

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 is bordered by Mountain View Rest Home, a small block owned by Ngati Tuwharetoa Holdings Ltd and one residential property on Waterhouse Street. It is bounded on the south by residential properties which front Porritt Drive and Lyn Hartley Reserve.

The vehicle entrance to the reserve is from Waterhouse Street. There is pedestrian access from Waterhouse Street and from Lyn Hartley Reserve. A walking track runs through the reserve along the bank of 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:-

Outdoor and Accommodation Centre Formerly a rugby clubrooms, the building consists of a hall with seating capacity of 200 persons, plus kitchen, toilets, showers and sleeping accommodation for 50 people. It is located between the grass field and the river. The sealed car park behind the building is fenced off from the grass field.

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.

Grass Field A grass playing field previously used as a rugby ground is a prominent feature of Firmin Field. Council maintains the field and undertakes general turf maintenance. The field is sown in fine rye grass and can be watered by an in ground irrigation system sourced from the Tarawera River.

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 outdoor and accommodation centre has toilet facilities, but these are not always available for public use.

3.2.2 HISTORY

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

Firmin Field was the town's first rugby ground. It was 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 grassed area developed as a playing field.

The original clubrooms building was one of six temporary wooden shops which were moved from their original site on the corner of Onslow and Plunket Streets onto various reserves around the District. The Firmin Field building was a Chemist shop run by Gordon McClelland and a Milk Bar/Dairy run by Reg Boss. Gutted by a fire in 1985, it was later rebuilt and extended into a 345 square metre brick rugby clubrooms.

Firmin Field was the premier rugby ground in Kawerau until the development of Tarawera Park from the 1970's led to its decreased usage. The trend was reversed in the early 2000s when the rugby club merged with other codes such as soccer to form a combined sports club, using Firmin Field as its base. In 2012 the sports club relocated to Tarawera Park and usage of the field and clubrooms again declined.

Firmin Field has long been used as the start/finish point for the annual King of the Mountain race. It also has a history of being used for overnight camping for competition kayaking events held on the Tarawera River. Development of the kayaking course on the neighbouring Waterhouse Street Reserve from 2010 led to increased use of the former clubroom buildings in association with water sports.

This led to Council purchasing and redeveloping the building as an accommodation and events centre.

3.2.3 STATUS

Firmin Field is vested in, and administered by Kawerau District Council. It 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. Firmin Field is zoned Reserve under the Kawerau District Council District Plan.

3.2.4 DEVELOPMENT

As the recreational use of the river and surrounding forest increases, the development of additional small scale accommodation, tenting and motorhome facilities on the reserve is envisaged.

3.2.5 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 bank shall be maintained.

Vegetation

1. Planting on the river bank 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 is a designated dog exercise area.
2. Existing pedestrian access to the reserve shall be maintained.
3. The sealed vehicular access way 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.
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.

Freedom Camping

1. Freedom Camping is permitted on the eastern side of the Firmin Lodge carpark. In addition, upon application Council may consider prior consent for self-contained vehicles, non-self-contained vehicles and tents for organised groups in which capacity of other areas may not be sufficient for demand. The maximum length of stay is set out in the Kawerau District Council Freedom Camping Bylaw.