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NEW PLYMOUTH

Observed



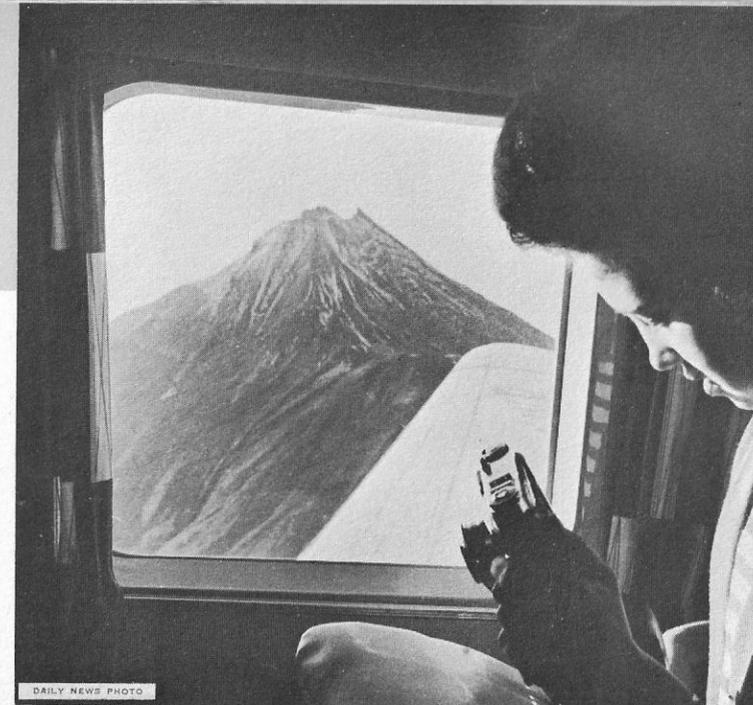
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About New Plymouth

FREDERICK ALONZO CARRINGTON, gazing northwards from the rocky summit of the ancient Maori stronghold Paritutu on a summer morning in January, 1841, could hardly have helped being impressed by the sight before him . . . Carrington had been sent by the Plymouth Company to survey a site for the new settlement which it planned to found in the Antipodes. And time was short, for already the first little ship carrying the pioneer settlers from Devon and Cornwall was on its way to the new land in the Southern Seas.

The scene Carrington and his party beheld must, in its essentials, have been very similar to the view from Paritutu today. Before them would have stretched the North Taranaki coastline, curving away in a great breaker-edged sweep of cliff and dune toward distant blue hills. To the south would have loomed the snow-capped peak of Mount Egmont, lording it above the fertile, bush-clad lowlands.

