

# EDUCATION IN THE TE AROHA DISTRICT IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

Philip Hart

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Historical Research Unit  
Faculty of Arts & Social Sciences  
The University of Waikato  
Private Bag 3105  
Hamilton, New Zealand

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Contact: [prhart1940@gmail.com](mailto:prhart1940@gmail.com)



THE UNIVERSITY OF  
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*Te Whare Wānanga o Waikato*

## EDUCATION IN THE TE AROHA DISTRICT IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

**Abstract:** *Establishing a school at Te Aroha was delayed while the Education Board waited to see whether the settlement would become permanent. In the interim, temporary arrangements were made. Although some praised the building finally erected, others noted such defects as being cold in winter, and residents met some of the costs of necessary improvements. Details are given of all the teachers, of the development of the school, of the number of pupils, and of the quality of the teaching. At Waiorongomai there was same sequence of erecting and improving the school, and details are given of all the teachers and their teaching. In both communities, residents had to raise money through holding entertainments to fund necessary improvements.*

*Examples of the curriculum are given, along with school inspectors' reports on the effectiveness of the teaching. Patriotism was emphasized, and corporal punishment was a normal method of control. Irregular attendance handicapped many children's success, and some parents clearly did not care about sending their children to school regularly. To vary the school year, there were occasional events such as Arbor Day, and a 'treat' was held at the end of every year. Providing religious education provoked controversy; and some attempts were made to provide much needed adult education.*

*To conclude, the life of a particularly popular teacher, James William Rennick, is given in as much detail as is available.*

*(Note that 'most of the early records' of the Te Aroha school 'were destroyed by fire',<sup>1</sup> making a complete history of its early years impossible.)*

### ESTABLISHING A SCHOOL

According to a statement made when the first school building was opened in 1883, the Wesleyans established the first school with ten pupils.<sup>2</sup> This was a reference to the Wesleyans renting their church for school purposes. After waiting to see whether a public hall or a school would be

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<sup>1</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 10 February 1948, p. 5.

<sup>2</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 7 July 1883, p. 2.

built which they could use for their services, in May 1881 the Wesleyans decided to erect a church; it opened in August.<sup>3</sup>

Early in January 1881, it had been anticipated that, 'through the exertions of Adam Porter, a prominent miner,<sup>4</sup> Te Aroha was 'likely to possess a public school at no distant date. The Board of Education have promised to erect a suitable building', on George Lipsey's land,<sup>5</sup> 'and to appoint a competent teacher as soon as they received a list of 25 children of school age'.<sup>6</sup> Late that month parents felt 'great disappointment' that the board, despite receiving their petition, had deferred a decision.<sup>7</sup> There were 33 children of school age, and two acres had been set aside.<sup>8</sup> When a 'Memorial from residents' was received in February, the board referred it to the warden, Harry Kenrick,<sup>9</sup> for comment.<sup>10</sup>

At its 1 April meeting, the board received Kenrick's letter recommending a school be erected. The board agreed to defer a decision but in the meantime to grant aid 'to the extent of a capitation allowance of £4 per annum on the average attendance'. Informed there were 62 children requiring education, it agreed to convene a meeting of householders to elect a school committee and 'consider the boundaries of the proposed School district'. As members were divided over whether there was sufficient stability in the population to justify providing a school, Kenrick's opinion was again sought.<sup>11</sup> The chairman, James McCosh Clark, later a leading investor in Waiorongomai mining,<sup>12</sup> stated that he wished to wait until it

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<sup>3</sup> *Waikato Times*, 19 May 1881, p. 2, 11 August 1881, p. 2; *Thames Advertiser*, 12 August 1881, p. 3.

<sup>4</sup> See paper on his life.

<sup>5</sup> See paper on his life.

<sup>6</sup> *Thames Advertiser*, 12 January 1881, p. 3.

<sup>7</sup> Auckland Board of Education, Minutes of Meeting of 21 January 1881, Minute Book 1881-1883, p. 15, YCAF 5491/3a, ANZ-A; Te Aroha Correspondent, *Thames Advertiser*, 26 January 1881, p. 3.

<sup>8</sup> Board of Education, *Auckland Weekly News*, 29 January 1881, p. 19.

<sup>9</sup> See paper on his life.

<sup>10</sup> Auckland Education Board, Minutes of Meeting of 11 February 1881, Minute Book 1881-1883, p. 27, YCAF 5491/3a, ANZ-A.

<sup>11</sup> Auckland Education Board, Minutes of Meeting of 1 April 1881, Minute Book 1881-1883, pp. 56-57, YCAF 5491/3a, ANZ-A; Board of Education, *Auckland Weekly News*, 9 April 1881, p. 11.

<sup>12</sup> See paper on the Battery Company.

was proved that there was gold at Te Aroha.<sup>13</sup> In May, a school district was established.<sup>14</sup> In the middle of that month, a meeting of residents heard the board's response to their 'memorial' asking for a school. Although 'not prepared at present to build a school, they would be prepared to provide a capitation fee of £4 per head per annum for each child towards the payment of an instructor. As it was believed that over 40 children would at once attend and a make-shift building could be found', and a clergyman assured them that he could provide a male teacher for £150 per annum, 'a committee was formed to obtain an exact list of the pupils to attend'. Once this was obtained, it would approach the board again seeking 'the providing of school fittings, and the advisability of the payment of a fixed salary to a teacher'. Over 70 children were ready to attend a school at once.<sup>15</sup>

Because of the fading of the goldfield, in June the board deferred consideration of erecting a school building and providing other requisites, but agreed to select a teacher for an 'aided' school.<sup>16</sup> A correspondent considered that 'too much credit' could not be given to Kenrick 'for the present action and interest he has taken' in providing schooling.<sup>17</sup> Once the board chose the first teacher, Mary Harvey, on 10 June, residents met to discuss obtaining a school building and a teacher's house.<sup>18</sup> Mrs Harvey was the wife of Dr William Harvey, who had been, briefly, superintendent of the Auckland Industrial Home, and she had been the matron.<sup>19</sup> She had been a

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<sup>13</sup> *Thames Star*, 14 April 1881, p. 2.

<sup>14</sup> Auckland Education Board, Minutes of Meetings of 13 May 1881, 27 May 1881, Minute Book 1881-1883, pp. 87, 92, YCAF 5491/3a, ANZ-A; *Waikato Times*, 7 May 1881, p. 2.

<sup>15</sup> Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 14 May 1881, p. 2; *AJHR*, 1882, E-1, p. 14.

<sup>16</sup> Auckland Education Board, Minutes of Meetings of 27 May 1881, 24 June 1881, Minute Book 1881-1883, pp. 92, 111, 116, YCAF 5491/3a, ANZ-A.

<sup>17</sup> Te Aroha Correspondent, *Thames Advertiser*, 2 June 1881, p. 3.

<sup>18</sup> Auckland Education Board, Minutes of Meeting of 10 June 1881, Minute Book 1881-1883, p. 106, YCAF 5491/3a, ANZ-A; Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 18 June 1881, p. 2.

<sup>19</sup> See *New Zealand Herald*, 11 December 1880, p. 3, 3 January 1881, p. 4, 8 March 1881, p. 4, 11 March 1881, p. 4, 12 March 1881, p. 6, letter from 'A Visitor', 1 April 1881, p. 6, Police Court, 13 April 1881, p. 6, 14 April 1881, p. 4, letter from J. Wright, 17 May 1881, p. 3; *Observer*, 19 February 1881, p. 228, 26 March 1881, p. 288, 9 April 1881, p. 315, 28 May 1881, pp. 397, 398.

teacher in a half-time school in the Waikato for a very short time.<sup>20</sup> On 11 June a meeting was convened to elect a school committee.<sup>21</sup>

The school opened on 4 July, as a correspondent reported enthusiastically: 'Mrs Harvey opened her school on Monday with an attendance of over 20 on the first day, and without any announcement, though probably there will be 40 as an average. The children all looked as happy as their parents at the commencement of the good work'.<sup>22</sup> The first pupils were reputedly 'a motley lot clothed in all manner of garb but freshly scrubbed'.<sup>23</sup> It was later believed that one room of Mrs Harvey's 'barely completed home' home was used for the school,<sup>24</sup> but in fact the Wesleyan Church was rented. Late in July both the school building and the teacher's residence were described as 'quite inadequate'.<sup>25</sup> The former must have been cold, for not till mid-1882 was it 'lined and made comfortable'.<sup>26</sup> Those who had subscribed to the Wesleyan church fund, not all of whom were Wesleyans, had understood that it could be used for a school at a nominal rent, but it had turned out that the church wanted 'a rental of 12s per week, a sum which the Education Board is not likely to grant'.<sup>27</sup> A resident clarified that when the building had been offered for 8s a week, including cleaning, the school committee had proposed the higher amount.<sup>28</sup> When the committee first asked the board to meet the rent and provide an allowance for cleaning the building, it declined, but at its next meeting granted 5s a week towards rent and urged the committee 'to provide closets'; the application for a school was 'deferred until funds are available'.<sup>29</sup> After awaiting the inspector's report on a renewed request, at the end of October

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<sup>20</sup> Auckland Education Board, Minutes of Meetings of 6 May 1881, 27 May 1881, Minute Book 1881-1883, pp. 78, 95, YCAF 5491/3a, ANZ-A.

<sup>21</sup> Auckland Education Board, Minutes of Meeting of 27 May 1881, Minute Book 1881-1883, p. 92, YCAF 5491/3a, ANZ-A.

<sup>22</sup> Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 7 July 1881, p. 2.

<sup>23</sup> Loris Priest, *Te Aroha Primary and District High School 1881-1981* (Te Aroha, 1981), p. 11.

<sup>24</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 10 February 1948, p. 5; Priest, p. 11.

<sup>25</sup> Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 26 July 1881, p. 2.

<sup>26</sup> Te Aroha Correspondent, *Thames Star*, 13 July 1882, p. 2.

<sup>27</sup> 'A Correspondent at Te Aroha', *Waikato Times*, 13 August 1881, p. 2.

<sup>28</sup> Letter from D.J. Frazer, *Waikato Times*, 25 August 1881, p. 3.

<sup>29</sup> Auckland Education Board, Minutes of Meetings of 19 August 1881, 16 September 1881, Minute Book 1881-1883, pp. 145, 159, 160, YCAF 5491/3a, ANZ-A.

it ordered plans prepared for a school, and two weeks later, having received a 'Memorial for a School District', approved its establishment.<sup>30</sup> Not until December 1882 were its boundaries fixed.<sup>31</sup>

Mrs Harvey commenced teaching with 45 children; by mid-August 'the depressed state of the field' was 'daily reducing the number of children attending', the average attendance being 'about 26', and by the end of the year she had 25, 37 having left.<sup>32</sup> Upon leaving the district in December 1881, she received a testimonial from the school committee noting 'the marked improvement the children have made in general education, and also in the departments of singing and drawing'.<sup>33</sup>

### TE AROHA SCHOOL IN THE 1880s

Providing adequate accommodation and facilities took much time and effort early in the decade. Just before Christmas 1881 the lowest tender for the building, £325, was accepted.<sup>34</sup> Two weeks later, when considering the school committee's request for both a school and teacher's residence, the board decided 'Cannot at present erect School buildings. Enquiry to be made as to renting House for Teacher'.<sup>35</sup> In mid-February the committee was 'informed that if site of two acres is obtained Board will erect School building'.<sup>36</sup> The following month, the board authorized the payment of rent, authorized employing a pupil teacher, 'subject to accommodation being provided for residence', and would 'favourably entertain the question of

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<sup>30</sup> Auckland Education Board, Minutes of Meetings of 14 October 1881, 28 October 1881, 11 November 1881, Minute Book 1881-1883, pp. 171, 177, 182, YCAF 5491/3a, ANZ-A.

<sup>31</sup> Auckland Education Board, Minutes of Meeting of 15 December 1882, Minute Book 1881-1883, p. 385, YCAF 5491/3a, ANZ-A.

<sup>32</sup> 'A Correspondent at Te Aroha', *Waikato Times*, 13 August 1881, p. 2; *AJHR*, 1882, E-1, p. 44.

<sup>33</sup> *Thames Advertiser*, 19 December 1881, p. 3.

<sup>34</sup> Auckland Education Board, Minutes of Meeting of 21 December 1881, Minute Book 1881-1883, p. 193, YCAF 5491/3a, ANZ-A.

<sup>35</sup> Auckland Education Board, Minutes of Meeting of 6 January 1882, Minute Book 1881-1883, p. 205, YCAF 5491/3a, ANZ-A; *Thames Advertiser*, 9 January 1882, p. 3.

<sup>36</sup> Auckland Education Board, Minutes of Meeting of 17 February 1882, Minute Book 1881-1883, YCAF 5491/3a, ANZ-A.

erecting a Teacher's Dwelling upon site being conveyed'.<sup>37</sup> At the end of April, it accepted George Lipsey's offer of a 21-year lease of two acres 'with agreement for conveyance of freehold to Board if acquired by Mr Lipsey',<sup>38</sup> the land being owned by his Maori in-laws. In June, after the committee had reported that the lease had been completed, it ordered plans and specifications to be prepared.<sup>39</sup> The teacher was instructed to 'make arrangements with Proprietors of church relative to use of building for Night School'.<sup>40</sup> The following month, the plans for both school and teacher's house were approved.<sup>41</sup> In August, an alteration to the latter was approved and Lipsey was 'asked to give further undertaking to convey site'.<sup>42</sup> Finally, in October, it agreed to call tenders for both school and house, at an estimated cost of £1,240, 'upon completion of conveyance of site'.<sup>43</sup> In the meantime, the Wesleyan chapel was rented for 10s a week.<sup>44</sup> As there were eight tenders ranging from £1,561 to £2,590, a decision was postponed until an estimate was obtained of the lowest possible price for a 'substantial building to accommodate 150 Scholars, and a teacher's dwelling'.<sup>45</sup> One board member's attempt to require the district to subscribe £200 towards its school was withdrawn after others protested; another asked whether, 'if we do not build, are the whole of the children of the district to go without any

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<sup>37</sup> Auckland Education Board, Minutes of Meeting of 10 March 1882, Minute Book 1881-1883, YCAF 5491/3a, ANZ-A.

<sup>38</sup> Auckland Education Board, Minutes of Meeting of 28 April 1882, Minute Book 1881-1883, YCAF 5491/3a, ANZ-A.

<sup>39</sup> Auckland Education Board, Minutes of Meeting of 23 June 1882, Minute Book 1881-1883, p. 302, YCAF 5491/3a, ANZ-A.

<sup>40</sup> Auckland Education Board, Minutes of Meeting of 23 June 1882, Minute Book 1881-1883, p. 305, YCAF 5491/3a, ANZ-A.

<sup>41</sup> Auckland Education Board, Minutes of Meeting of 21 July 1882, Minute Book 1881-1883, p. 317, YCAF 5491/3a, ANZ-A.

<sup>42</sup> Auckland Education Board, Minutes of Meeting of 18 August 1882, Minute Book 1881-1883, p. 322, YCAF 5491/3a, ANZ-A.

<sup>43</sup> Auckland Education Board, Minutes of Meeting of 13 October 1882, Minute Book 1881-1883, p. 359, YCAF 5491/3a, ANZ-A.

<sup>44</sup> Auckland Education Board, Minutes of Meeting of 2 February 1883, Minute Book 1881-1883, p. 411, YCAF 5491/3a, ANZ-A.

