







FRIMLEY HOMESTEAD

The Sunken Garden marks the site of the former Frimley Homestead which was destroyed by fire on 10 March 1950.

The fire began in the staff quarters and took hold quickly. By the time the Hastings Fire Brigade arrived, the unoccupied house was well ablaze with the flames reportedly soaring 500 feet. The glow could be seen as far away as Napier and as far south as Waipukurau. The Homestead could not be saved as at that time the closest water main was at Pakowhai Road and the Brigade did not have enough hose to reach the blaze.

Firemen and volunteers rescued as much furniture as they could from two ground floor rooms and also a safe, before they were forced out by the intensity of the heat. Some 5,000 spectators gathered at the scene and such was the density of the traffic and people that a number of accidents were reported as the crowd dispersed.

The historic 22-roomed kauri homestead was built in 1894 by Frimley Station owner, J.N. Williams, a cousin of the noted Archdeacon Samuel Williams, founder of Te Aute College. The Williams home was built to replace the first Frimley Homestead which too was destroyed by fire.

The pioneering station of once 2,000 acres was gradually reduced by subdivision and other developments including the expansion of Hastings. Cornwall Park was once part of the Frimley property and was previously used as a bullock fattening paddock.

Many of the trees in the photograph still exist today and form the framework of Frimley Park. One better known tree is the *Populus deltoides "Virginiana"* and is reputed to be the largest of its kind in the Southern Hemisphere.

Following the destruction of the Frimley Homestead, Elsie Williams, A.B. and H.B. Williams donated the magnificent grounds of over 47 acres to the Hastings Borough Council in memory of their pioneering parents. They gifted the memorial sundial in the Sunken Garden to mark the house site.

TOP IMAGE: HISTORIC FRIMLEY HOMESTEAD BOTTOM IMAGE: AERIAL VIEW OF FRIMLEY HOMESTEAD