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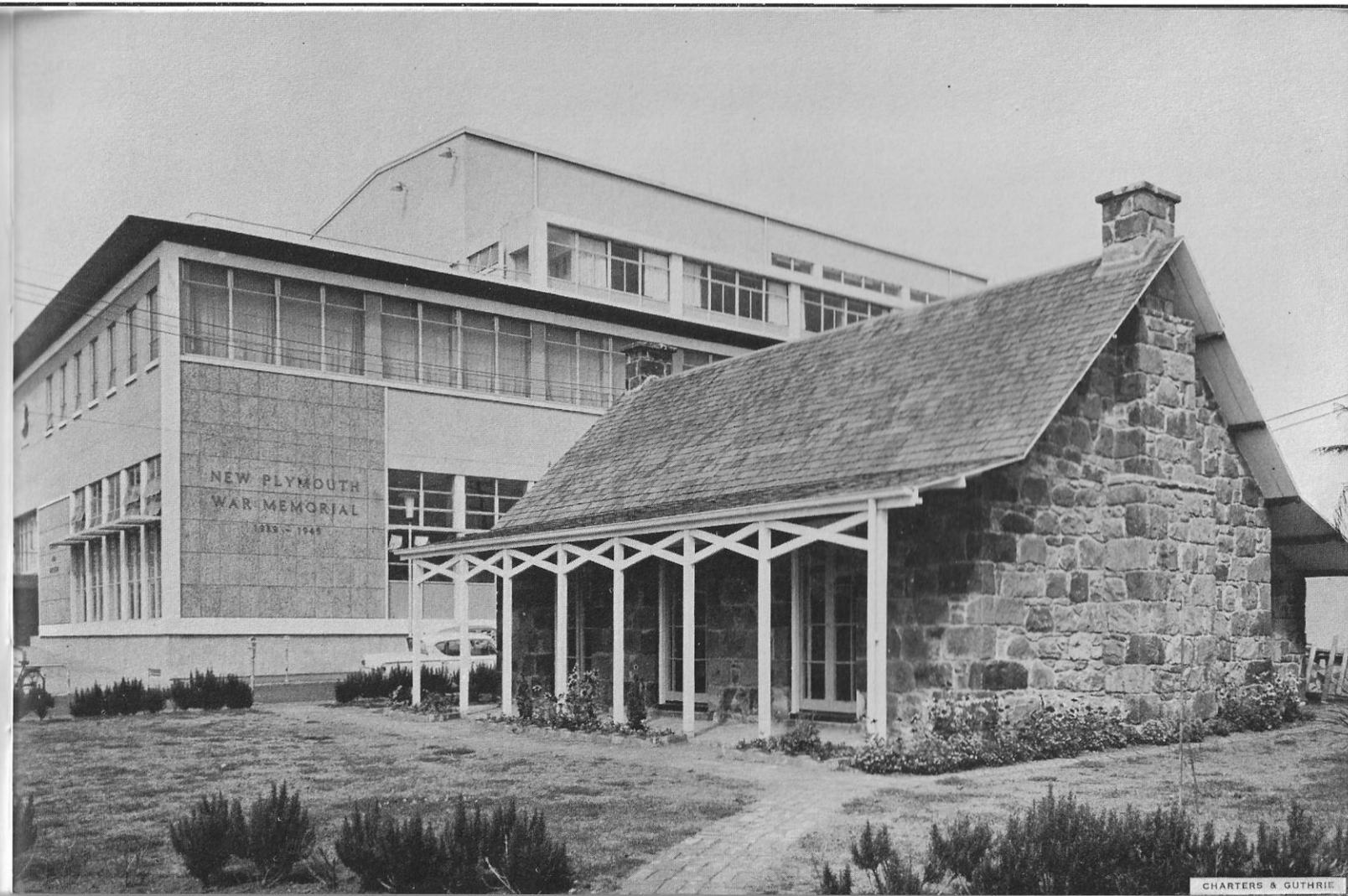




But there the resemblances would have ended. For even in his wildest imaginings, Carrington could hardly have visualised the vast changes that were to be wrought on the peaceful countryside of Taranaki in the ensuing century. The infant settlement of New Plymouth, founded less than three months after Carrington's arrival, was to grow into a bustling, prosperous city with a population of well over 30,000. And almost beneath the crag on which Carrington stood, where the mighty Tasman Sea swell rolled in against islands and rocks, was to be constructed one of the finest artificial harbours in New Zealand. But of that, more later . . .

The sheer-sided aluminium roof of the new Whiteley Church stands out as a prominent landmark in this aerial view of central New Plymouth.

Historic Richmond Cottage, an early settler's home, formerly stood near the sea shore. When it had to be demolished to make way for a new hotel each stone was numbered so that it could be rebuilt exactly as it was on a new site beside New Plymouth's War Memorial centre.





First, let us take a closer look at New Plymouth itself. Any new-comer to New Plymouth will sooner or later (and probably sooner, rather than later) find himself in Devon Street. Four miles long, Devon Street runs through the centre of the city from north-east to south-west in a broad ribbon of undeviating straightness. In and around the half-mile or so of its central section is the commercial heart of New Plymouth.

Fertile soil and a benign climate have made Taranaki into one of the richest agricultural areas in New Zealand, and this fact is reflected in the commercial prosperity of New Plymouth.

The city has well over 400 stores of various categories and sizes, with an annual turnover in the vicinity of £15 million. It has its share of

attractive, post-war buildings, including modern new bank premises, Government buildings, commercial and office blocks, an ultra-modern department store and a new, multi-storey tourist hotel. The modern War Memorial centre, fronting Brougham Street, contains a fine library and museum, as well as a concert hall and a smaller hall well-suited for conferences and lectures.