<sup>45</sup> Auckland Education Board, Minutes of Meeting of 24 November 1882, Minute Book 1881-1883, p. 376, YCAF 5491/3a, ANZ-A.

education whatever?' Clark now strongly supported providing a large school:

There is no doubt this place is growing almost as rapidly as the Thames. The number of children would increase rapidly. The sound of the hammer was heard all day long in the district, and houses were going up in every direction. It would be a mistake to confine the plan of the building to suit the present number of children.<sup>46</sup>

None of the tenders were accepted because the lowest was £300 above the estimate, the higher ones being 'due to the rise in timber since the estimate was made'. Clark emphasized that 'there were 98 children on the roll, and 60 more wanted to be placed on it. There was only accommodation for 60, and irrespective of the goldfield, these had to be provided with accommodation'. Members debated the prospects of both goldfield and agriculture (Clark promising prosperity) and whether cheaper buildings could be erected, and again defeated the notion of residents subscribing towards the cost. When one member 'thought the proprietors of the land should subscribe', Clark pointed out that the rangatira 'had given a very valuable site'. The engineer was asked to obtain estimates for a cheaper building accommodating 150 pupils.<sup>47</sup> After a reduced estimate was produced by mid-December it was agreed to invite tenders to be considered in February.<sup>48</sup>

In 1936 a local historian commented that 'especially in the earlier stage' the school was 'one of the most inconvenienced' ones because of 'continual changes of teachers. Somewhere over 200 teachers have taught in the school since it was established'.<sup>49</sup> Six years previously, a former pupil of the nearby Waihou school had recalled the difficulties facing teachers in these small communities. At Waihou, 'all the pupils were herded together in one room and a teacher had to have kindergarten experience as well as qualifications to train pupils for scholarships'. He considered that the teachers 'did very well', working 'six days a week for one-quarter of the salary received to-day. If an analysis was made it would be found that those

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<sup>46</sup> Board of Education, *Auckland Weekly News*, 21 October 1882, p. 5.

<sup>47</sup> Board of Education, *Auckland Weekly News*, 2 December 1882, p. 19.

<sup>48</sup> Auckland Education Board, Minutes of Meeting of 15 December 1882, Minute Book 1881-1883, p. 387, YCAF 5491/3a, ANZ-A.

<sup>49</sup> C.T. Harris, 'The Upper Thames Valley', *Te Aroha News*, 14 September 1936, p. 8.



old pupils stood as high or higher to-day than those who had a more efficient education'.<sup>50</sup>

In 1882 Norman Matheson was selected to run the school. Although not a fully qualified teacher, he commenced teaching at Waipu in 1870.<sup>51</sup> He had been appointed to the Kihikihi school in 1878 after the previous teacher was removed after clashing with members of the school committee.<sup>52</sup> By 1881, because of factionalism he was in perpetual conflict with the committee and some parents, and in January 1882 the education board supported the committee's view that he must be removed.<sup>53</sup> It made this decision only in mid-January, and when Matheson arrived without any warning in Te Aroha late in the month his large family had to live in a hotel until a house could be provided.<sup>54</sup> Six of his children attended the school in that year.<sup>55</sup> In May, because the attendance had 'increased so much of late', he was provided with an assistant, Kate Truscott, an experienced pupil teacher formerly of the Tararu school.<sup>56</sup> As she never married,<sup>57</sup> she may have made teaching her career, but it has not been traced. Commencing with 29 pupils, despite 17 leaving they were teaching 97 by the end of the year.<sup>58</sup> The inspector recorded that there was 'not much' singing but

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<sup>50</sup> Recollections of Christopher James Parr, *Te Aroha News*, 2 July 1930, p. 5.

<sup>51</sup> Andrew Matheson, *Matheson, McDonald and McKenzie: The story of three Highland Scots families and their migration to New Zealand* (Wellington, 2008), pp. 154-157; Secretary, Auckland Education Board, to Chairman, Te Aroha Goldfield District Committee, 8 November 1883, printed in *Te Aroha News*, 15 December 1883, p. 7.

<sup>52</sup> *Waikato Times*, 9 March 1878, p. 2, 12 March 1878, p. 2, 19 November 1878, p. 2, 12 December 1878, p. 2.

<sup>53</sup> *Waikato Times*, 1 June 1881, p. 2, 7 June 1881, p. 2, 21 June 1881, p. 2, 23 June 1881, p. 2, 28 June 1881, p. 3, 30 June 1881, p. 3, 12 July 1881, p. 2, 6 September 1881, p. 2, 20 September 1881, p. 2, 20 October 1881, p. 2, 29 October 1881, p. 2, 1 November 1881, p. 2, 3 November 1881, pp. 2, 3, 5 November 1881, p. 2, 8 November 1881, p. 3, 10 November 1881, p. 3, 10 January 1882, p. 2, 17 January 1882, p. 2, 21 January 1882, p. 3; Matheson, pp. 159-169.

<sup>54</sup> *Waikato Times*, 17 January 1882, p. 2, Te Aroha Correspondent, 28 January 1882, p. 2.

<sup>55</sup> Te Aroha Goldfields School, Attendance Roll 1882, pp. 55, 58, 60, YCAF 4135/7a, ANZ-A.

<sup>56</sup> *Thames Advertiser*, 8 May 1882, p. 3; *AJHR*, 1882, E-1, p. 14; 1883, E-1, p. 14.

<sup>57</sup> Probate of Kate Truscott, Probates, BBAE 1570, 407/1950, ANZ-A.

<sup>58</sup> *AJHR*, 1883, E-1, p. 45.

drawing was taught, elementary science was well taught, and recitations, needlework, discipline, and drill were good.<sup>59</sup>

In February 1883, tenders of £700 to erect the school and £459 for the teacher's house were accepted.<sup>60</sup> The house was completed in May, but as the contractor 'had departed from plans with regard to length of studs', £17 1s 3d was deducted from the contract price.<sup>61</sup> Because the contract had gone over time, a £3 penalty was imposed.<sup>62</sup> The school had one part for boys and one for girls.<sup>63</sup> When completed it was described as a splendid building, with two rooms, one 40 feet by 21 feet and the other 35 feet by 41, the height of both being 14 feet. Both were 'closely panelled throughout' with 'ample' fireplaces in a double brick chimney. It could accommodate 160 pupils; three classes were held simultaneously in each room, 'the sounds being deadened', the local newspaper reported, perhaps over-confidently.<sup>64</sup> An historian described it as 'austere, nothing was done to brighten the interior, there were no playing fields laid out, no lawns or gardens or trees'.<sup>65</sup> As the heating was inadequate, in 1887 the head teacher was granted permission to dismiss the children on very frosty mornings.<sup>66</sup> 'Parts of the original building continued in use until 1936'.<sup>67</sup> It had to stand up to periodic gales; in 1888, for instance, 17 or 18 panes of glass were 'slightly cracked' after the building swayed.<sup>68</sup>

On the evening of 4 July,

the new schoolhouse was formally opened by a treat to the children, a concert interspersed with addresses following, and a dance which did not conclude till early hours, to wind up with. There was a very large attendance, both of juveniles and their

<sup>59</sup> Te Aroha Goldfields School, Class Lists for 1882, YCAF 4135/7a, ANZ-A.

<sup>60</sup> Auckland Education Board, Minutes of Meeting of 2 February 1883, Minute Book 1881-1883, p. 408, YCAF 5491/3a, ANZ-A.

<sup>61</sup> Auckland Education Board, Minutes of Meeting of 18 May 1883, Minute Book 1881-1883, p. 488, YCAF 5491/3a, ANZ-A.

<sup>62</sup> Auckland Education Board, Minutes of Meeting of 6 July 1883, Minute Book 1883-1884, p. 49, ANZ-A.

<sup>63</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 9 June 1883, p. 2.

<sup>64</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 30 June 1883, p. 2.

<sup>65</sup> Priest, p. 13.

<sup>66</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 16 September 1887, p. 3.

<sup>67</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 10 February 1948, p. 5.

<sup>68</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 4 July 1888, p. 2.

elders, the former number close on 200. A very good tea was provided by the committee,

which had done ‘everything possible’ to make the occasion ‘the success that it undoubtedly proved’. The *Te Aroha News* considered that ‘the greatest credit’ was due to the it

for the way in which they stuck to the Board till they got what they wanted, and what was absolutely required. The school and master’s residence would be creditable to far larger places than Te Aroha, but that the accommodation is not too large was abundantly shown by the flood of youngsters who were present.

After ‘ample justice’ had been done to the meal, Charles Stanislaus Stafford, a farmer, who had ‘kindly consented to preside’ in the place of his close friend Henry Ernest Whitaker,<sup>69</sup> spoke on the importance of education. ‘He paid a high and well-deserved tribute to the perseverance and energy of the committee’ in obtaining the school and ‘considered that the community owed a deep debt of gratitude’ to Lipsey for providing the site, ‘a magnificent free gift to the cause of education in the district. (Great cheering.)’ The concert commenced with ‘a little band of children’ singing, ‘very nicely, “My Own New Zealand Home”’, and after songs and recitations ‘most creditably rendered’ by eight girls, ‘several ladies and gentlemen gave valuable service’. One teenaged boy’s performance ‘excited quite a little furore amongst his young friends, and was twice encored’. Three women provided the piano accompaniments. ‘Short addresses’ were given by three Protestant clergymen, the first dwelling

on the value of scholastic teaching, and the great importance it was to the children to avail themselves of the great privileges open to them. He said that the three R.’s were supposed to comprise the fundamental principles of education, but he thought three D.’s should be added, viz, Duty, Diligence and Determination. He enlarged on each of these as applicable to schools and scholars, especially enforcing the duty of obedience to superiors, assiduity in study, and resolution to overcome all difficulties.

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<sup>69</sup> See the paper on Harry and Charles: Henry Ernest Whitaker and Charles Stanislaus Stafford.

The second clergyman ‘spoke of the wondrous talent displayed by the boys and girls who appeared before them’. Their future depended on education, not their birth, and ‘amongst the children then present would be thoughtful politicians, and statesmen, who would bless the land of which the elders now were the early pioneers’. The third also ‘referred in warm terms to the advantages of education generally’ and emphasized ‘the value of girls being instructed in domestic economy’. He urged the children ‘to do all in their power to support the schoolmaster and help him by all possible means by close and unremitting attention to their studies’. After the national anthem was sung ‘with great heartiness’, dancing ‘was kept up with great spirit till late’. The newspaper considered that ‘the opening ceremony passed off very well indeed’.<sup>70</sup>

Starting the year with 79 pupils, by the end of the year there were 109.<sup>71</sup> In October 1883, Truscott was replaced two pupil teachers, William Henry Newton and Emma Ashman.<sup>72</sup> Newton, who had been born in 1865, went to the teachers’ training college at the beginning of the following year; he would become headmaster of the Tararu school in 1890, and remained a teacher all of his life.<sup>73</sup> Ashman, who had taught at the Kauaeranga Boys’ School, was presented with ‘a handsome silver bracelet’ when she left it, indicating she had ‘won the regard of her fellow-teachers and pupils’.<sup>74</sup> She would marry in 1889.<sup>75</sup> A request for a singing teacher was declined in August.<sup>76</sup>

Two months later, the school committee asked the board for a ‘higher class teacher’. It unanimously resolved that the inspector be asked ‘to formulate his opinions on the subject, and that same be submitted to School Committee to deliberate on’ at its next meeting. The committee also asked

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<sup>70</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 7 July 1883, pp. 2-3.

<sup>71</sup> *AJHR*, 1884, E-1, p. 47.

<sup>72</sup> *AJHR*, 1884, E-1, p. 15.

<sup>73</sup> Auckland Education Board, Minutes of Meeting of 2 November 1883, Minute Book 1883-1884, p. 160, YCAF 5491/4a; Probate of William Henry Newton, Probates, BBAE 1570, 1232/1952, ANZ-A; *Te Aroha News*, 2 February 1884, p. 7; *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 2, p. 871.

<sup>74</sup> *AJHR*, 1883, E-1, p. 14; *Te Aroha News*, 6 October 1883, p. 2.

<sup>75</sup> Marriage Certificate of Emma Ashman, 1889/761, BDM; see also Probate of Emma May, Probates, BBAE 1570, 506/1938, ANZ-A.

<sup>76</sup> Auckland Education Board, Minutes of Meeting of 17 August 1883, Minute Book 1883-1884, p. 85, YCAF 5491/4a, ANZ-A.

for details of Matheson's 'standard, qualifications, &c', for it was 'anxious to do justice to the requirements of this rising district'.<sup>77</sup> At a special meeting of the committee, Clark was told by six of its seven members that, if the board decided to send 'a more highly qualified teacher', they, 'whilst they would regret Mr Matheson's removal, still they would not in any way object'.<sup>78</sup> After receiving Clark's report, the board resolved that Matheson 'be removed to a smaller school'.<sup>79</sup> In response to the committee's questions, the board's secretary described Matheson's career and why he been appointed to Te Aroha:

Mr Matheson was for many years teacher at the school at North River, Waipu, and at first conducted the school in a satisfactory manner. After a while the state of the school became from various reasons unsatisfactory. It was thought desirable to remove him from the district, and he was appointed to Kihikihi. During his employment at Kihikihi disputes arose between the Committee and teacher; and, as Mr Matheson could not give satisfaction there, it became necessary to remove him. He was then appointed on trial to the Te Aroha Goldfield School at the time when the numbers were small and the place comparatively unsettled. The Board did not then anticipate that the school would so soon grow to its present size and importance.... After full consideration the Board agrees with your Committee that the school has grown beyond his capabilities, and steps will be taken at a convenient opportunity to remove him to a smaller school.<sup>80</sup>

There was some local feeling that Matheson had been 'unfairly or unkindly',<sup>81</sup> but in November the inspector's report confirmed that he needed to be removed. 'Very little attempted' in elementary science, he noted, and in teaching history little effort was made to direct pupils to the objects of the syllabus. 'Results are not at all satisfactory. In Stands iii iv & v the Geography and History would appear to have received but little

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<sup>77</sup> John Ilott to Secretary, Board of Education, 2 October 1883, printed in *Te Aroha News*, 15 December 1883, p. 7.

<sup>78</sup> Letter from John Ilott, *Te Aroha News*, 15 December 1883, p. 7.

<sup>79</sup> Auckland Education Board, Minutes of Meetings of 12 October 1883, 2 November 1883, Minute Book 1883-1884, pp. 135, 160, YCAF 5491/4a, ANZ-A.

<sup>80</sup> Secretary, Auckland Education Board, to District School Committee, 8 November 1883, printed in *Te Aroha News*, 15 December 1883, p. 7; for details of his work at the school, see Matheson, pp. 170-177.

<sup>81</sup> Letter from James Lavery, *Te Aroha News*, 15 December 1883, p. 7.

attention and the Writing although an attempt has been made to follow the system is by no means up to the required Standard'. Even all Matheson's children failed their examinations.<sup>82</sup> He was offered to the Mount Roskill school and allowed to remain in the schoolhouse until the end of January.<sup>83</sup> He was then allowed to remain until the end of February and was granted first three months' salary 'in lieu of notice' and then six months' 'in consideration of his long service',<sup>84</sup> for Mount Roskill had declined to accept him.<sup>85</sup> In 1886 the board declined his 'request for a testimonial', but he was 'allowed to refer to Board'.<sup>86</sup> For four years he taught in the backblocks of Whanganui, a demotion that forced him to live separate from his family, and in 1890 he retired from teaching, aged about 61.<sup>87</sup>

In 1884, William Henry Pasco Marsdon was appointed as head teacher.<sup>88</sup> Born in England in 1859, he had arrived in New Zealand in 1880 and taught at Parawai at Thames with Annie Marie Cleveland, whom he married three years later.<sup>89</sup> During 1884 two others assisted him: his wife (until then a pupil teacher at Parawai) and a pupil teacher, Kate P. Cleave.<sup>90</sup> At the beginning of the year, the board declined to meet costs incurred in repairs, apart from spending £2 12s repairing the school bell.<sup>91</sup> In March, it authorized fencing the school site for an estimated cost of £31

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<sup>82</sup> Te Aroha Goldfields School, Class Lists for 1883, YCAF 4135/10a, ANZ-A.

<sup>83</sup> Auckland Education Board, Minutes of Meeting of 30 November 1883, Minute Book 1883-1884, pp. 185, 186, YCAF 5491/4a, ANZ-A.

<sup>84</sup> Auckland Education Board, Minutes of Meetings of 11 January 1884, 25 January 1884, Minute Book 1883-1884, pp. 213, 229, YCAF 5491/4a, ANZ-A.

<sup>85</sup> *AJHR*, 1885, E-1, p. 17.

<sup>86</sup> Auckland Education Board, Minutes of Meeting of 12 February 1886, Minute Book 1885-1887, p. 282, YCAF 5491/5a, ANZ-A.

<sup>87</sup> Matheson, pp. 180-183.

