

Soap factory pulled down



Egmont Soaps factory being pulled down recently.

Tennis Club, and a member of the Opunake Scout Group committee, as well as being active in the Anglican Church and the Opunake Beach Improvement Society, before dying suddenly in 1962, aged 55.

These were good years for plumbing, with contracts for state houses, and the town's water supply being put in. Tom employed three staff, Ted Robson, John Trotter and Ray Young. They made corrugated iron tanks, night soil cans for the many long drop dunnies still around, and made their own spouting and brackets. The paddock next door to King Street had the bus sheds, and the land was used to store old tank stands and coal range stoves.

Tom's son David remembers using copper wire on a small folding machine to make spouting clips.

In 1959, Ron Wallis moved the workshop from King Street to Tasman Street. The building had to be put away from the street, as it wasn't a retail business. It was sold after Tom died.



All gone.

and came up with sensitive soaps which were made of vegetable oil. The place across the road came up for sale, so I moved over there, and it got bigger and bigger.

"Our sensitive soap was our biggest seller, but we also made liquid soaps and crèmes, mostly to do with the skin and the hair. Our shampoos were quite popular with hairdressers. It all came from natural products, even the perfumes."

The soap factory building had begun life as a plumbers workshop at 17 King Street owned by a Mr Fawcett, who had a motorbike, and carried his tools and equipment around in a sidecar.

Tom Knapman bought the business in 1946. Before this, he had served with the RNZAF in the Pacific during World War 2. He went on to be an active member in the Opunake Fire Brigade, a vice president of the Opunake

Long standing chemist and Opunake identity Grant Cavaney remembers when the soap factory he owned exported as far afield as Australia and the United States. He even had people from overseas come to pick his soapmaking expertise.

Then tough economic conditions meant many of his customers went out of business. He sold the Tasman Street factory building and put his stock into storage, though he still hopes to one day be able to sell from another building.

Last week the factory from which he made and sold soap for over 30 years was pulled down.

Grant had shifted in here from his previous Napier Street premises in the mid 1970s.

"Working in a chemist shop I found there were these specific soaps on the market for skin, and 30 per cent of them upset people," he said. "I did a lot of research,



On the eve of the destruction of the soap factory that had once been the family plumbing business. Jared and David Knapman.

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