Although its economy is still based predominantly on agriculture, and particularly dairy farming, New Plymouth is becoming increasingly aware of the importance of its growing industries.

One of the largest industrial concerns near the city is the factory of McKechnie Brothers (N.Z.) Ltd., which produces a wide range of aluminium and brass extrusions and sections used by manufacturers all over the country. A small amount of the company's output is exported.





Spacious, modern shops reflect New Plymouth's soundly-based prosperity; the inevitable coffee bar provides a quiet corner for a chat in relaxed surroundings.

McKechnies were the first firm to move onto the new 300-acre industrial site at Bell Block which has been set aside to meet the growing needs of heavy industry. Bell Block is ideally suited for this purpose because of its easy access to transport facilities by rail, road, sea and air.

Another major metalworking industry in New Plymouth is The Cambrian Engineering Co. Ltd., which makes precision components for refrigerators, washing machines, electrical and horticultural equipment and agricultural machinery. This factory also makes builders' hardware and plumbers' fittings.

One of the city's fastest-growing concerns is the agricultural chemicals firm of Ivon Watkins Ltd., whose modern plant is situated on the new industrial area near Paritutu. Ivon Watkins' products need no introduction to New

Zealand farmers and horticulturalists, and this go-ahead firm now uses the port of New Plymouth for increasing amounts of imported raw materials and for exports to new markets in the Pacific and elsewhere.

Some of New Plymouth's other major industries include clothing, footwear and soap. The New Zealand Farmers' Fertilizer Company's factory near Fitzroy produces 150,000 tons of fertilizer a year to enrich the farmlands of Taranaki and the King Country.

New Plymouth could never have achieved the position it holds today without its port. Port Taranaki is the only deep-water port on the entire West Coast of New Zealand, and as such is the closest New Zealand port to Australia. It now handles more than 550,000 tons of cargo a year.



Nearly all the primary produce of Taranaki is exported through this efficient, well-equipped port, with its associated cool stores. Inward cargoes include oils and motor spirits and the enormous quantities of phosphate, sulphur and potash necessary to meet the needs of the fertilizer industry.

Oil has been a factor in the New Plymouth scene ever since 1865, when the first greenish-brown crude gushed up from a makeshift well at Moturoa. The Moturoa field, lying beneath a New Plymouth seaside suburb, has never



The glass-fronted department store of the Farmers' Co-operative Organisation Society of N.Z. Ltd., in Devon Street, cost half a million pounds to build. Opened at the end of 1960, it is the largest department store outside the main centres.

AFTER HOURS
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THE FARMERS CO-OPERATIVE SOCIETY OF N.Z. LTD.

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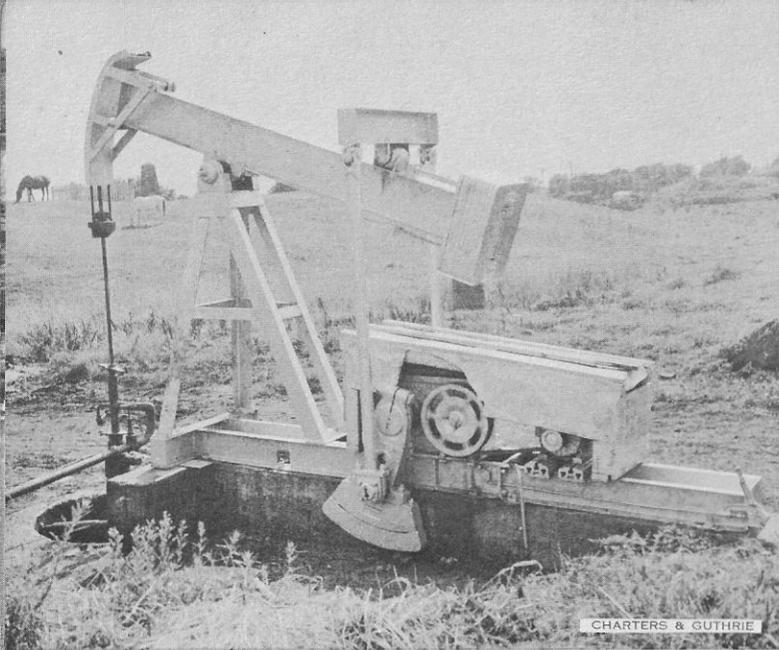
stopped producing from that day to this. But unfortunately for the economies of both New Plymouth and New Zealand, a century of exploratory efforts and the sinking of no fewer than 57 wells have not been able to produce oil in much more than token quantities. Even so, New Plymouth can still boast its own brand of petrol refined from Moturoa oil.