<sup>88</sup> Auckland Education Board, Minutes of Meetings of 14 December 1883, 11 January 1884, Minute Book 1883-1884, pp. 199, 210, YCAF 5491/4a, ANZ-A.

<sup>89</sup> Marriage Certificate of William [recorded as Matthew] Henry Pasco Marsdon, 1883/1034, BDM; *AJHR*, 1882, E-1, p. 14; *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 2, p. 870.

<sup>90</sup> Auckland Education Board, Minutes of Meeting of 11 January 1884, Minute Book 1883-1884, p. 210, YCAF 5491/4a, ANZ-A; *AJHR*, 1885, E-1, p. 19.

<sup>91</sup> Auckland Education Board, Minutes of Meeting of 11 January 1884, Minute Book 1883-1884, p. 208, YCAF 5491/4a, ANZ-A.

10s.<sup>92</sup> The year commenced with 103 pupils and ended with 108; 88 joined during the year and 83 left, which would have increased the difficulties of teaching.<sup>93</sup> Also making running the school difficult was the ‘most irregular’ attendance of pupils and some members of the school committee, including the chairman.<sup>94</sup> Despite these difficulties, in its annual report the committee stated that Marsdon had run it in an ‘excellent manner’ and referred to ‘the high state of proficiency existing among the pupils. This has been testified to by the inspector’.<sup>95</sup> All the children examined had passed.<sup>96</sup>

During 1885, a pupil teacher, Elizabeth Mary Lena Gibbons (known as Lena), assisted the Marsdons.<sup>97</sup> She had been born in 1869, to John,<sup>98</sup> a leading timber merchant and mining investor at Thames and Te Aroha.<sup>99</sup> When the inspector examined the pupils at the end of October, he found the results to be ‘on the whole very satisfactory. Most of the work was very creditable’, although more attention was needed to spelling, grammar, and drawing. Discipline was ‘satisfactory’.<sup>100</sup> Of almost 70 children presented for examination, 90 per cent passed. All those in Standards 2, 3, and 4 passed, and only a few failed in Standard 1. Several of those who failed lived ‘at some distance from school, and being irregular in their attendance, were not quite so well prepared’.<sup>101</sup> He described the school as being in an ‘excellent state of efficiency’.<sup>102</sup>

The same teachers taught in 1886.<sup>103</sup> For a few weeks, during the absence of Mrs Marsdon, who was having a baby, Agnes Jeffrey, wife of a

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<sup>92</sup> Auckland Education Board, Minutes of Meeting of 14 March 1884, Minute Book 1883-1884, p. 282, YCAF 5491/4a, ANZ-A.

<sup>93</sup> *AJHR*, 1885, E-1, p. 53.

<sup>94</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 29 November 1884, p. 2.

<sup>95</sup> *Waikato Times*, 29 January 1885, p. 2.

<sup>96</sup> Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 5 November 1885, p. 2.

<sup>97</sup> *AJHR*, 1886, E-1, p. 19.

<sup>98</sup> Birth Certificate of Elizabeth Mary Lena Gibbons, 25 May 1869, 1869/16486, BDM.

<sup>99</sup> See *Thames Advertiser*, 30 December 1875, p. 3, 7 April 1884, p. 2, 20 February 1886, p. 3; *Thames Star*, 5 September 1889, p. 2, 29 January 1900, p. 3; *Observer*, 13 December 1902, p. 4, 7 July 1906, p. 4.

<sup>100</sup> Te Aroha Goldfields School, Class Lists for 1885, YCAF 4135/16a, ANZ-A.

<sup>101</sup> Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 5 November 1885, p. 2; *Te Aroha News*, 7 November 1885, p. 2.

<sup>102</sup> Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 9 January 1886, p. 3.

<sup>103</sup> *AJHR*, 1887, E-1, p. 18.

Waiorongomai miner,<sup>104</sup> was an assistant teacher.<sup>105</sup> Early in the year, a library was established, which a year later had 130 books and a small 'museum' in a glass case.<sup>106</sup> Because it cost 2d a month to use the library, not much use was being made of it, and Marsdon asked (unsuccessfully) the committee to remove the charge, for it was such a small charge, and because 'throwing the library open' would probably mean 'much injury to the books'.<sup>107</sup> The education board granted £10 towards it, but at first declined to pay for 'gravel, fender, and other requisites'.<sup>108</sup> One month later it agreed to contribute to the cost of the gravel, providing £1 12s, but 'Declined to alter previous decision as to request for sundry repairs &c'.<sup>109</sup>

At the beginning of 1887 the number of pupils rose by 20 to 143, and the committee wanted a drill instructor appointed.<sup>110</sup> As Marsdon's wife no longer taught after her daughter was born,<sup>111</sup> he was assisted by two pupil teachers: Eliza Reid and Edith Mary Baskett.<sup>112</sup> The latter, who lived at Waiorongomai, was appointed in March.<sup>113</sup> She had been born in England in 1871,<sup>114</sup> and her father, Nathaniel, became a farmer in the district in 1883.<sup>115</sup> He was a member of the Waiorongomai school committee for many years, for several as chairman.<sup>116</sup> In April the inspector considered that the

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<sup>104</sup> See *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 2, p. 835; recollections of Agnes Jeffrey, *Te Aroha News*, 10 February 1948, p. 5.

<sup>105</sup> Auckland Education Board, Minutes of Meeting of 14 May 1886, Minute Book 1885-1887, p. 345, YCAF 5491/5a, ANZ-A; *Te Aroha News*, 15 May 1886, p. 2; Birth Certificate of Aileen Florence Cleveland Marsdon, 1886/5912, BDM.

<sup>106</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 30 April 1887, p. 2.

<sup>107</sup> School Committee, *Te Aroha News*, 11 June 1887, p. 2.

<sup>108</sup> Auckland Education Board, Minutes of Meetings of 21 May 1886, 11 June 1886, Minute Book 1885-1887, pp. 349, 362, YCAF 5491/5a, ANZ-A.

<sup>109</sup> Auckland Education Board, Minutes of Meetings of 16 July 1886, 6 August 1886, 20 August 1886, pp. 382, 395, 404, YCAF 5491/5a, ANZ-A.

<sup>110</sup> School Committee, *Te Aroha News*, 6 February 1887, p. 2.

<sup>111</sup> Birth Certificate of Aileen Florence Cleveland Marsdon, 1886/5912, BDM.

<sup>112</sup> *AJHR*, 1888, E-1, p. 19.

<sup>113</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 12 March 1887, p. 2.

<sup>114</sup> England and Wales, BDM Birth Index 1837-1983, 1881 Census, Brames Hall, Wetheringsett cum Brockford, Suffolk, RG11/1852, Ancestry.co.uk.

<sup>115</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 1 September 1883, p. 2.

<sup>116</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 1 May 1886, p. 2, 30 April 1887, p. 2, 25 April 1888, p. 2, 27 April 1889, p. 2, 27 April 1895, p. 2.



school was 'being carefully conducted, the discipline is excellent'.<sup>117</sup> In September, Marsdon reported that the school was running smoothly, attendance being 'well kept up'.<sup>118</sup> At the end of the year, it was noted that, since he had taken charge, the pass average 'of those presented' had always been over 90 per cent.<sup>119</sup>

During 1888 two assistant teachers, Mary Elizabeth Hould and Selina Imogen Frances Mulgan, taught with Marsdon.<sup>120</sup> By June there were 144 on the roll.<sup>121</sup> The inspector reported that the Primer classes 'are well taught; they are making good progress. These results are satisfactory; the weakest classes were standards 4 and 5. Those who passed showed neat and careful work.'<sup>122</sup> The school was 'conducted in a satisfactory manner', with 'both teachers' (indicating that Marsdon was assisted by only one additional teacher in November, when the inspector visited) showing 'zeal, energy, and diligence', and 'discipline, behaviour, and tone' were all 'good'. Of the pupils presented for examination, one was absent, five were exempted, six failed, and 44 passed.<sup>123</sup>

The following year, in addition to these three teachers, there was a pupil teacher, William Simmonds.<sup>124</sup> Born at Thames in 1870, he would be appointed headmaster of the Waitekauri school in 1893.<sup>125</sup> The roll increased from 95 in late 1888 to 'over' 180 in the following February.<sup>126</sup> In May, the inspector 'found everything in a very excellent condition, and the children all being well taught. The Inspector's report was most satisfactory in every way'.<sup>127</sup> The following month, the school committee agreed to purchase the books Marsdon wanted for the library. The 'visiting

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<sup>117</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 23 April 1887, p. 2.

<sup>118</sup> *Waikato Times*, 13 September 1887, p. 3.

<sup>119</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 24 December 1887, p. 2.

<sup>120</sup> *AJHR*, 1889, E-1, p. 19; Marriage Certificates of Mary Elizabeth Hould, 1896/4735; Selina Imogen Frances Mulgan, 1891/29, BDM.

<sup>121</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 6 June 1888, p. 2.

<sup>122</sup> School Committee, *Te Aroha News*, 6 February 1889, p. 2.

<sup>123</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 1 May 1889, p. 2.

<sup>124</sup> *AJHR*, 1890, E-1, p. 17 [recorded as Simmonds].

<sup>125</sup> Birth Certificate of William Simmonds, 1870/18030, BDM; *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 2, p. 912.

<sup>126</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 23 February 1889, p. 2, 1 May 1889, p. 2.

<sup>127</sup> School Committee, *Te Aroha News*, 3 July 1889, p. 2.

Committee' reported that five panes of glass had been broken and replaced during the past month.

With reference to re-fixing the window frames in the teacher's residence, Mr Marsdon had expressed his willingness to wait the carrying out of this work until the house was painted. That with respect to raising funds to provide the School Committee's half of the cost of painting the school house and teacher's residence, Mr Marsdon had kindly promised to assist by getting up a school entertainment in about six weeks or two months, the proceeds from which he would hand over to the Committee for this purpose. As an additional means of raising the necessary funds, Mr Marsdon suggests that a public subscription of one shilling from each subscriber might easily be productive of £5 or £6.

As his offer of an entertainment was 'accepted with thanks', consideration of a subscription was adjourned. A member then

drew attention to the heavy expense the Committee were put to every year in replacing broken panes of glass in the school house, and thought it was time some steps were taken to relieve the Committee of this demand on the very limited funds at their disposal. Windows were frequently broken by the older scholars throwing balls, etc. He thought when children broke the windows their parents should make good the damage. He knew this was done in other schools.

As 'within a very short space of time' in the previous year £1 10s had been spent replacing windows, Marsdon was asked 'to announce in the school, that in future scholars breaking the windows would be held responsible to have the damage made good'.<sup>128</sup>

#### THE TE AROHA SCHOOL AND ITS TEACHERS IN THE 1890s

In 1890, Marsdon was assisted by three others: Susan Jane Ormiston, presumably the sister of the Waiorongomai teacher,<sup>129</sup> and two pupil teachers, Mary Ann Coad and Clara Garrick Goldsworthy.<sup>130</sup> As Coad

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<sup>128</sup> School Committee, *Te Aroha News*, 5 June 1889, p. 2.

<sup>129</sup> Marriage Certificates of Susan Jane Ormiston, 1894/3988; Edward Nicolls Ormiston, 1902/4800, BDM; Probate of Susan Jane Wayte, Probates, BBAE 1570, 2750/1965, ANZ-A.

<sup>130</sup> *AJHR*, 1891, E-1, p. 17.

remained single,<sup>131</sup> it seems likely that she taught for many years. Goldsworthy, born in December 1875, was a daughter of John,<sup>132</sup> a leading mine manager at Te Aroha and elsewhere.<sup>133</sup> As she never married,<sup>134</sup> she had to earn her living as a teacher. In September, a male assistant teacher named Oldham (not listed in the *AJHR* as teaching at Te Aroha) applied for three week's leave of absence, 'owing to failing health'.<sup>135</sup> Late the following month, the education board asked for the committee's consent for him to be moved to a school north of Auckland. The chairman 'telegraphed to the Board that the committee were not willing that Mr Oldham should be removed, as the school had already been greatly disorganized by the numerous changes which have taken place in the teaching staff during the past nine months', and when he was appointed it was agreed he should remain until Christmas.<sup>136</sup> Despite this protest, Oldham was removed, but was not listed as being employed there or anywhere else.<sup>137</sup> At the end of the year, Ormiston moved to an Auckland school.<sup>138</sup>

In 1891, Marsdon's colleagues were Isabella Mary Roberts,<sup>139</sup> assistant teacher, and Goldsworthy and Louisa May Stevens, pupil teachers.<sup>140</sup> (The latter's son would be a teacher also.)<sup>141</sup> The inspector noted that drawing was 'not up to the mark' and arithmetic for the older children was 'weak'.<sup>142</sup> In 1892, the same teachers were employed, and early that year Francis D. Woods was appointed as a pupil teacher because attendance had 'increased so much of late'.<sup>143</sup> In August, the *Observer* Man reported that 'Miss Roberts, our much esteemed schoolteacher, has obtained a month's leave of

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<sup>131</sup> Probate of Mary Ann Coad, Probates, BBAE 1570, 757/1958, ANZ-A.

<sup>132</sup> Birth Certificate of Clara Garrick Goldsworthy, 1 December 1875, 1875/650, BDM.

<sup>133</sup> See paper on the Goldsworthy brothers.

<sup>134</sup> Probate of Marion Goldsworthy, Probates, BBAE 1569/12528; probate of Clara Garrick Goldsworthy, Probates, BBAE 1570, 2720/1958, ANZ-A.

<sup>135</sup> 'Te Aroha', *Observer*, 27 September 1890, p. 18.

<sup>136</sup> *Te Aroha News*, n.d., reprinted in *Auckland Weekly News*, 8 November 1890, p. 18.

<sup>137</sup> *AJHR*, 1892, E-1, pp. 9-18.

<sup>138</sup> *AJHR*, 1892, E-1, p. 12.

<sup>139</sup> See Marriage Certificate of Isabella Mary Roberts, 1898/4222, BDM.

<sup>140</sup> *AJHR*, 1892, E-1, p. 17.

<sup>141</sup> Marriage Certificate of Louisa May Stevens, 1898/1233, BDM; Probate of Louisa May Towers, Probates, BBAE 1570, 38/1944, ANZ-A.

<sup>142</sup> Te Aroha School, Class Lists for 18912, YCAF 4135/30a, ANZ-A.

<sup>143</sup> *AJHR*, 1893, E-1, p. 18; 'Te Aroha', *Auckland Weekly News*, 26 March 1892, p. 23.

absence owing to ill health. Her smiling face will be missed by her many friends'.<sup>144</sup> Two months later, when Stevens was transferred to Waiorongomai, a correspondent complained that Te Aroha was 'now left with only four teachers, an assistant, two pupil teachers, and the head teacher, and two of these have charge of 90 children in one room'. Stevens had been removed because the average attendance was 'below 140, which is the minimum average entitling the school to a fifth teacher', but her loss when there were over 180 on the roll meant 'a consequent retarding of the progress of the whole school'. However, 'much satisfaction' was being 'felt at the probable return of Miss Roberts to the school after an absence through ill health of three months. She has endeared herself to the children, and is greatly respected by all the parents. Mrs Marsdon has ably fulfilled Miss Roberts' duties during her enforced absence'.<sup>145</sup>

In May the outgoing school committee had expressed its 'unqualified satisfaction ... with the very zealous manner in which the teachers have performed their duties'.<sup>146</sup> After the inspector's annual examination in November it was reported 'that 90 per cent of those presented have passed, which speaks volumes for the persevering work of Mr Marsdon and his staff of teachers, especially when the irregular attendance during the wet spring is considered'.<sup>147</sup>

There was no change of teachers in 1893.<sup>148</sup> In the following year, Marsdon was assisted by four others: Woods, Goldsworthy, Annie L. Gibbons (an assistant teacher), and Mary Sophia Lavery (a pupil teacher).<sup>149</sup> Not being recorded as 'Mrs', the usual appellation for a married teacher, it seems that Gibbons' first name was incorrectly recorded,<sup>150</sup> for Amy L. Gibbons, a sister of the Thorp brothers of Paeroa, worked as a teacher before purchasing the Fencourt homestead near Cambridge in 1900.<sup>151</sup> Lavery, born in March 1877, was appointed as a probationary pupil

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<sup>144</sup> 'Te Aroha', *Observer*, 20 August 1892, p. 19.

