

King descendants plant reminder of park legacy

By MATT RILKOFF - Taranaki Daily News

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New Plymouth's Brooklands Park was made a family home once again yesterday.

Generations of the King family gathered to celebrate with a lunch and a tree planting the 75 years since their patriarch's home was gifted to the city of New Plymouth.

Newton King bought the property in 1896 and developed it into one of the most impressive private gardens in the country.

Upon his death in 1927 the financial burden of the estate proved too great for the family and it was given to New Plymouth in a ceremony attended by 5000 people and the governor-general.

"I was the little girl who gave flowers to the governor general's wife. I was only six so I can't remember it much, but I look scared stiff in the photo," said Lynette Jolicoeur, one of Mr King's granddaughters.

"The pond is where the boys from Boys' High used to come down and steal the boat and use flax stems to pole around. Our grandmother Mary would bring out a great big bell and ring it like mad and all the boys would go running," said the dapper Vivian King, 94, son of Plunket founder Truby King.

"And Adrienne's husband was one of those boys, " he said of his cousin Adrienne Tatham, also at the ceremony.

Pukekura Park curator Chris Connolly said gathering the descendants of the King family was an opportunity to remember the spirit in which the homestead was donated to the city and to maintain the King connection to the park.

At the tree planting, a Mexican pinus patula, New Plymouth Mayor Peter Tennent took charge just in case the family thought they had already done their bit.

"Right you've all had a lovely lunch," he said while handing the shovel to the nearest King.

"Now you've got to work for it."