Considerably more promising commercially has been the comparatively recent discovery of large reserves of natural gas under the farmlands of South Taranaki. Natural gas promises to play an important role in the future industrial development of New Plymouth, as well as producing considerable quantities of oil condensate for shipment through Port Taranaki to the Marsden Point refinery.

A breakwater two-thirds of a mile long provides a secure, all-weather harbour for overseas and coastal shipping. The largely undeveloped land immediately behind the port has been set aside for industrial development.

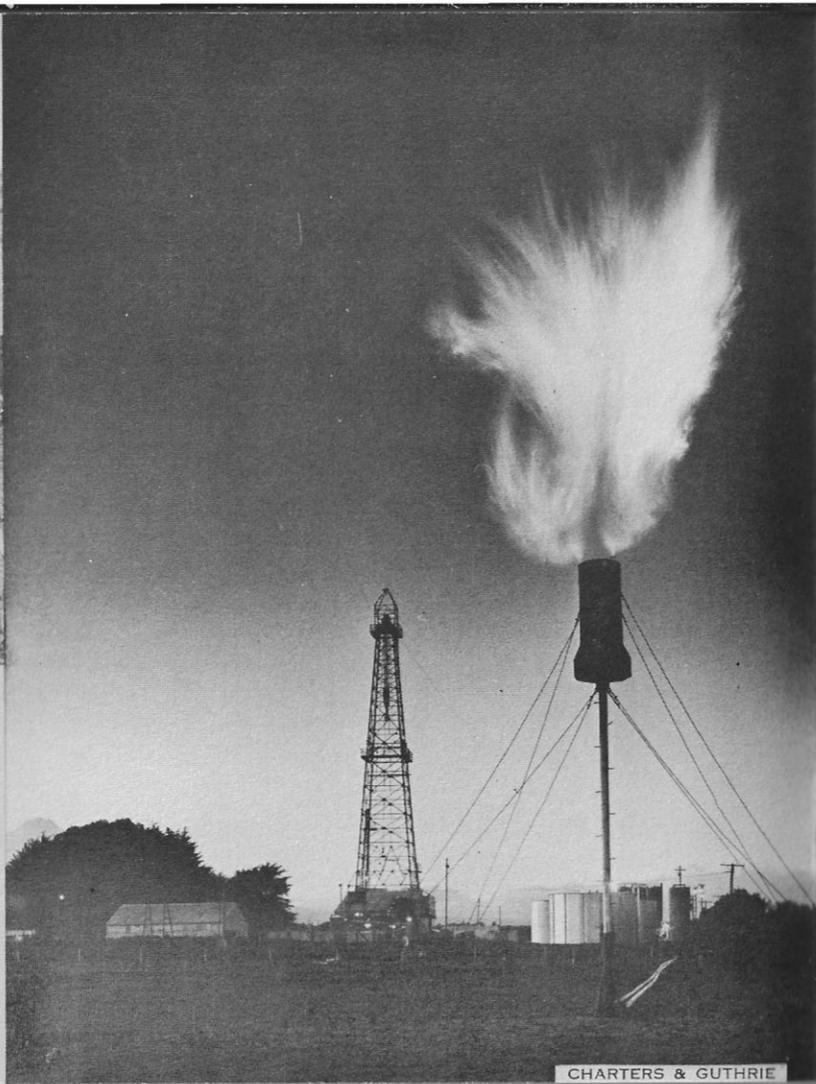


One of the first companies to establish itself in the port industrial area was the rapidly-expanding agricultural chemicals firm of Ivon Watkins Ltd.