<sup>145</sup> Te Aroha Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 22 October 1892, p. 23.

<sup>146</sup> Te Aroha Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 7 May 1892, p. 27.

<sup>147</sup> Te Aroha Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 26 November 1892, p. 23.

<sup>148</sup> *AJHR*, 1894, E-1, p. 18.

<sup>149</sup> *AJHR*, 1895, E-1, p. 19.

<sup>150</sup> Other examples can be found in the *AJHR*; for example, the spelling of O'Connor, of Te Aroha West School, as O'Conor: *AJHR*, 1883, E-1, p. 14.

<sup>151</sup> *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 2, p. 763.

teacher in July 1894.<sup>152</sup> Her father, James, a timber merchant, builder, and agent,<sup>153</sup> was a leading figure in the district and a leading investor in local mining.<sup>154</sup> He was also the superintendent of the Wesleyan Sunday School.<sup>155</sup> The first chairman of the school committee, he served on it for most of the 1880s.<sup>156</sup> In 1888, when he resigned because he intended to settle in Queensland (he soon returned because the climate did not suit his wife),<sup>157</sup> the chairman

referred in eulogistic terms to the great interest displayed by Mr Lavery in all matters touching the education and improvement of the young ever since the school was established, in the starting of which at the first opening of the goldfield, he (Mr Lavery) had been an active promoter. The valuable aid he had on all occasions rendered was fully appreciated by the committee, the members of which were united in wishing him future prosperity.<sup>158</sup>

After teaching for six months at Te Aroha, Mary Lavery was appointed to the Tararu school.<sup>159</sup> As she never married,<sup>160</sup> she probably taught for the rest of her life.

In June 1894, the committee unanimously adopted the following motion:

“That this committee begs respectfully to protest against the 10 per cent reduction in the head teachers’ salaries, and also against the charging of rent for their houses, as the committee believe it will have a direct tendency to discourage the teachers, and to

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<sup>152</sup> Birth Certificate of Mary Sophia Lavery, 24 March 1877, 1877/10219, BDM; *New Zealand Herald*, 5 July 1894, p. 6.

<sup>153</sup> For example, *Descriptive Handbook to the Waikato* (Hamilton, 1880), p. 66; *Thames Advertiser*, 18 November 1880, p. 3, 15 January 1881, p. 3, 31 January 1881, p. 3, 17 May 1881, p. 2, 28 September 1881, p. 2; *Te Aroha News*, 17 October 1885, p. 2, 28 January 1888, p. 2, advertisement, 7 May 1898, p. 1; *Thames Star*, 15 July 1913, p. 5.

<sup>154</sup> For example, *Te Aroha News*, editorial, 8 April 1884, p. 2, 10 November 1888, p. 2.

<sup>155</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 2 May 1885, p. 2.

<sup>156</sup> *Thames Advertiser*, 19 December 1881, p. 3; *Te Aroha News*, 26 January 1884, p. 2, 1 May 1886, p. 2, 30 April 1887, p. 2, 27 April 1889, p. 2, 30 April 1890, p. 2.

<sup>157</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 10 November 1888, p. 2.

<sup>158</sup> *Waikato Times*, 9 February 1888, p. 2.

<sup>159</sup> *Thames Advertiser*, 30 January 1895, p. 2

<sup>160</sup> Probate of Mary Sophia Lavery, Probates, BBAE 1570, 1364/1965, ANZ-A.

prevent men of ability from entering the service of the Board.” It was shown that the new regulations would seriously affect the income of the Te Aroha teacher, probably to the extent of from 15 to 20 per cent. It is particularly hard and unjust in his case, as the following will show: - The only promotion he has had during 12 or 13 years of service has been from Parawai, Thames, to Te Aroha, the only difference between the two places being the possession of a teacher’s residence at Te Aroha. Now, after 11 years of faithful and very successful work here, rent is to be charged for the house, which made the move promotion. The Board can hardly expect competent men to enter their service if they anticipate treatment like this.<sup>161</sup>

In 1895, Marsdon was assisted by four others: his wife, Gibbons, and Mary Stapleton Slater,<sup>162</sup> all assistant teachers, and Goldsworthy.<sup>163</sup> In September, the committee discussed ‘the necessity for increased school accommodation’, as the roll had risen to 200 ‘with an upward tendency’. As the rooms were ‘far too small for this number’, during part of the day lessons were held ‘in one of the porches’. The education board was asked to provide greater space ‘and thus enable the teaching staff to do their work with greater ease and efficiency’.<sup>164</sup> This number of pupils was the highest ever.<sup>165</sup> Although the enlarged accommodation was not provided, a new bell was, which ‘should give forth a more certain sound than the old cracked one’.<sup>166</sup> The *Te Aroha News* complained that refusal to provide more accommodation meant that ‘in many cases children have to sit three in a desk’; teaching in such conditions could not be satisfactory.<sup>167</sup> Despite the overcrowding, the inspector recorded that, in the Primers, ‘the highest division can read and spell with great ease and freedom from the Infant Readers’ and were making ‘good progress’ in arithmetic. The second division were coping, but ‘the third division consist mostly of beginners who have not as yet made an appreciable progress’.<sup>168</sup>

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<sup>161</sup> Te Aroha Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 16 June 1894, p. 10.

<sup>162</sup> See Marriage Certificate of Mary Stapleton Slater [recorded as Slator], 1900/4462, BDM; Probate of Mary Stapleton Beale, AAOM 6030, box 224, no. 21265, ANZ-W.

<sup>163</sup> *AJHR*, 1896, E-1, p. 19.

<sup>164</sup> Te Aroha Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 21 September 1895, p. 23.

<sup>165</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 14 September 1895, p. 2.

<sup>166</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 5 October 1895, p. 2.

<sup>167</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 27 November 1895, p. 2.

<sup>168</sup> Te Aroha Goldfields School, Class Lists for 1895, YCAF 4135/45a, ANZ-A.

In 1896, Marsdon's wife no longer taught, Slater remained, and Goldsworthy was now an assistant teacher. Lavery was once more a pupil teacher, as was Maurice Priestley.<sup>169</sup> The latter, correctly Job Maurice Priestley, then aged 18, would eventually become an inspector.<sup>170</sup> In 1897, Marsdon retained Slater, Goldsworthy and Lavery, and there were two more pupil teachers, Griffith Rogers Jones and Hilda Armstrong.<sup>171</sup> The former was a schoolteacher for the rest of his life.<sup>172</sup> In June, when 237 pupils were enrolled, the inspector 'reported favorably on quality of the instruction given, and the general efficiency of the school'.<sup>173</sup> He gave a more detailed account of the achievements when revisiting in December, starting with Class 5:

Drawing & Writing 'V Satisf work in books Much good writing & drawing.

Geography Many good papers Answers full – govmt of India not so good.

Composition No serious blunders ... but want of progress of thought noticeable.

Class 4 was not quite so satisfactory, with 'few good exercises' in composition. 'Many show little power of dealing with stories. Punctuation defective'. In geography, there were 'Some good papers About half inferior'. No comments were made about the Primers.<sup>174</sup> Of the 135 children who sat the end of year examinations, 79 per cent passed. 'This percentage would have been larger, but for the disarrangement of the teaching staff caused by the removal of Mr Priestley in the middle of the year's work', according to the chairman of the committee.<sup>175</sup> Priestley had been transferred to be headmaster of the Waikato coal mining settlement of Kimihia.<sup>176</sup> The chairman 'complimented Mr Marsdon and his staff on the efficient manner

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<sup>169</sup> *AJHR*, 1897, E-1, p. 19.

<sup>170</sup> Auckland Hospital, Register of Patients 1904-1908, folio 190, YCAB 15288/4a; Probate of Job Maurice Priestley, Probates, BBAE 1570, 2725/1957, ANZ-A; *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 2, p. 710.

<sup>171</sup> *AJHR*, 1898, E-1, p. 19.

<sup>172</sup> Probate of Griffith Rogers Jones, Probates, BBAE 1570, 3396/1962, ANZ-A.

<sup>173</sup> 'Twinkler', 'Te Aroha Notes', *Thames Advertiser*, 17 June 1897, p. 3.

<sup>174</sup> Te Aroha Goldfields School, Class Lists for 1897, YCAF 4135/46a, ANZ-A.

<sup>175</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 28 April 1898, p. 3.

<sup>176</sup> *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 2, p. 710.

in which the work of teaching and conducting the school had been carried out, and quoted the Inspector's report on the subject, which was highly commendatory'.<sup>177</sup>

In June, the education board was again asked to erect 'a new fence to enclose the school ground and the teacher's residence, the present fence being dilapidated and unsightly'.<sup>178</sup> In that year, a new school building was opened. 'A large playground surrounds the school, which is well sheltered, and there are two covered sheds for wet weather. The class-rooms are well fitted up and thoroughly ventilated, and have accommodation for 250 children'.<sup>179</sup>

The only change amongst the teachers in 1898 was that Mabel E. Conway replaced Armstrong.<sup>180</sup> In early 1899, Marsdon was selected from 19 candidates to take charge of the Kauaeranga Boys' School. The *Te Aroha News* could not 'but deplore the departure from our midst of such a painstaking and worthy a teacher'.<sup>181</sup> He was replaced by Alfred Fordyce Burton, who had been born in New Zealand in 1866 and who taught from 1886 until retiring from teaching in 1927, when still the head teacher at Te Aroha.<sup>182</sup> Elizabeth Masefield joined Goldsworthy as an assistant teacher,<sup>183</sup> and there were two pupil teachers, Lavery once more, and Frank William Garland,<sup>184</sup> who would be a teacher for the rest of his life.<sup>185</sup> Masefield would marry an Anglican clergyman in the following year,<sup>186</sup> and leave the profession.

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<sup>177</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 28 April 1898, p. 3.

<sup>178</sup> 'Twinkler', 'Te Aroha Notes', *Thames Advertiser*, 17 June 1897, p. 3.

<sup>179</sup> *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 2, p. 826.

<sup>180</sup> *AJHR*, 1899, E-1, pp. 19-20.

<sup>181</sup> *Te Aroha News*, n.d., reprinted in *Thames Advertiser*, 24 March 1899, p. 2.

<sup>182</sup> Birth Certificate of Alfred Fordyce Burton, 1866/10974, BDM; Auckland Education Board, Minutes of Meeting of 30 April 1886, Minute Book 1885-1887, p. 333, YCAF 5491/5a, ANZ-A; *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 2, pp. 826-827; Probate of Alfred Fordyce Burton, Probates, BBAE 1570, 2381/1956, ANZ-A; Priest, p. 7.

<sup>183</sup> See *Auckland Star*, 13 August 1891, p. 6, 23 February 1892, p. 5, 21 February 1895, p. 3.

<sup>184</sup> *AJHR*, 1900, E-1, p. 20.

<sup>185</sup> Probate of Frank William Garland, CAHZ 2989, CH 944/1955, ANZ-C.

<sup>186</sup> Marriage Certificate of Elizabeth Masefield, 1900/4301, BDM; probate of Elizabeth Wingfield, BBAE 1570, P525/1951, ANZ-A; *New Zealand Herald*, 7 August 1905, p. 6.



At the beginning of July, the state of the school was ‘only middling’, according to the *Te Aroha News*:

The head teacher is confined to his house through sickness, Miss Lavery, pupil teacher, is in a similar predicament, and only 75 scholars were present out of a roll number of over 200. And to add to the general happiness two new teachers started yesterday morning, and were consequently at a disadvantage in having only one pupil teacher with any local experience to show them “the run of the ropes.” Mrs Burton, who is an ex-teacher, has had to step into the breach, and render what assistance she can, but she also labors under the disadvantage already referred to, as being a new arrival, she is unknown to the bulk of the scholars. What with sickness, an almost entirely new staff within two months, and the attendance reduced to about one half through a measles and whooping cough epidemic, Mrs Burton has a particularly “hard row to hoe.” And on top of all this, the Board of Education has notified the Committee that as the attendance has fallen away so considerably, they may have to reduce the staff of teachers.<sup>187</sup>

The inspector gave a particularly detailed report in November of the first year under Burton’s leadership. The Primers were doing well, but reading in the first Standards revealed ‘considerable weakness’, for a ‘good many read with little or no confidence’. In geography at this level, ‘Definitions very fairly known – Pupils have got a poor knowledge of position of places and know little or nothing of meaning of map i.e. way physical features are marked’. Geography for Standards 4 and 5 was ‘very poor ... the pupils appear to know little or nothing of the subject. Great confusion too exists as to positions of places. Errors in spelling geographical names are frequent’. In Standard 4, drawing was ‘very fair’, for ‘many are unfinished’. Composition was ‘only moderate – very little power or skill shown in sentence formation’. In the grammar class, parsing was ‘almost poor’, and ‘many of the simpler parts of speech’ were ‘not recognized. Inflections hardly fair’. Reading, however, was satisfactory. Composition in Standard 5 varied from very fair to very satisfactory; ‘Use of apostrophe and of inverted commas not thoroughly understood’.<sup>188</sup>

When he attended the opening of a new school building in 1936, Burton ‘observed that the new school had been looked forward to and hoped for for many many years. In his period of service he had considered the old

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<sup>187</sup> *Te Aroha News*, n.d., reprinted in *Thames Star*, 7 July 1899, p. 1.

<sup>188</sup> Te Aroha School, Class Lists for 1899, YCAF 4135/52a, ANZ-A.

school the most inconvenient in the Auckland district. The layout and lighting arrangements were just about the worst possible'.<sup>189</sup>

During 1900, there were 212 children on the roll, 'with an average attendance of 197'.<sup>190</sup> In August the name was changed from Te Aroha Goldfields School to Te Aroha School.<sup>191</sup> Seven years later, it would be created a district high school.<sup>192</sup>

## THE WAIORONGOMAI SCHOOL

At its meeting of 1 December 1882 the education board received an application for a school from Waiorongomai residents. 'Postponed until first meeting in April. Committee to be asked for full information'.<sup>193</sup> In April, the request was deferred 'for Inspector's report'.<sup>194</sup> At the beginning of June, Thomas Lawless, a Waiorongomai publican,<sup>195</sup> acting as spokesman for the residents, complained to the school committee about the 'apathetic action' of the board, for more families were settling. A member commented that 'it was really too much that the children should be expected to walk to Te Aroha to attend school'. For the moment, temporary buildings would be acceptable.<sup>196</sup> One week later later, when the inspector's report was received, the board agreed to send a teacher and rent a building from William Wilkinson.<sup>197</sup> Wilkinson, who had founded the *Thames Advertiser* and later the *Te Aroha Mail*,<sup>198</sup> had attended the opening of the Te Aroha

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<sup>189</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 9 September 1936, p. 5.

<sup>190</sup> *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 2, p. 826.

<sup>191</sup> Priest, p. 13.

<sup>192</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 10 February 1948, p. 5.

<sup>193</sup> Auckland Education Board, Minutes of Meeting of 1 December 1882, Minute Book 1881-1883, p. 383, YCAF 5491/3a, ANZ-A.

<sup>194</sup> Auckland Education Board, Minutes of Meeting of 20 April 1883, Minute Book 1881-1883, p. 465, YCAF 5491/3a, ANZ-A.

<sup>195</sup> See paper on his life.

<sup>196</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 9 June 1883, p. 2.

<sup>197</sup> Auckland Education Board, Minutes of Meeting of 15 June 1883, Minute Book 1883-1884, p. 30, YCAF 5491/4a, ANZ-A.

