getting the silt out of the domain and finding somewhere to put it.

But the council is sympathetic to the residents' petition.

Mayor David Lean said it was a nice change to see a petition on a non-controversial matter. And parks and recreation committee members said they admired community initiative and agreed that the residents should be allowed to restore the pool to its former state. But who's going to pay for it?

## Why should this pretty pool remain just a pleasant memory? ask 600 residents

By RICHARD DAVIES

Picture: KAREN DAY



Pool petition organiser Claire Harvey and New Plymouth Mayor David Lean with the 627-signature petition, and newspaper cuttings and photographs of the pool in years gone by.