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First oil: now gas. . . The dipper well pictured above, at the New Plymouth seaside suburb of Moturoa still produces a modest but steady flow of oil—nearly a century after the field was first tapped. More promising commercially is the Kapuni natural gas field, whose potential is symbolised by the gas flare burning near the well-head of Kapuni 3.

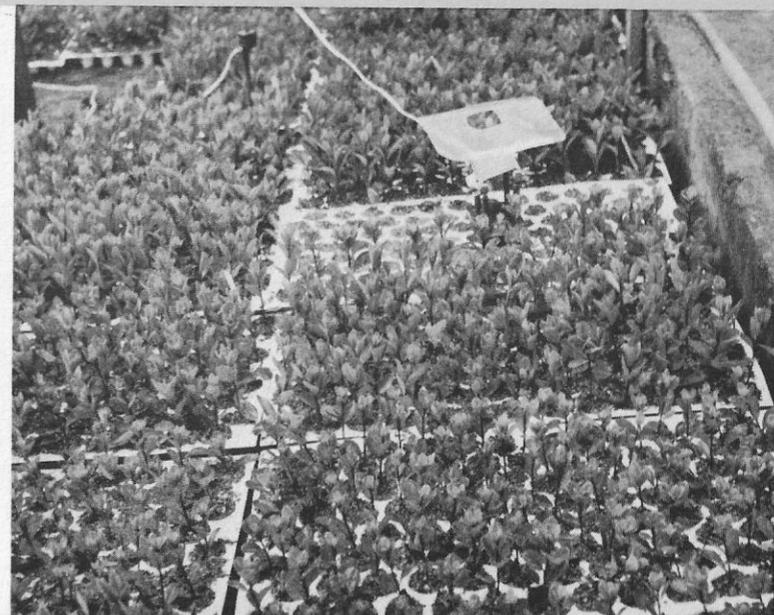


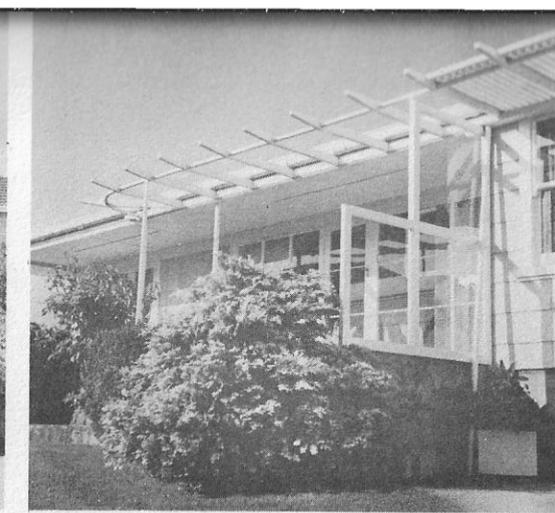
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New Plymouth's equable climate and rich soil have combined to make the city one of the leading horticultural centres in New Zealand. Shrubs and plants grown here are sent all over the Dominion, and even further afield. Messrs. Duncan and Davies' Nurseries, a corner of which is seen at left, cover 100 acres and are among the largest in the Southern Hemisphere. At bottom, left, plants are growing through a polythene sheet mulch, while below, an electronic device is used to control the amount of moisture on the leaves of young plants.

Photos courtesy Duncan & Davies Ltd.