<sup>198</sup> *Auckland Provincial Government Gazette*, 26 July 1871, p. 198; *New Zealand Gazette*, 24 August 1876, p. 601: advertisement, *Waikato Times*, 13 May 1882, p. 3; *Thames Star*, 28 April 1882, p. 2; *Thames Advertiser*, 5 June 1882, p. 3; *New Zealand Herald*, 6 June 1882, p. 2; *Observer*, 4 March 1882, p. 390, 10 June 1882, pp. 198, 204, 26 May 1900, p. 6.

goldfield but did not invest in mining there until gold was discovered at Waiorongomai.<sup>199</sup> He also acquired both residence and business sites in the Waiorongomai settlement and 128 acres of adjoining farmland.<sup>200</sup> By this time he had moved to Auckland to take charge of the *Observer* and, later, to be a printer.<sup>201</sup> Wilkinson agreed to rent his building for £25 for 12 months, during which time the school committee was required to make a 'definite recommendation as to site' of a permanent school.<sup>202</sup> £10 was granted to provide 'closets', meaning toilets, and other alterations to the building.<sup>203</sup> Late in July, the board received a telegram from the committee 'reporting School-room blown down, also letter from proprietor Mr Wm Wilkinson offering to re-erect it if Board will grant £10 towards the cost'; it agreed.<sup>204</sup> The repairs cost almost double this amount, £19 6s 6d.<sup>205</sup> It also met the cost of carting furniture to the school.<sup>206</sup> During 1883, £43 17s was spent on the site, buildings, furniture, and 'apparatus'.<sup>207</sup>

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<sup>199</sup> *Thames Star*, 25 November 1880, p. 2; Te Aroha Warden's Court, Register of Te Aroha Claims 1880-1888, folios 254, 330, BBAV 11567/1a; Register of Licensed Holdings 1881-1887, folios 64, 84, BBAV 11500/9a, ANZ-A; *Thames Advertiser*, 23 October 1882, p. 2; *New Zealand Gazette*, 31 May 1883, p. 722, 20 September 1883, p. 1345, 4 October 1883, p. 1437.

<sup>200</sup> Te Aroha Warden's Court, Register of Applications 1880-1882, folios 191, 203, 261, BBAV 11505/3a; Plaintiff Book 1880-1898, 45/1883, 28/1884, BBAV 11547/1a; Rent Ledger 1881-1900, folios 270, 271, BBAV 11501/1a, ANZ-A; *Thames Advertiser*, 11 May 1882, p. 3.

<sup>201</sup> *Thames Star*, 9 March 1883, p. 2; *Thames Advertiser*, 26 April 1883, p. 2, 11 April 1895, p. 2; *Observer*, 8 September 1883, p. 15, 23 September 1905, p. 3, 28 May 1910, p. 5; *New Zealand Herald*, 23 September 1921, p. 6.

<sup>202</sup> Auckland Education Board, Minutes of Meeting of 29 June 1883, Minute Book 1883-1884, p. 43, YCAF 5491/4a, ANZ-A.

<sup>203</sup> Auckland Education Board, Minutes of Meeting of 13 July 1883, Minute Book 1883-1884, p. 56, YCAF 5491/4a, ANZ-A.

<sup>204</sup> Auckland Education Board, Minutes of Meeting of 27 July 1883, Minute Book 1883-1885, p. 67, YCAF 5491/4a, ANZ-A.

<sup>205</sup> Auckland Education Board, Minutes of Meeting of 17 August 1883, Minute Book 1883-1884, p. 86, YCAF 5491/1a, ANZ-A.

<sup>206</sup> Auckland Education Board, Minutes of Meeting of 12 October 1883, Minute Book 1883-1884, p. 135, YCAF 5491/4a, ANZ-A.

<sup>207</sup> *AJHR*, 1884, E-1, p. 15.

This temporary schoolhouse was only 240 square feet, compared with Te Aroha's 1,575.<sup>208</sup> As this building 'was found inadequate to the requirements of the district ... on the urgent request of the committee the Board, seeing a proper school building was necessary, promptly took the necessary preparatory steps' to replace it.<sup>209</sup> In August, Samuel Cochrane Macky's offer of two acres was accepted.<sup>210</sup> Macky, a prominent legal manager,<sup>211</sup> had invested in several Waiorongomai claims and companies,<sup>212</sup> and had made a substantial profit from acquiring and selling land in and adjacent to the settlement.<sup>213</sup>

As the temporary schoolhouse was 'quickly restored to its proper position, from which it was shifted by the late storm', it was formally opened on 1 August in the presence of almost 40 children. The committee's chairman 'congratulated the inhabitants on obtaining so suitable a building for the purpose', and 'impressed upon parents the necessity of sending their children regularly to school and other duties in connection with the training of the young'. Following more speeches, 'a bountiful supply of good things' was consumed. 'After this Mrs [Margaret] Lawless favoured the company with several choice selections on the pianoforte, kindly lent for the occasion. The meeting then adjourned till 8 o'clock, when about twenty couples and many onlookers were present and they kept up the dancing till midnight'. After congratulating the inhabitants on the success of the first such social gathering at Waiorongomai, the *Te Aroha News* hoped 'to ere long see a proper school house erected, suited to the requirements of this rising

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<sup>208</sup> *AJHR*, 1884, E-1, p. 47.

<sup>209</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 2 February 1884, p. 7.

<sup>210</sup> Auckland Education Board, Minutes of Meeting of 17 August 1883, Minute Book 1883-1884, p. 86, YCAF 5491/4a, ANZ-A.

<sup>211</sup> See *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 2, p. 465; letters from S.C. Macky, *Thames Advertiser*, 20 June 1898, p. 4, 12 July 1898, p. 4, 19 July 1898, p. 4; *New Zealand Herald*, 3 November 1914, p. 7; N.L. Macky, *Macky Family in New Zealand 1945-1969*, vol. 1 (Auckland, 1969), pp. 40-41.

<sup>212</sup> For example, Te Aroha Warden's Court, Register of Licensed Holdings 1881-1887, folios 1, 46, 53, 54, 56, 88, 107, BBAV 11500/9a, ANZ-A; *Thames Star*, 23 February 1882, p. 2; *New Zealand Gazette*, 23 March 1882, p. 490, 5 August 1882, p. 1131, 14 September 1882, p. 1264, 2 November 1882, p. 1616, 14 December 1882, p. 1885.

<sup>213</sup> *Thames Star*, 27 June 1882, p. 2; *Thames Advertiser*, 4 September 1883, p. 3, 12 November 1883, p. 3, 4 March 1884, p. 2; *Waikato Times*, 16 October 1883, p. 2; *Observer*, 3 November 1883, p. 15; *Te Aroha News*, 17 November 1883, p. 2.

district. The present number of scholars will at once fill the temporary school, which, with the early influx of population that is certain to take place shortly, will be utterly inadequate to afford sufficient accommodation'.<sup>214</sup>

Alfred O'Connor, who moved from the Mackaytown school in February 1881 to be, briefly, a probationary teacher in Auckland and the following year was appointed the first teacher at Te Aroha West, at the end of June 1883 became the first teacher at Waiorongomai.<sup>215</sup> He was a shareholder in one claim and one company.<sup>216</sup> In September he told the school committee that those using the schoolroom for dancing 'had so abused the privilege by upsetting the desks, greasing the floor, and injuring the school property, besides leaving the place in a very dirty state, etc, that he had felt it his duty to refuse them the key'.<sup>217</sup> Within a month the committee decided that he was 'not suitable as a teacher', and on their request he was removed.<sup>218</sup> At the same meeting, the board resolved that O'Connor should answer the accusation by William Henry Hawkins,<sup>219</sup> his replacement at Te Aroha West,<sup>220</sup> that he had falsified the roll at that school.<sup>221</sup> After O'Connor went to Auckland to answer this charge he was informed that he was not dismissed because of any alleged misconduct but simply in accordance with the provisions of the Act; the board refused to employ him again.<sup>222</sup> It also

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<sup>214</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 4 August 1883, p. 2.

<sup>215</sup> Auckland Education Board, Minutes of Meetings of 18 February 1881, 6 May 1881, Minute Book 1881-1883, pp. 33, 82, YCAF 5491/3a, ANZ-A; *AJHR*, 1883, E-1, p. 14; *Te Aroha News*, 30 June 1883, p. 2; *Te Aroha West School: 85th Jubilee 1882-1967: Te Aroha West district 1879-1967* (Te Aroha, 1968), no pagination [p. 10].

<sup>216</sup> Te Aroha Warden's Court, Register of Licensed Holdings 1881-1887, folio 157, BBAV 11500/9a, ANZ-A; *Waikato Times*, 6 September 1883, p. 3; *Te Aroha News*, 29 March 1884, p. 7.

<sup>217</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 8 September 1883, p. 2.

<sup>218</sup> Auckland Education Board, Minutes of Meeting of 12 October 1883, Minute Book 1883-1884, p. 145, YCAF 5491/4a, ANZ-A; *Te Aroha News*, 2 February 1884, p. 7.

<sup>219</sup> See paper on the temperance movement in the Te Aroha district.

<sup>220</sup> *AJHR*, 1884, E-1, p. 15.

<sup>221</sup> Auckland Education Board, Minutes of Meeting of 12 October 1883, Minute Book 1883-1884, p. 146, YCAF 5491/4a, ANZ-A.

<sup>222</sup> Auckland Education Board, Minutes of Meetings of 2 November 1883, 18 January 1884, Minute Book 1883-1884, pp. 160, 220, YCAF 5491/4a, ANZ-A.

declined his request to meet his travelling expenses to Auckland.<sup>223</sup> William T. Murray replaced him in mid-November on a temporary basis; formerly a probationary teacher in Newton East school in Auckland, he remained in charge for the rest of the year, later going on to teach elsewhere in the Auckland district.<sup>224</sup>

During its first six months, 95 pupils were enrolled, 75 remaining when the year ended.<sup>225</sup> The local newspaper considered that Murray was a good teacher. 'The attendance has largely increased, and the children made excellent progress'.<sup>226</sup> In November, the inspector noted that object lessons were 'fair', as were the laws of health, but there was no singing or needlework, and drawing consisted of 'Elementary Freehand on Slates'. Discipline and drill was 'Fair – No gymnastic apparatus'.<sup>227</sup>

The head teacher in 1884 was Edmund Campbell Purdie, who was assisted by Peter Gillies Steel.<sup>228</sup> Purdie was 'highly qualified' and had the reputation of being an excellent teacher.<sup>229</sup> He formed a debating society for adults.<sup>230</sup> Steel would be a teacher until his death in 1897.<sup>231</sup> At the beginning of March, it was reported that they were 'much liked', everyone being satisfied with their performance.<sup>232</sup> Lucy J. Harling, a pupil teacher, taught for part of the year. In July she made unspecified charges, presumably of sexual harassment, against Hawkins, who taught at both Waihou and Te Aroha West. After both attended a meeting of the board, the

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<sup>223</sup> Auckland Education Board, Minutes of Meeting of 28 March 1884, Minute Book 1883-1884, p. 300, YCAF 5491/4a, ANZ-A.

<sup>224</sup> *AJHR*, 1884, E-1, p. 15; 1886, E-1, p. 16; *Te Aroha News*, 17 November 1883, p. 2, 2 February 1884, p. 7.

<sup>225</sup> *AJHR*, 1884, E-1, p. 47.

<sup>226</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 22 December 1883, p. 2.

<sup>227</sup> Waiorongomai School, Class Lists for 1883, YCAF 4135/10a, ANZ-A.

<sup>228</sup> *AJHR*, 1885, E-1, p. 20.

<sup>229</sup> Auckland Education Board, Minutes of Meeting of 11 January 1884, Minute Book 1883-1884, p. 210, YCAF 5491/4a, ANZ-A; *Te Aroha News*, 22 December 1883, p. 2, 2 February 1884, p. 7.

<sup>230</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 19 April 1884, p. 2, 26 April 1884, p. 2, 24 May 1884, p. 7, 21 June 1884, p. 2.

<sup>231</sup> Probate of Peter Gillies Steel, Probates, BBAE 1569/2612, ANZ-A.

<sup>232</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 1 March 1884, p. 2.

Waihou committee was instructed to investigate her charges.<sup>233</sup> After receiving the report, the board gave Hawkins three months' notice and resolved that Harling 'be removed from the district to another school'.<sup>234</sup> The committee and some residents asked that she not be removed, but she had already been appointed to Ararimu Valley.<sup>235</sup> Hawkins was removed one month after the decision that he must leave.<sup>236</sup>

There were 64 pupils enrolled at the start of 1884; 60 joined later, 43 left, and 81 were enrolled at the end of the year.<sup>237</sup> The new schoolroom was opened at the beginning of May.<sup>238</sup> It was 840 square feet in size, and cost £504.<sup>239</sup> According to one account, the building, 'a very commodious one', was 'in the stereotyped style of school architecture and stands in an excellent situation. It is much required, as the place in which the children are at present taught is miserably small and comfortless'.<sup>240</sup> For some reason, not till May 1885 was the committee authorized to purchase a bell.<sup>241</sup> In November, 21 of the 31 children examined passed.<sup>242</sup> The inspector noted that, in the 'Infant Division', the work done was 'as yet very elementary indeed'. Although they knew their letters, they were 'not yet able to read more than very easy words. Writing needs more attention'. In the 'upper division' of the 'infants', the children were 'able to read words (easy) and have made some progress in Arithmetic'. Their writing was 'good'. There was no singing, drawing, needlework, or elementary science. Discipline and drill were 'Good – Appliances lately received teacher states

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<sup>233</sup> Auckland Education Board, Minutes of Meeting of 3 July 1885, Minute Book 1885-1887, p. 140, YCAF 5491/5a, ANZ-A.

<sup>234</sup> Auckland Education Board, Minutes of Meetings of 17 July 1885, 24 July 1885, Minute Book 1885-1887, pp. 150, 155, YCAF 5491/5a, ANZ-A.

<sup>235</sup> Auckland Education Board, Minutes of Meetings of 31 July 1885, 7 August 1885, Minute Book 1885-1887, pp. 162, 164, YCAF 5491/5a, ANZ-A.

<sup>236</sup> Auckland Education Board, Minutes of Meeting of 21 August 1885, Minute Book 1885-1887, p. 171, YCAF 5491/5a, ANZ-A.

<sup>237</sup> *AJHR*, 1885, E-1, p. 53.

<sup>238</sup> *Waikato Times*, 8 May 1884, p. 2.

<sup>239</sup> *AJHR*, 1885, E-1, p. 53; C.T. Harris, 'The Upper Thames Valley', *Te Aroha News*, 16 September 1936, p. 8.

<sup>240</sup> Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 15 March 1884, p. 2.

<sup>241</sup> Auckland Education Board, Minutes of Meeting of 1 May 1885, Minute Book 1885-1887, p. 94, YCAF 5491/5a, ANZ-A.

<sup>242</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 17 January 1885, p. 2.

little proficiency as yet in Bar Drill'. He considered there had been 'a great improvement in this school generally but the results in the higher standards are scarcely satisfactory'.<sup>243</sup> At the beginning of 1885 Purdie was removed, but the local newspaper was told that he was leaving at his own request.<sup>244</sup> In its annual report the committee stated that Purdie had run his school in an 'excellent manner'.<sup>245</sup> The local *Observer* Man, presumably referring to Purdie, mysteriously asked: 'Was the reason given by our schoolmaster ... for leaving his lodgings correct?'<sup>246</sup> He would eventually become a school inspector.<sup>247</sup>

In response to a petition from residents of Waiorongomai and Quartzville for their own school committee, in December 1884 the education board authorized the division of the existing district between Te Aroha and Waiorongomai.<sup>248</sup>

For the following two years, John Henry Gillies was head teacher, assisted by Ellen Mary Mason.<sup>249</sup> Gillies was aged 23 when he took up this appointment.<sup>250</sup> At the end of 1885, in a generally positive assessment the inspector noted, under 'Discipline and Drill', that the children were 'rather restless – should be stricter'. The results 'on the whole' were very satisfactory, but he repeated that discipline 'should be somewhat stricter'.<sup>251</sup> The pass rate was 89 per cent, up 22 per cent on the previous year.<sup>252</sup>

Mary E. Scott replaced Mason in 1887.<sup>253</sup> The school requested, unsuccessfully, the appointment of a drill instructor, but the committee did agree to floor 'the shed' so that children could eat their lunches in it during

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<sup>243</sup> Waiorongomai School, Class Lists for 1884, YCAF 4135/13a, ANZ-A.

<sup>244</sup> Auckland Education Board, Minutes of Meeting of 13 February 1885, Minute Book 1885-1887, p. 32, YCAF 5491/5a; *Te Aroha News*, 20 December 1884, p. 2.

<sup>245</sup> *Waikato Times*, 29 January 1885, p. 2.

