

Tomorrow...the end of an era

TOMORROW marks the end of an era, the era of the New Plymouth municipal baths at Kawaroa Park.

The old baths which were opened in January, 1904, and built at a cost of £3175, will not be used again when the water is let out tomorrow afternoon. On March 12 modern machinery will move in to start excavating, and the buildings and stands will be demolished to make way for the new £46,818 baths.

Last month, particularly this week, has been one of the busiest ever, according to the custodian, Mr E. Meull. All this week different organisations and schools have been holding their annual swimming sports.

Mr Meull did not empty the baths yesterday because of the heavy programme. Lepperton School used them for distance swimming. Today the baths were used for the Boys Brigade swimming sports.

For Mr Meull and his wife this week has been busy, but next week will be busier. They are shifting from the place which has been their home for the past 34 years.

Mr Meull said today that although the baths had reached their last days, they still contained certain admirable features.

- They are the only baths in the North Island at least, with covered stands for spectators.

- Starters and officials are under cover.

- They are one of the best baths in New Zealand for competition because of the closeness and height of the stands.

- Visibility for spectators was 100 per cent. Mr Meull related the baths to the Pukekura Park sportsground.

- They are the only baths of their type in New Zealand.

- When the 1938 New Zealand senior championships were held there gate takings were a record which Mr Meull believes still

stands.

- The water is fast and only in recent years have swimming times set at championships many years ago been broken.

- They are the only true water polo baths in New Zealand. (Because of the depth.)

Fire destroyed the custodian's quarters in 1919 and it was then that the present flat was built and the second storey added.

In 1936, because the swimming clubs wanted a deeper pool, the main pool was

deepened by 3ft to give it its present depth of 6ft 6in at the shallow end and about 14ft at the deep end. In this year the small pool was built.

About the same time the combined New Plymouth swimming clubs raised money to build the present stands and the dressing sheds were moved from either side of the baths to their present position.

The main incidents in the Meulls' long association with the baths were floods. The biggest flood occurred about 20 years ago, said Mr Meull. A curler (wave) came crash-

ing in and in no time the place was flooded.

"A dog I had chained to a kennel at the back was washed up right round to the front—still chained to his kennel. We rescued and revived him with resuscitation and he lived to be a good pig-hunting dog," said Mr Meull.

The completion date for the new baths is December 1, which will mean a shortened swimming season again next year. The contractors said today they would finish the first contract, which involved the construction of the pavillon, ahead of schedule.



THE SCENE at the 59-year-old New Plymouth municipal baths at Kawaroa Park today—the last Saturday the baths will be used. The baths will close tomorrow to make way for the new baths.