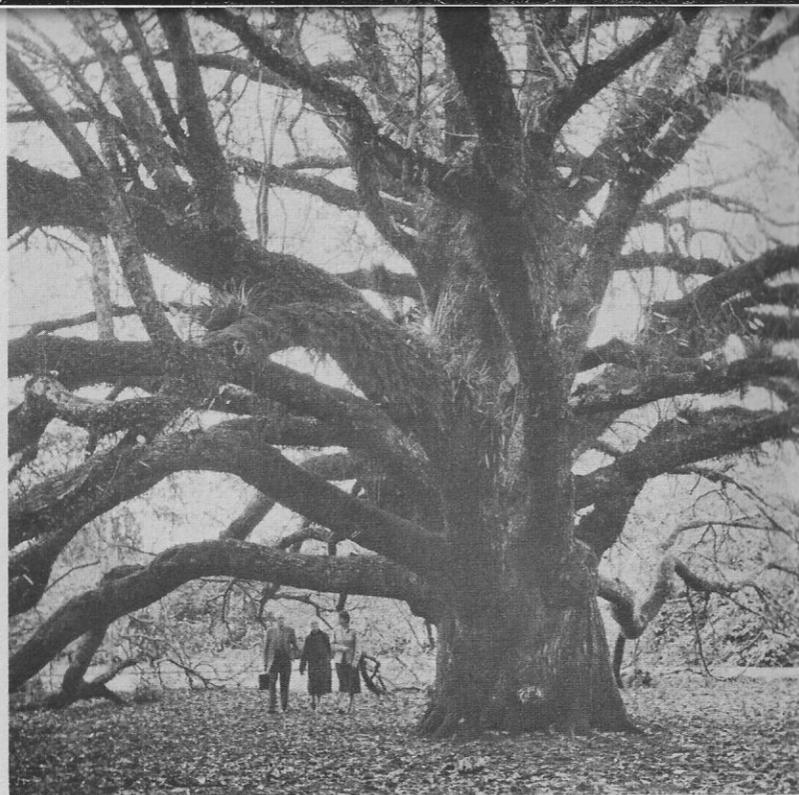
Fine homes and gardens are a feature of New Plymouth suburbs. A wide variety of building styles are to be seen in the new housing areas, and a few examples are reproduced on this and the opposite page.

Unlike some centres, New Plymouth has no housing problems. Building sections within a few minutes' drive of the city centre are plentiful, and large new subdivisions are constantly being opened up to keep pace with population increases. Government statistics put the average cost of houses built in New Plymouth at £3,600.

The care lavished on home gardens in the city is a reflection of New Plymouth's status as a leading horticultural centre. In few other cities in New Zealand will the visitor see such an astonishing variety of flowers, plants, trees and shrubs—a sight which adds weight to New Plymouth's claim to be the Scenic City.

For those who prefer to be free from the cares of tending a garden, New Plymouth has its modern blocks of owner-occupier flats. More of these are being built as the demand grows.

Distinctly "off-beat" architecturally is the Beehive House at Westown (right), built entirely of hexagon-shaped members. Its owner and builder, Mr. E. R. Brewster, drew his inspiration from the shape of the cells in a honeycomb. The house is composed of seven equal hexagonal sections, and there are no interior doors. Mr. Brewster claims that the hexagonal form combines maximum living space with greater structural strength than a conventional building. The house has always been open to the public, and in its first ten years of existence 120,000 people are estimated to have visited it.



New Plymouth's citizens have always been tree-conscious—one reason why the visitor will still find unspoilt glades of native bush within a stone's throw of the city centre. The city's parks are famed for their fine trees, boasting such splendid specimens as the giant puriri (left), believed to be over 2,000 years old, and the exotic Spanish chestnut (right), with a spread of branch reputed to be the largest in the world.

A Theatre Beneath the Stars

New Plymouth's spectacular Bowl of Brooklands is an amphitheatre without rival anywhere in New Zealand. It is this "starlight theatre," as it has been called, which is the focal point every summer for the city's nationally-famous Festival of the Pines, to which come artists from overseas and from all parts of New Zealand.

The Bowl of Brooklands owes its origins to the vision and drive of a former public relations officer for the city, Eric Hanbury. Under his lead, an unprepossessing area of swamp and native bush was transformed into a stage setting without parallel in New Zealand. The swamp was turned into an artificial lake, over which was built a projecting, cantilevered sound shell and a wide apron stage—the latter built almost entirely by community effort.

Night is the time to see the Bowl at its finest. Multi-coloured reflections from the brightly-lit stage dance and shimmer in the still waters of the lake. The curving, terraced auditorium, sloping down to the lake's edge, can seat nearly 20,000 people. The Bowl of Brooklands can truly be said to rank among the great open-air theatres of the world.