<sup>246</sup> 'Waiorongomai', *Observer*, 21 March 1885, p. 10.

<sup>247</sup> Probate of Edmund Campbell Purdie, Probates, BBAE 1570, 859/1936, ANZ-A.

<sup>248</sup> Auckland Education Board, Minutes of Meeting of 19 December 1884, Minute Book 1883-1884, p. 484, YCAF 5491/4a, ANZ-A; *Te Aroha News*, 20 December 1884, p. 2.

<sup>249</sup> *AJHR*, 1886, E-1, p. 19; 1887, p. 18; Marriage Certificate of Ellen Mary Mason, 1889/1867, BDM.

<sup>250</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 20 December 1884, p. 2.

<sup>251</sup> Waiorongomai School, Class Lists for 1885, YCAF 4135/16a, ANZ-A.

<sup>252</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 7 November 1885, p. 2.

<sup>253</sup> *AJHR*, 1888, E-1, p. 19.



bad weather.<sup>254</sup> The roll in April was 85, with an average attendance of 61.<sup>255</sup> Four months later, the roll had fallen to 83, and the average attendance was 54.<sup>256</sup> A year later, with 19 new children enrolling during the year, there were 91 pupils.<sup>257</sup> In 1888, Elizabeth Ada Nixon replaced Scott as the assistant teacher; there was no change of teachers in 1889.<sup>258</sup> As Nixon never married,<sup>259</sup> she probably taught all her life. By March that year, when the roll had reached 99; although the average attendance was only 69, pressure on space was such that the infants were taught in the porch.<sup>260</sup> In July, the committee agreed to plant trees around the grounds. As Gillies had got the boys to cut up the firewood instead of employing someone as the board had agreed, there was debate about whether they should be paid for this work. Some members considered that 'they ought to be well satisfied to do the work for their own comfort', but the chairman's casting vote ensured that they received 6s.<sup>261</sup> The boys cut firewood each morning.<sup>262</sup> Concern was expressed that children aged under five years might be attending.<sup>263</sup>

In mid-1890, when Gillies left, he received a testimonial signed by 43 residents.<sup>264</sup> Gillies was replaced by Edward Nicolls Ormiston,<sup>265</sup> who would teach for the rest of his life.<sup>266</sup> Ormiston remained until the end of 1893. In 1891, he was relieved for part of the year by James B. Murray, and Elizabeth Kelly was the pupil teacher.<sup>267</sup> In the following year two pupil teachers assisted him: Louisa Stevens, who was transferred from Te Aroha

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<sup>254</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 6 February 1887, p. 2, 14 May 1887, p. 2.

<sup>255</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 30 April 1887, p. 2.

<sup>256</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 20 August 1887, p. 3.

<sup>257</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 1 August 1888, p. 2.

<sup>258</sup> *AJHR*, 1889, E-1, p. 19; 1890, E-1, p. 17.

<sup>259</sup> Probate of Elizabeth Ada Nixon, Probates, BBAE 1570, 170/1942, ANZ-A; but note Marriage Certificate of Elizabeth Ada Nixon, 1903/2070, BDM.

<sup>260</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 6 March 1889, p. 2.

<sup>261</sup> Waiorongomai Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 20 July 1889, p. 22.

<sup>262</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 13 July 1889, p. 2.

<sup>263</sup> Waiorongomai Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 20 July 1889, p. 22.

<sup>264</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 2 July 1890, p. 2.

<sup>265</sup> *AJHR*, 1891, E-1, p. 17.

<sup>266</sup> Probate of Edward Nicolls Ormiston, Probates, BBAE 1570, 1372/1948, ANZ-A.

<sup>267</sup> *AJHR*, 1892, E-1, p. 17.

in October, and Norman Hayworth Sanger Law.<sup>268</sup> Law, then aged 15, had been a pupil at Te Aroha; he would become a school inspector.<sup>269</sup> Stevens was the only teacher to assist Ormiston in 1893.<sup>270</sup>

James William Rennick, whose life is detailed below, was appointed head teacher in 1894, assisted by Stevens and another pupil teacher, Emily Mabel Maingay.<sup>271</sup> A former pupil at Te Aroha, then aged 17,<sup>272</sup> she was the daughter of James Tenison Maingay, manager and editor of the *Te Aroha News*, and for a time a member of the Te Aroha committee.<sup>273</sup> As she never married, she taught all her life; she returned to live in Te Aroha before her death in 1958.<sup>274</sup> Rennick remained in charge until March 1902,<sup>275</sup> assisted by a series of pupil teachers: Stevens in 1895, Ethel Annie McAndrew<sup>276</sup> and Maingay in 1896, the latter being replaced by Mary Eliza Jennings in August 1897, just Maingay in 1898, and just Jennings in 1899.<sup>277</sup> Jennings, born in 1882, had been a pupil at this school, and remained a teacher at least until she married a farmer at Otorohanga in 1910.<sup>278</sup> Her father, Edward, a carpenter and occasional miner,<sup>279</sup> was a member of the

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<sup>268</sup> *AJHR*, 1893, E-1, p. 18; Te Aroha Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 22 October 1892, p. 23.

<sup>269</sup> Te Aroha Goldfields School, Attendance Rolls, November 1890, YCAF 4135/27a; Probate of Norman Hayworth Sanger Law, BBAE 1570, 375/1937, ANZ-A.

<sup>270</sup> *AJHR*, 1894, E-1, p. 18.

<sup>271</sup> *AJHR*, 1895, E-1, p. 19.

<sup>272</sup> Te Aroha Goldfields School, Attendance Roll 1884, p. 88, YCAF 5135/13a, ANZ-A.

<sup>273</sup> *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 2, p. 828.

<sup>274</sup> Probate of Emily Mabel Maingay, Hamilton Probates, BCDG 4421, 548/1958, ANZ-A.

<sup>275</sup> *Thames Star*, 29 January 1902, p. 2.

<sup>276</sup> See Marriage Certificate of Ethel Annie McAndrew, 1917/3324, BDM; Probate of Ethel Annie Kenney, Probates, BBAE 1569/15884, ANZ-A.

<sup>277</sup> *AJHR*, 1896, E-1, p. 19; 1897, E-1, p. 19; 1898, E-1, p. 19; 1899, E-1, p. 20; 1900, E-1, p. 20 [Jennings recorded as Elizabeth Mary]; *Te Aroha News*, 28 April 1898, p. 3.

<sup>278</sup> Birth Certificate of Mary Eliza Jennings, 15 August 1882, 1882/10087, BDM; Waiorongomai School, Attendance Roll 1888, p. 440, YCAF 4135/24a, ANZ-A; Marriage Certificate of Mary Eliza Jennings, 26 April 1910, 1910/3520, BDM.

<sup>279</sup> See *Thames Star*, 24 July 1890, p. 2; *Thames Advertiser*, 25 January 1893, p. 2, 21 May 1894, p. 2; *New Zealand Herald*, 25 October 1926, p. 10; *Te Aroha News*, 27 October 1926, p. 8.

Waiorongomai committee for many years and its secretary for at least two years.<sup>280</sup>

In early 1895, the inspector 'singled out this school and grounds as among the neatest and best kept in the district'.<sup>281</sup> After examining the pupils, he noted irregular attendance and 'weakness' in arithmetic and reading, with 'inferior' work in Standard 1 in spelling and arithmetic. In the Primers, the children had 'made very little progress. Very few are able to do more than read and spell words of three letters. They can count and add from the ball frame but they have very little knowledge of tables'.<sup>282</sup> In April 1898, the committee chairman informed householders that the inspectors' reports for the 12 months to that date 'were considered satisfactory'.

The school and all the outbuildings were painted by the Board of Education, and the Committee put a new boarded floor in the shelter shed, repaired wood shed, window blinds, doors, fences and footpaths. The Committee exerted themselves in obtaining a teacher's residence, with the result that the Board of Education has let a contract for the building of a very neat and substantial cottage. The site for this residence was made a present of to the Board by Mr Martin Murphy.<sup>283</sup>

Murphy, the Waiorongomai publican,<sup>284</sup> was a member of the committee.<sup>285</sup> The teacher's house cost £258.<sup>286</sup> 'A fine library' had been established, the board providing £10 to purchase books and another £12 4s for this purpose being obtained 'partly from the receipts of a school concert, and partly from school hire and from donations by some friends'. £1 5s had been spent buying books 'as prizes for a series of essay competitions'. The footpath to the school, which had been 'in a bad state of repair last winter', was 'regravelled and otherwise fixed'. The report ended by acknowledging

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<sup>280</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 1 May 1886, p. 2, 25 April 1888, p. 2, 24 April 1895, p. 2, 28 April 1898, p. 3; *Auckland Weekly News*, 8 May 1902, p. 41.

<sup>281</sup> Waiorongomai Correspondent, *Te Aroha News*, 16 February 1895, p. 2.

<sup>282</sup> Waiorongomai School, Class Lists for 1895, YCAF 4135/45a, ANZ-A.

<sup>283</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 28 April 1898, p. 3.

<sup>284</sup> See section on publicans in paper on the drink problem in the Te Aroha district.

<sup>285</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 28 April 1898, p. 3; *Auckland Weekly News*, 5 May 1899, p. 36.

<sup>286</sup> C.T. Harris, 'The Upper Thames Valley', *Te Aroha News*, 16 September 1936, p. 8.

the 'generous treatment' the committee had 'always received' from the board.<sup>287</sup>

In November 1898, the inspector recorded that the Primers could 'read well spell very fair', had 'a fair knowledge' of addition, tables, 'notation & numeration', and wrote satisfactorily.<sup>288</sup> He made a more detailed report of the pupils' levels of achievement when he visited in November 1899. In Standard 3, reading was 'fair'; 'one or two read well – others hurry over words & read without either fluency or expression'. Writing was fair, but drawing was 'untidy', with 'too much rubbing out'. Similar comments were made about drawing in Standards 4 and 5; in the former it was 'at most fair', although 'some' achieved a satisfactory level. In science, pupils 'know names of organs and generally speaking the terminology of the subject – but have only a meagre knowledge of the reasons wh[ich] lie at the bottom of the facts they have learnt'.<sup>289</sup>

Because of its steadily falling roll, the school would close in 1927.<sup>290</sup>

### RAISING MONEY FOR SCHOOL NEEDS

In 1936, Peter Gilchrist, a lawyer and ex-chairman of the school committee, addressed a ceremony celebrating the opening of new buildings. He noted that, when he served on the committee in 1894, 'the annual allocation had been £20, and as £18 of this was necessary for the ordinary cleaning expenses and upkeep, there was a very small margin left to work on'.<sup>291</sup> It was, therefore, necessary for parents and residents to raise additional funds, usually by involving the pupils. For example, in December 1883 an entertainment was held in Te Aroha to raise funds for the annual picnic.<sup>292</sup> In the following August, a concert and dance was held in the Waiorongomai schoolhouse 'for purpose of Clearing School Ground and Erecting Swings, etc'.<sup>293</sup> In subsequent years, concerts were held to meet both general needs and the annual treat.<sup>294</sup> In July 1889, for instance, an

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<sup>287</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 28 April 1898, p. 3.

<sup>288</sup> Waiorongomai School, Class Lists for 1898, YCAF 4135/49a, ANZ-A.

<sup>289</sup> Waiorongomai School, Class Lists for 1899, YCAF 4135/42a, ANZ-A.

<sup>290</sup> *AJHR*, 1928, E-2, p. 26.

<sup>291</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 9 September 1936, p. 5.

<sup>292</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 22 December 1883, p. 2.

<sup>293</sup> Advertisement, *Te Aroha News*, 16 August 1884, p. 7.

<sup>294</sup> For example, *Te Aroha News*, 9 July 1887, p. 2, 17 December 1887, p. 3.

entertainment provided by Te Aroha pupils, aided by adults, raised 'about £16' to purchase 'scientific apparatus'. Performances included a burlesque on Sleeping Beauty, recitations, tableaux, songs, piano solos and a duet, and a violin solo (encored). 'The whole affair passed off with eclat. The children fulfilled their several parts faultlessly, demonstrating that a vast amount of patient and careful training had been bestowed upon them' by their teachers. As usual, the evening ended with a dance.<sup>295</sup>

Later that year, an entertainment mainly performed by adults raised funds to repaint the school:

Although the night was dark and the weather not very favourable, there was a very large attendance, in fact the Hall was filled to its utmost capacity. The following was the programme: -

#### PART 1.

Pianoforte duet                      Mrs Roberts and Miss E. Wainwright.  
Waxworks                              Mrs Jarley's Waxworks comprising the  
following groups: -

(1) Pear's Soap. "You Dirty Boy;" (2) "Chang," The Chinese Giant;  
(3) Mrs Squeers and Smike; (4) Queen Elizabeth and Sir Walter  
Raleigh; (5) Queen and Knave of Hearts; (6) Robinson Crusoe and  
Friday; (7) Fatima and Bluebeard; (8) Squallina; (9) Hinemoa;  
(10) Britannia; (11) The Farmer's Wife (in The Three Blind Mice);  
(12) Yum, Yum (Japanese lady); (13) Gipsy Fortune Teller; (14)  
Babes in the Wood; (15) Madame Duflot of the Golden Chariot,  
and Patient.

#### PART 2.

Song, Three Fair Maids of Lee – Misses Hould, V. Pavitt, and E.  
Wainwright  
Tableaux (1), Guardian Angel and Children  
Song, Little Buttercup – Miss H. Cocks  
Song, Brown eyes or Blue eyes – Miss V. Pavitt  
Recitation – Mr E. Mulgan (Katikati)  
Tableau, Queen Philippa pleading for citizens of Calais (2 scenes)  
Song, Turnham Toll – Miss E. Wainwright  
Recitation, I remember – Master Leslie Winstone  
Tableau, Janet's choice (6 scenes)  
Song, Sparrows are Calling – Miss E. Hirst  
Song (in character), Molly Malone – Miss Mary Lavery  
Burlesque – Decapitation Extraordinary (Characters: Miss Hould,  
Messrs Simmonds and Johnson).

God Save the Queen

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<sup>295</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 6 July 1889, p. 2.

Most of these performers were young adults. 'Master Winstone, for a lad of only eight or nine years of age, acquitted himself remarkably well' in his recitation.

Everybody appeared highly delighted with the entertainment generally; and the perfect manner in which the performers went through the several parts allotted to them, the appropriate dresses, etc; all demonstrating what time and patience the several teachers of the school (by whom the entertainment was got up, with the assistance of others), must have expended in the preparations and rehearsals.

The evening concluded with a dance.<sup>296</sup>

The following year the *Observer* Man considered that Mrs Marsdon deserved 'great credit for the way in which she taught those school children to go through the "Japanese Fan" at the concert; she must have a vast amount of patience'.<sup>297</sup> In 1892 the teachers took 'advantage of the large number of visitors' at Te Aroha 'by giving an entertainment in aid of the school funds'.<sup>298</sup> This was 'an immense success', with the items 'well given and warmly received. So many failed to get into the hall on Monday that the teachers and helpers decided to repeat the concert on Friday. Another crowded house was the result, and a good round sum has been added to the school committee's exhausted coffers'.<sup>299</sup> In December the following year there was a good attendance, including some people from Te Aroha, at the Waiorongomai concert 'in aid of the prize fund'.<sup>300</sup> During 1897, two entertainment organized by the head teacher raised 'about £20', which was 'devoted to procuring additional school furniture and fittings'.<sup>301</sup> £3 15s 6d of the surplus money left over from the subsequent New Year's Day picnic was used to buy books for the Te Aroha school library.<sup>302</sup> At Waiorongomai in 1887, 'parents and friends of the children' subscribed £23 8s for picnics to celebrate the Queen's Diamond Jubilee and 'breaking-up day' at the end of

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<sup>296</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 2 October 1889, p. 2.

<sup>297</sup> 'Te Aroha', *Observer*, 6 September 1890, p. 18.

<sup>298</sup> Te Aroha Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 19 March 1892, p. 22.

<sup>299</sup> Te Aroha Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 26 March 1892, p. 23.

<sup>300</sup> Te Aroha Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 23 December 1893, p. 22.

<sup>301</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 28 April 1898, p. 3.

