

3.2 FIRMIN FIELD

3.2.1 DESCRIPTION

Firmin Field is located on the western bank of the Tarawera River. Waterhouse Street forms the northern boundary of the reserve and separates it from Waterhouse Reserve. Along its western boundary, Firmin Field borders one residential property on Waterhouse Street, Mountain View Rest Home and a small block owned by Ngati Tuwharetoa Holdings Ltd. It is bounded on the south side by the rear of private properties which front Porritt Drive and Ward Street Reserve.

The vehicle entrance to the reserve is from Waterhouse Street. There is pedestrian access is from two entrances on Porritt Drive, from the Ngati Tuwharetoa Holdings Ltd block, from Waterhouse Street and from Ward Street Reserve. A walking track runs through the reserve along the Tarawera River.

Firmin Field contains a diverse array of flora. Poplars and native Kanuka line the river's edge. Birch, Elm, Eucalyptus and Cypress stand on the south and west sides of the reserve.

Buildings and Facilities:-

Rugby Clubrooms The clubrooms are between the marked playing field and the river. Built in 1975 and extended 10 years later, the building has a floor area of 345 square metres. The complex consists of a hall with a seating capacity of 250 persons, plus kitchen, bar and male and female changing rooms, toilets and showers. A sealed car park behind the building is fenced off from the grassed playing field. Formerly used by the Kawerau Sports Club Incorporated, at the time of writing the building was not in use.

Scout Den Used by the Tarawera Scout Group, this building has a small kitchen, an activity hall, storage facilities and toilets. The site was first leased in 1975 when a Licence to Occupy Agreement was signed with the NZ Scout Association under the provisions of the Reserves and Domains Act 1953. A new lease was entered into after the 1977 Reserves Act was enacted.

Sports Field A full-sized marked rugby field is the prominent feature of Firmin Field. Council maintains the field and undertakes general turf maintenance.

The sports field is sown in fine rye grass and is watered by an inground irrigation system sourced from the Tarawera River. The field is surrounded by five floodlights provided by and maintained by the Kawerau Rugby, Sports and Cultural Club Incorporated. Two further spotlights aim to the south of the clubroom building over the rugby practice area.

Public Toilets An old concrete toilet block situated between the clubrooms and the Scout Den is kept locked unless use is requested by facility users. The block is cleaned by Council staff before being opened. The clubrooms on Firmin Field have toilet facilities, but these are not always available for public use.

3.2.2 HISTORY

Firmin Field was the Town's first rugby ground. The original club building was one of six temporary wooden shops moved from the corner of Onslow and Plunket Streets onto various reserves around the District. The building at Firmin Field had been used as a Chemist shop by Gordon McClelland and a Milk Bar/Dairy by Reg Boss.

The ground is named in honour of Bill Firmin who was one of the Town's first Police Constables. Bill Firmin played a leading part in promoting rugby in the district, forming the club and having the area developed as a playing field.

On 16 June 1960, Firmin Field, together with Boyce Park, Waterhouse and River Road Reserves and Prideaux Park, was the first reserve to be vested in the then Kawerau Borough Council for recreation purposes under the Reserves and Domains Act 1953.

The present rugby clubrooms replaced the original building in 1975. The old building was gutted by a fire and demolished in 1985. The development of Tarawera Park from the 1970's led to decreased usage of Firmin Field as the premier rugby grounds. This trend was reversed in the early 2000's.

The reserve has also been used for overnight camping for competition canoeing events held on the Tarawera River and for many years has been the start/finish point for the Annual King of the Mountain race.

3.2.3 STATUS

Firmin Field is vested in, and administered by Kawerau District Council. The field is a Recreation Reserve as defined by the Reserves Act 1977.

The legal description is Part of Lot 1 DPS 5882 Recreation Reserve.

The total area of Firmin Field is approximately 3.0720 hectares in size. The remaining land gazetted for Lot 1 DPS 5882 is the Ward Street Reserve and a block behind South School. Firmin Field is zoned Reserve under the Kawerau District Council District Plan.

3.2.4 POLICIES

Landscape Character

1. The relaxed and informal nature of the reserve shall be retained.
2. Grounds maintenance shall be to a standard appropriate to the various recreational uses of the Reserve.
3. The semi-wilderness character of the river embankment shall be maintained.

Vegetation

1. Planting on the river embankment shall be with tree and shrub species complementary to the character of the reserve.
2. The integrity of the Kanuka stand shall be maintained.
3. Prior to removal of any vegetation, its historic, ecological and aesthetic merit must be assessed against the goal of removal.
4. Pest plants shall be controlled and where possible eliminated from the reserve.
5. Sound horticultural techniques shall be applied in the management of the reserve's vegetation and turf.

Access/Parking

1. Firmin Field, other than marked playing areas, is a designated dog exercise area.
2. Existing pedestrian access to Firmin Field shall be maintained.
3. The sealed vehicular access way to Firmin Field shall be maintained.
4. The sealed parking area with its surrounding fence shall be maintained.
5. Parking on the grassed area shall be at the northern end of the reserve, previously the site of clubrooms.
6. The track along the Tarawera River from the Kawerau Golf Course to the Waterwheel Heritage Park shall be maintained in a semi-wilderness state for walking access.