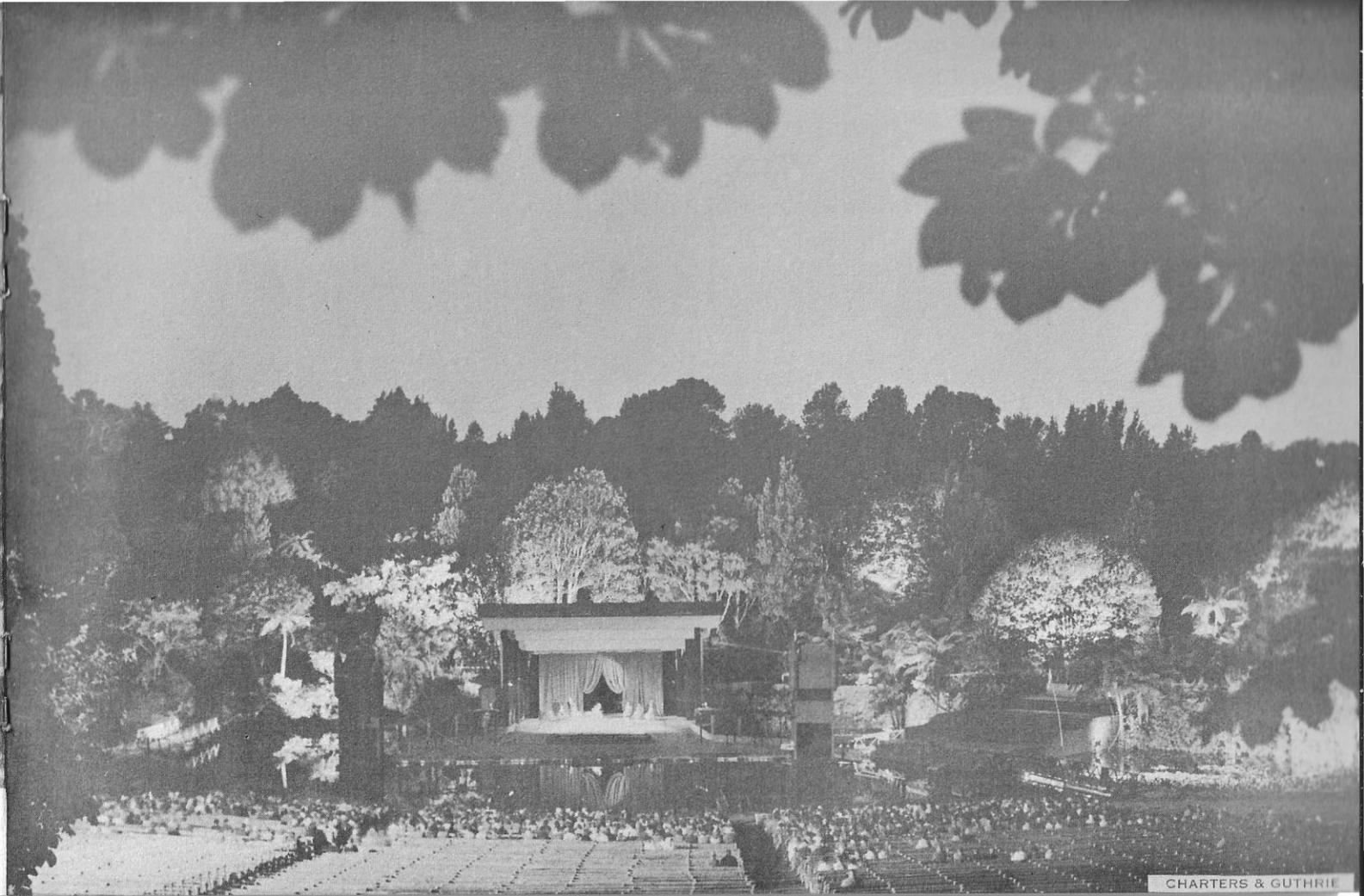
A few of the productions which have been staged at the Bowl include "Antony and Cleopatra," "A Midsummer Night's Dream," "Prince Igor," Jean Anouilh's "The Lark," and the Romantic ballet "Les Sylphides." It has also been the venue of a number of symphony concerts by the New Zealand National Orchestra.



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Shakespeare's "Antony and Cleopatra" was the major production staged at the Bowl during the 1963 Festival.

The Bowl of Brooklands by night.



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