<sup>302</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 1 February 1898, p. 2.

the year.<sup>303</sup> The costs of the annual treats at both Te Aroha and Waiorongomai were met by donations from parents and friends.<sup>304</sup>

### EXAMPLES OF WHAT WAS TAUGHT

Ronald McIndoe was born in Auckland in 1891.<sup>305</sup> His father, Thomas, a saddler,<sup>306</sup> was a member of the Te Aroha school committee for many years, being elected its chairman in 1905.<sup>307</sup> In his reminiscences, Ronald recalled his first day at school:

I started school at Te Aroha just before my 5th birthday. I was sent in a devil of a hurry after painting my girl friend with red oxide paint. I can remember being given a “Longmans” Reader to look at the pictures. The one that appealed to me was a chain of monkeys crossing a river in Africa, and I never heard of that happening since. The other picture was of a sailor who went ashore in India with a pack of coloured caps. During a sleep under some trees the monkeys had looted his caps and took to the trees each wearing a cap. “All right,” he said, here is one left and threw it into the tree whereupon the monkeys did likewise to him, so he could never sell his caps.<sup>308</sup>

This was all he recorded about his schooling, apart from the comment that he was a good pupil, ‘always head of my class. Not much competition’,<sup>309</sup> implying a modest level of ability of the other children.

Little detail of what was taught has survived, but in 1895, for the first time, the Horticultural Society’s Spring Show included an exhibition of

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<sup>303</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 28 April 1898, p. 3.

<sup>304</sup> For example, *Te Aroha News*, 2 January 1889, p. 2.

<sup>305</sup> Birth Certificate of Ronald McIndoe, 1891/3768; Marriage Certificate of Ronald McIndoe, 1 March 1916, 1916/3267, BDM.

<sup>306</sup> See Te Aroha Correspondent, *New Zealand Herald*, 24 October 1895, p. 3; *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 2, p. 831; advertisement, *Te Aroha News*, 6 August 1903, p. 1; *New Zealand Herald*, 12 October 1942, p. 2.

<sup>307</sup> *Auckland Weekly News*, 7 May 1892, p. 27, 26 April 1901, p. 37, 8 May 1902, p. 41, 30 April 1903, p. 28, 4 May 1905, p. 20, 3 May 1906, p. 21; *Te Aroha News*, 21 September 1905, p. 2; Priest, p. 8.

<sup>308</sup> Ronald McIndoe, Typescript Reminiscences, n.d., p. 4, MS-Papers 3896, Alexander Turnbull Library.

<sup>309</sup> McIndoe, p. 5.

schoolwork, which illustrated what was taught and what children were encouraged to collect in their spare time. 'The hall looked exceedingly pretty, on the right a long table contained the school work, maps, drawing, penmanship, etc. The centre table, which was a wide one, was made brilliant with an excellent display of ferns, flowers, etc, on the left was a table containing the fancy work, and collections'. Prizes were awarded for art, penmanship, and collections of 'New Zealand woods'. 'The works of art were especially good, several of the competitors showing great skill'. They were asked to sketch their school, one boy's 'end elevation' of it being 'almost perfect, proving the exhibitor to have a taste for mechanical drawing'. The subjects for freehand drawing were an arum lily, a kettle, a landscape, and the school; the scale drawing was a plan of the school and the shaded drawing was a horse's head. Only a few exhibited their penmanship, but the entries were good. One girl's 'writing and accounts ... displayed great ability, being clean, neat, and regular', while another's was 'bold and businesslike'. The categories were a copy of the Ten Commandments, a map of New Zealand, 'Business account receipted', and 'Business accounts receipted by Deputy'. The essays 'were of great merit', particularly in the under-ten-year-old age group. The only category under 'mechanical work' was 'Flax Whips'. There were few needlework entries, 'the girls evidently preferring drawing and penmanship', but 'the few samples were very creditable indeed'. There were collections of flowers, ferns, wood, stamps, and coins, probably made with the teachers' encouragement.<sup>310</sup>

The essay that so impressed the newspaper, written by a 13-year-old girl, was published as an example of what was required to win first prize. Its topic was Te Aroha:

Te Aroha is situated on the right bank of the Waihou, and at the foot of Bald Spur. The chief feature is the Domain, in which are the Thermal Springs. Te Aroha is well known by tourists, for the great healing effect it has on rheumatics, lumbago, and other troublesome diseases. The Domain has an area of about fifty acres, most of which is upon the hill slope. There are eighteen springs in all, seven are baths, two drinking fountains, and nine are not used at present. The waters contain potash, lime, sulphur, soda, phosphorus, silica, more or less. The chief occupation of Te Aroha and surrounding districts is gold mining and farming. If Gold mining pays, it will be a flourishing town. Te Aroha is connected with Auckland and Paeroa with rail, and by steamer

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<sup>310</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 13 November 1895, p. 2.



from the Thames. It is also connected with Tauranga, by Kati-Kati and Thompson's track. About fifteen miles from here is the Wairere Falls, the highest in the North Island. Tourists generally visit these falls to see the beautiful scenery round about them. Our mountain, the "Mount of Love," is 3120 feet. The scenery round about the trig is very picturesque, on a bright clear day you can see White Island, throwing out volumes of smoke, also the Estuary of River Thames. Te Aroha has not a very mild climate because of its nearness to the mountain, as it is subject to heavy gales and rain.<sup>311</sup>

In 1912, a 14-year-old boy criticized the way Te Aroha children were taught to read poetry aloud: they 'read very badly'.<sup>312</sup>

Schoolchildren were taught a variety of sports. By 1898, they were being given weekly swimming lessons at the domain swimming pool.<sup>313</sup> They were also taught practical skills, such as, in the early twentieth century, gardening.<sup>314</sup> At Waiorongomai, for instance, 12 plots were cultivated in the school garden, seven of which were entered in a competition; girls were more interested in this activity than boys. The children had 'built a little bush-house upon the model of that to be seen in the Te Aroha Domain. This is well stocked with ferns brought from the neighbouring bush'.<sup>315</sup>

Patriotism was encouraged. When Queen Victoria's Jubilee Celebrations were held in June 1887, despite the rain the children and their teachers marched from the schoolhouse to the domain. As part of the festivities, a maypole dance, held indoors because of the weather, 'was gone through several times by about forty little girls.... The children were all most gaily attired in costumes specially prepared for the occasion'. After eating 'an abundance of light refreshments', the pupils, accompanied by the local brass band, sang 'God Save the Queen'.<sup>316</sup>

The Boer War prompted an outburst of patriotism. In early 1900, when the Premier declared a school holiday to celebrate the surrender of a leading Boer commander, the Te Aroha pupils listened to Seddon's cable at an

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<sup>311</sup> Bertha Wild, 'Composition on Te Aroha', *Te Aroha News*, 16 November 1895, p. 2.

<sup>312</sup> *Burrator Weekly News*, 24 August 1912, printed in Ted Axford, *A Childhood in Te Aroha, 1907-1913* (Wellington, 1992), p. 58.

<sup>313</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 20 March 1895, p. 2.

<sup>314</sup> For a Waihi example, see *Waihi Daily Telegraph*, 28 November 1906, p. 2.

<sup>315</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 14 December 1909, p. 2.

<sup>316</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 25 June 1887, p. 2.

assembly. ‘The children were evidently impressed – more especially with the part of the message that referred to the holiday. A verse of “God Save the Queen” was sung; cheers were given for the soldiers fighting in South Africa, and the British Empire; and the children patriotically went home’.<sup>317</sup> At Waiorongomai, ‘the teacher called for three hearty cheers for Lord Roberts and the British forces in South Africa. The National Anthem was then sung and the children dispersed for a holiday. A number of girls went home and made flags, and then went around the township spreading the news’.<sup>318</sup> Later that year, ‘in the presence of a large gathering of parents and friends’, a ‘ceremony of unfurling the flag’ was held at the Waiorongomai school:

A feature of the event was the presence of the Te Aroha Naval Cadets, a squad of scholars attending Te Aroha school. The boys were clothed in a naval uniform, and, being armed with wooden guns, and well drilled, presented a very effective appearance. They marched all the way from Te Aroha to Waiorongomai and back, no small undertaking for some of the youthful warriors.

After the chairman of the school committee opened proceedings, the Anglican clergyman unfurled the flag after making ‘a patriotic speech, in which he traced the history of the flag, and dwelt on the glory and pride with which every Britisher ought to regard it’. When it was unfurled, to cheers, the cadets ‘gave a military salute’ and the head teacher marched the schoolboys ‘past the staff, where they saluted the flag. The National Anthem was then sung’. After two more speeches, one contrasting ‘the liberty and freedom enjoyed by those of the British Empire as compared with people in certain European countries’, the gathering moved to the schoolhouse, ‘where a liberal supply of tea, coffee, and cake had been provided by the ladies’.<sup>319</sup>

Some things were not taught. At a meeting of the Te Aroha committee in 1885, four of the five members present refused permission for the teacher to use a temperance lesson book.<sup>320</sup> Four years later, after Waiorongomai householders opposed the compulsory teaching of temperance, this was

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<sup>317</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 1 March 1900, p. 2.

<sup>318</sup> Waiorongomai Correspondent, *Te Aroha News*, 1 March 1900, p. 2.

<sup>319</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 25 September 1900, p. 5.

<sup>320</sup> Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 4 July 1885, p. 3.

dropped.<sup>321</sup> In 1895, it was reported that a woman was filling ‘a long-felt want’ by providing singing lessons for boys and girls.<sup>322</sup>

### IRREGULAR ATTENDANCE

Irregular attendance was of constant concern to teachers and the committee. Not only did it inhibit learning, attendance, not enrolment, determined funding and the number of teachers. In 1892, when the average attendance at Te Aroha for the third quarter fell below 140, the minimum required for five teachers, a pupil teacher was removed.<sup>323</sup> Three years later, when complaining about low attendance, the local newspaper pointed out that this lowered the teachers’ salaries and the financial allocation.<sup>324</sup>

The first time attendance became an issue was in November 1884, when Marsdon reported it as being ‘most irregular’.<sup>325</sup> During that year, when the school was opened 421 times, 14 children attended rarely; five attended less than half that number, the two lowest 120 and 131 times.<sup>326</sup> At the committee’s first meeting in 1885, ‘the irregularity of the attendance of many pupils and the culpability of some parents in keeping their children altogether away from school’ prompted a discussion about enforcing the compulsory clauses of the Act.<sup>327</sup> A special meeting held shortly afterwards resolved to enforce these clauses. ‘The attendance roll showed that many of the children’ were absent for much of the time ‘and that there were others who do not attend at all’.<sup>328</sup> During February, out of 114 pupils the average attendance was 90.<sup>329</sup> The newspaper approved enforcing compulsory attendance, ‘as the non-attendance of children from some few families has been disgraceful’.<sup>330</sup> In July, after another ‘grave complaint’ by Marsdon ‘regarding unsatisfactory attendance of many of the pupils’, the committee

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<sup>321</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 14 August 1889, p. 2.

<sup>322</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 16 November 1895, p. 2.

<sup>323</sup> Te Aroha Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 22 October 1892, p. 23.

<sup>324</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 24 April 1895, p. 2.

<sup>325</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 29 November 1884, p. 2.

<sup>326</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 21 February 1885, p. 2.

<sup>327</sup> Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 17 February 1885, p. 2.

<sup>328</sup> Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 21 February 1885, p. 3.

<sup>329</sup> *Waikato Times*, 12 March 1885, p. 3.

<sup>330</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 14 February 1885, p. 2.

warned that the compulsory clauses would be ‘strictly enforced’.<sup>331</sup> Marsdon reported that ‘fully one-third of the children have been absent nearly half time’ in the previous quarter, and listed the worse cases.<sup>332</sup> One month later, because of enforcement, ‘the attendance of certain scholars who had previously constantly absented themselves from school, had improved considerably’.<sup>333</sup> In the last six months of this year, although the roll was down by nine, the average attendance was up by ten.<sup>334</sup>

The problem continued. The Waiorongomai committee, in April 1886, noted that ‘the general progress of the school was greatly hindered through the irregular attendance of many scholars’, and regretted the ‘carelessness’ of some parents concerning their children’s education.<sup>335</sup> During that year, some Te Aroha children, ‘whose parents have been repeatedly spoken to and warned to send them to school’, still did not attend regularly. ‘The number of absences for the past term amount to 4425, being almost twenty five per cent of the whole’.<sup>336</sup>

In April 1887, of the 85 children enrolled at Waiorongomai an average of 61 attended.<sup>337</sup> The following month, the teacher provided a ‘list of those who attended irregularly, and asked the assistance of the committee in regard to keeping up a good average’.<sup>338</sup> In June, at Te Aroha, of 136 on the roll the average attendance was 96.5; however, by September attendance was ‘well kept up’.<sup>339</sup> In May the following year, when there were 144 on the roll, the average attendance was 111.7.<sup>340</sup> The following month, with 137 on the roll, attendance was 107.6. The committee noted that the compulsory clauses only required pupils to attend half the days in each quarter and that there was no inspector to enforce attendance. It resolved to obtain a list of children who were not attending for 30 days of each quarter.<sup>341</sup> In July,

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<sup>331</sup> Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 4 July 1885, p. 3.

<sup>332</sup> School Committee, *Te Aroha News*, 4 July 1885, p. 2.

<sup>333</sup> School Committee, *Te Aroha News*, 8 August 1885, p. 7.

<sup>334</sup> Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 9 January 1886, p. 3.

<sup>335</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 1 May 1886, p. 2.

<sup>336</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 9 October 1886, p. 2.

<sup>337</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 30 April 1887, p. 2.

<sup>338</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 14 May 1887, p. 2.

<sup>339</sup> School Committee, *Te Aroha News*, 11 June 1887, p. 2; *Waikato Times*, 13 September 1887, p. 3.

<sup>340</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 6 June 1888, p. 2.

<sup>341</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 4 July 1888, p. 2.

with 143 on the roll, attendance was only 101.7, largely attributable to winter colds. The committee would write to the parents of pupils who had not attended on 30 days and ask for a justification.<sup>342</sup> This action prompted an immediate improvement.<sup>343</sup> In November, with 161 on the roll, the average attendance was 134.7. Marsdon reported that, in the fourth week of that month, although the enrolment had increased by two, attendance had decreased by 16.7.

I wish to draw attention to this, as it is what usually happens about this time each year. The idea, with many, seems to be that once the annual examination in standards is over, there is no need for children to attend school, for an indefinite period. This fact appears to have been overlooked, viz, that the work for the next year begins immediately the examination is completed. Owing to the limited staff much of the work in some standards can only be gone over once in the year so that absence at the beginning, or indeed at any portion of the time, must cause some deficiency. On 23rd November, the day the examination concluded, a child made this request: "May I get my books, as I am not coming again till after Christmas?" The statement possesses the merit of candour at any rate. Others are not quite so straightforward but they stay away all the same.<sup>344</sup>

At Waiorongomai, during 1888, out of an average enrolment of about 72 on one occasion 41 were absent.<sup>345</sup> Only one pupil was 'entitled to the Board's certificate for good attendance', the head teacher reported.<sup>346</sup> At the last committee meeting of the year, 'much dissatisfaction was expressed in the apathy shown by parents' about attendance. 'We understand that a falling-off commenced immediately after the examination, and the number attending is still diminishing'. On the previous Friday, only 53 of the 94 pupils attended. The committee decided to act.<sup>347</sup> Whatever action was taken had minimal effect, for the following February, when the roll was 99, the average attendance was only 69.1.<sup>348</sup> The following month, with a roll of

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<sup>342</sup> School Committee, *Te Aroha News*, 8 August 1888, p. 2.

<sup>343</sup> School Committee, *Te Aroha News*, 8 September 1888, p. 7.

<sup>344</sup> School Committee, *Te Aroha News*, 8 December 1888, p. 2.

<sup>345</sup> *Waikato Times*, 10 January 1889, p. 2.

<sup>346</sup> Waiorongomai School Committee, *Te Aroha News*, 9 January 1889, p. 2.

<sup>347</sup> Waiorongomai School Committee, *Te Aroha News*, 4 December 1888, p. 2.

<sup>348</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 6 March 1889, p. 2.

100, the average was 70.4.<sup>349</sup> In June, with 98 enrolled, the average was 62.9.<sup>350</sup> During July, when the roll rose to 103, the head teacher reported an average attendance of 67.

Some of the children were very irregular in their attendance, and ... he had written to their parents about the matter.... The Chairman stated that the committee had done all they could to secure better attendance. They had reasoned with the parents time after time about the matter, with the result that for a couple of weeks the attendance would be fairly good, but after that it used to fall back again in the old style. In his opinion enforcing the compulsory clauses of the Education Act was not desirable, savouring too much of intimidation.

Nevertheless, if attendance did not improve, 'something certainly would have to be done'.<sup>351</sup>

At Te Aroha, during February 1889 there were 182 enrolled but attendance was 143.7; the highest attendance on one day was 164.<sup>352</sup> With 163 enrolled in September, the average attendance was 121.6.<sup>353</sup> At the last committee meeting of the year,

some conversation took place with respect to the irregular attendance of some of the children, and the best way to deal with some who had apparently determined to please themselves with respect to attending school, in spite of various admonitions and warnings; but the holidays being so near at hand, it was decided to take no decided action until the new year.<sup>354</sup>

Despite incomplete records, it is clear that the same problem continued throughout the 1890s. In May 1892, after noting that, although there were 175 on the roll, the average attendance was 137.9, the Te Aroha committee 'regretted that the average was so low' and hoped parents would 'take every advantage of the educational advantages so liberally provided'.<sup>355</sup> In October, a correspondent complained that, with attendance at Te Aroha for

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<sup>349</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 6 April 1889, p. 2.

<sup>350</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 13 July 1889, p. 2.

<sup>351</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 14 August 1889, p. 2.

<sup>352</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 9 March 1889, p. 2.

<sup>353</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 12 October 1889, p. 2.

<sup>354</sup> School Committee, *Te Aroha News*, 4 December 1889, p. 2.

<sup>355</sup> Te Aroha Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 7 May 1892, p. 27.

the third quarter falling below 140, the required number for a fifth teacher, one had been removed.

The number at present on the roll is over 180, which leaves a good margin over the required number. The absence of so many (an average of 40) has been caused partly by the very wet winter and early spring, but mainly because of the indifference of so many of the parents to the regular attendance of their children, an indifference which has now resulted in the reduction of the teaching staff and a consequent retarding of the progress of the whole school. It is sincerely hoped that the putting into operation of the compulsory clause of the Act, and the finer weather we are having, will soon increase the attendance, and enable the committee to apply for another teacher.<sup>356</sup>

The decision to enforce compulsory attendance was made at the committee's meeting that month. A correspondent commented on the 'strange fact that so many of the parents are indifferent about the regular attendance of their children at the school, and the remarkable part of it is that some of these parents are in a better position to send their children than those are whose children<sup>357</sup> attend most regularly'.<sup>358</sup>

Yet again, in April 1895, at Te Aroha attendance was low.<sup>359</sup> At the beginning of November, the local newspaper reminded parents and guardians of the 'urgent necessity of sending their children to school more regularly than they have been doing' because the annual examinations were nigh.<sup>360</sup> By contrast, at Waiorongomai in mid-year attendance was the largest for a 'long time'.<sup>361</sup> In August, attendance certificates, 'very tasteful in design and excellent in execution', were distributed on Arbor Day. 'The action of the Committee in providing these certificates was fully justified by results, the average attendance for the past month being 61.5 out of 89 on the roll or nearly 90 per cent'.<sup>362</sup> At the end of 1897,

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<sup>356</sup> Te Aroha Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 22 October 1892, p. 23.

<sup>357</sup> 'Parents' according to the *Thames Advertiser*.

<sup>358</sup> Te Aroha Correspondent, *Thames Advertiser*, 7 October 1892, p. 2, and *Auckland Weekly News*, 8 October 1892, p. 23.

<sup>359</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 24 April 1895, p. 2.

<sup>360</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 2 November 1895, p. 2.

<sup>361</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 10 July 1895, p. 2.

<sup>362</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 10 August 1895, p. 2.

a fine lot of useful books, to the value of £8, was awarded to the pupils for regular attendance; those who had attended the full number of days getting first choice, and the others in rotation as to the number of attendances recorded. These awards were highly appreciated by the children, and by their parents also, and undoubtedly have a good effect as regards the children's attendance.<sup>363</sup>

Despite these efforts, as some Waiorongomai boys failed to attend regularly their parents were to be contacted yet again.<sup>364</sup>

In March 1897 *Te Aroha* parents continued to keep children away from school without reasonable excuse. Although 239 were enrolled, the average attendance was only 155; the 75 pupils absent on most days were equivalent to the total enrolment at Waiorongomai.<sup>365</sup> The policeman was asked to investigate persistent absentees.<sup>366</sup> The following year, some regular truants continued to concern the committee; one-fifth of the pupils were absent every day.<sup>367</sup>

In April 1898, a *Te Aroha News* editorial headed 'Compulsory Education' hoped to see a large attendance at the committee election. 'Judging from the poor attendance at the annual meetings, the interest taken of late years in this matter seems very languid', which it feared reflected parents' 'absolute indifference'. With 223 pupils enrolled, the average attendance was only 173, meaning 50 were 'continually absent'.

In a comparatively small and compact community like *Te Aroha* there ought not to be such a difference between the nominal strength and the actual attendance, indeed such a state of matters is a reflection both on some of the parents, and the committee. When we consider the trivial pretexts, and frivolous excuses made by parents for keeping their children away from school, we can hardly avoid arriving at the conclusion that the committee are seriously neglecting their duty in not instituting proceedings against the habitual offenders. Absenteeism to the extent we have indicated is objectionable all round. It is a grave injustice to the children themselves; it is a hindrance to the general progress of the school, it lowers the average, and so prevents the Committee from handling that amount of capitulation

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<sup>363</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 28 April 1898, p. 3.

<sup>364</sup> Waiorongomai School Committee, *Te Aroha News*, 10 May 1898, p. 2.

<sup>365</sup> *Waikato Argus*, 27 March 1897, p. 2.

<sup>366</sup> *Waikato Argus*, 13 May 1897, p. 2.

<sup>367</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 22 March 1898, p. 2, 28 April 1898, p. 3.



money necessary to the proper conservation of school property, and it is unfair to those parents who are endeavouring to do their duty in the matter of securing the regular attendance of their children. We hope the new committee will deal with this matter more vigorously than their predecessors have done, as we feel certain that a few (and only a few) prosecutions under the compulsory clauses of the Education Act would have the desired effect, and drive home to some heads of families the much needed lesson that they cannot ignore the warnings they have received, with impunity.<sup>368</sup>

At the election of the new committee, when attendance was ‘greatly in excess of what has previously been the case’,

James Mills,<sup>369</sup> in a brief speech, drew attention to that part of the report dealing with the attendance, and expressing the opinion that some action should be taken to compel parents to send their children to school more regularly. This absenteeism was injurious in many respects, it was an injustice to the children themselves; it hindered the progress of more advanced and regular attendants, and it deprived the school of a proper staff of teachers.... He thought the Committee were quite justified in taking proceedings against the more prominent offenders. He hoped the Committee would take their cue from this, and act accordingly.

These remarks met with the evident approval of most of those present, and there seems little doubt that some action will be taken.<sup>370</sup>

Absenteeism continued to be a problem. Another editorial, in February 1900, disapproved of low attendance, as those missing school would get behind in their work and never catch up.<sup>371</sup> As the Te Aroha headmaster noted in February 1901, ‘Give the children a day and their parents think they need two, give them six weeks and they take nine. Some children are weeks in arrears with their work; an unsatisfactory state of affairs’.<sup>372</sup> Shortly afterwards, when the truant officer issued notices, some ‘heads of families ... resented his interference, stating that as long as they comply

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<sup>368</sup> Editorial, *Te Aroha News*, 19 April 1898, p. 2.

<sup>369</sup> See paper on his life.

<sup>370</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 28 April 1898, p. 3.

<sup>371</sup> Editorial, *Te Aroha News*, 24 February 1900, p. 2.

<sup>372</sup> Priest, p. 14.

with the Act their actions cannot be interfered with'.<sup>373</sup> Presumably as a result, in July 'the average attendance continued good'.<sup>374</sup> In the following July, most of the five parents taken to court 'pleaded guilty, and were fined the minimum amount'.<sup>375</sup> In 1905, the committee chairman noted that some parents 'only send their children often enough to come within the prescribed limit'.<sup>376</sup> The following year, several Waiorongomai parents were fined because of irregular attendance.<sup>377</sup> In 1907, the truant officer visited and charged parents who had not sent their children the minimum number of times; amongst those fined was the chairman of the Waiorongomai committee.<sup>378</sup>

Some absences could be explained by ill health, but others indicated a lack of parental concern for their children's educational needs, even by some skilled workers and professionals. For instance, Thomas Wright Hector, son of a doctor, and whose grandmother was an 'Honourable', was the first chemist at Te Aroha.<sup>379</sup> In 1884, their son attended 360 times out of 421, and in the following year attended only 18 times out of 80 in the first quarter and 90 out of 112 in the second.<sup>380</sup> Perhaps both Hector and his wife being drunkards may be relevant.<sup>381</sup> Joshua Cuff, a barrister and solicitor,<sup>382</sup> in 1884 was chairman of the Te Aroha committee, although he failed to attend four consecutive meetings.<sup>383</sup> His son attended 203 times out of a possible 421 during that year, and a daughter only 131.<sup>384</sup> Francis William Lipsey, nephew of George, printed the *Te Aroha News* for nearly 20

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<sup>373</sup> *Thames Star*, 15 April 1901, p. 4.

<sup>374</sup> *Auckland Weekly News*, 19 July 1901, p. 31.

<sup>375</sup> Te Aroha Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 24 July 1902, p. 32.

<sup>376</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 21 September 1905, p. 2.

<sup>377</sup> *Thames Star*, 18 July 1906, p. 4.

<sup>378</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 4 May 1907, p. 2, Magistrate's Court, 1 June 1907, p. 2.

<sup>379</sup> See letter from T.W. Hector, *Waikato Times*, 21 June 1881, p. 3; *Auckland Weekly News*, 17 January 1907, p. 34.

<sup>380</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 21 February 1885, p. 2, 18 April 1885, p. 7, 4 July 1885, p. 2.

<sup>381</sup> Magistrate's Court, *Te Aroha News*, 23 July 1883, p. 2, 27 October 1883, p. 2.

<sup>382</sup> See Joshua Cuff to Minister of Mines, 12 October 1885, Mines Department, MD 1, 85/1259, ANZ-W; advertisement, *Te Aroha News*, 9 June 1883, p. 1; *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 1 (Wellington, 1897), p. 1281.

<sup>383</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 2 February 1884, p. 7, 29 November 1884, p. 2.

<sup>384</sup> Te Aroha Goldfields School, Class Lists for 1884, YCAF 4135/13a, ANZ-A.

years and was praised for his efficiency.<sup>385</sup> For failing to send one child to school, he was fined 4s in 1902; for failing to send two in 1907 he was fined 15s; and in 1912 for failing to send one he was fined 30s.<sup>386</sup>

Two children of a miner, Matthew Quinton,<sup>387</sup> aged eight and ten, were recorded as being 'habitual truants' in 1893.<sup>388</sup> There was no evidence to indicate that he was a bad father, although in his old age he was charged with being drunk in a Waihi street.<sup>389</sup> Another notable drunk was David Kerr Young,<sup>390</sup> an Irish labourer and miner who spent many years at Waiorongomai.<sup>391</sup> Despite being the son of a doctor and nephew of a physician and surgeon, implying a thoroughly respectable background,<sup>392</sup> he seemed not to have considered his children needed educating. In 1883, when his 12-year-old daughter Mary and his three sons, De Courcey James, aged 11, Daniel, aged ten, and Charles Thomas, aged eight, were enrolled at Waiorongomai, the inspector noted that none had ever been to school, that their subsequent attendance was irregular, and that none of the boys knew the alphabet.<sup>393</sup> Possibly this educational deprivation was one reason why the youngest, who would be a prospector at Waiorongomai during the depression of the 1930s,<sup>394</sup> surpassed his father as a drunkard.<sup>395</sup> He would

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<sup>385</sup> See *Te Aroha News*, 17 February 1898, p. 2, 8 August 1905, p. 2, 16 May 1917, p. 2, 5 April 1924, p. 1, 28 February 1980, p. 5.

<sup>386</sup> Te Aroha Magistrate's Court, Criminal Record Book 1896-1907, 25/1902, 30, 31/1907, 53/1912, BCDG 11220/1b, ANZ-A.

<sup>387</sup> See paper on Billy Nicholl.

<sup>388</sup> Te Aroha Goldfields School, Class Lists for 1893, YCAF 4135/37a, ANZ-A.

<sup>389</sup> Waihi Magistrate's Court, Criminal Record Book 1899-1903, 145/1902, BAFV 13710/1a, ANZ-A.

<sup>390</sup> Armed Constabulary Force, Return of Charges taken at Te Aroha Lock-Up 1880-1903, 7/1890, 13/1892, in private possession; Te Aroha Magistrate's Court, Criminal Record Book 1881-1896, 34/1890, 22/1892, BCDG 11220/1a; Criminal Record Book 1896-1907, 1/1900, BCDG 11220/1b, ANZ-A.

<sup>391</sup> For his mining career in this district, see *Te Aroha News*, 8 August 1885, p. 7, 5 March 1887, p. 2, 12 May 1888, p. 2, 2 June 1888, p. 2, 30 January 1889, p. 2.

<sup>392</sup> Death Certificate of David Kerr Young, 14 July 1908, 1908/4816, BDM; Mines Department, MD 1, 87/115, ANZ-W.

<sup>393</sup> Waiorongomai School, Class Lists for 1883, YCAF 4135/10a, ANZ-A.

<sup>394</sup> See paper on prospectors and investors in the Te Aroha Mining District in the 1930s.

<sup>395</sup> Te Aroha Magistrate's Court, Criminal Record Book 1896-1907, 74/1906; Criminal Record Book 1907-1913, 31, 52/1908, entry for 12 March 1909, 16, 54/1909, 70/1910,

also be accused of fathering an illegitimate child.<sup>396</sup> However, De Courcey, named after his great-uncle,<sup>397</sup> was able to overcome his father's disinterest in education and to avoid repeating his drinking problem. After working as a battery foreman at the end of the nineteenth century, when he went to the Thames School of Mines and obtained a battery manager's certificate the general manager for whom he had last worked described him as an 'honest sober hard working man'.<sup>398</sup> When he died eight years later, of miner's complaint, aged only 36, he was described as a 'greatly respected' metallurgist who had held 'many responsible positions as Battery Manager, etc'.<sup>399</sup>

## DISCIPLINE

Corporal punishment was an accepted aspect of school life, and teachers whose use of it was questioned by parents were normally supported unquestioningly. For instance, in 1887 the Waiorongomai committee rejected a complaint by a publican that his son had been wrongly punished.<sup>400</sup> Two years later, the Te Aroha one considered a complaint 'against one of the lady teachers for having too severely caned a little girl'. After 'considerable' discussion, the committee, by five votes to two, reminded the teacher of the regulations. 'No imputation whatsoever against Mr Marsdon, the head teacher, was implied in this motion, it being the unanimous opinion that a better conducted school does not exist'.<sup>401</sup> In 1903, when Barbara Ellen Cornes, wife of Clem,<sup>402</sup> charged the head teacher of the Waihou School with assault for unduly punishing her ten-

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BCDG 11220/2a; Criminal Record Book 1913-1919, 2, 13, 107/1916, entries for 13 July 1918, 15 November 1918, BCDG 11220/2b; Criminal Record Book 1919-1921, entry for 7 March 1919, BCDG 11220/3a, ANZ-A; *Te Aroha News*, 26 November 1908, p. 2, 16 October 1909, p. 2, 12 November 1910, p. 2, 15 July 1918, p. 2, 9 December 1918, p. 2.

<sup>396</sup> Magistrate's Court, *Te Aroha News*, 8 March 1900, p. 2.

<sup>397</sup> Mines Department, MD 1, 87/115, ANZ-W.

<sup>398</sup> Declaration of General Manager, Waitekauri Extended Gold Mining Company, 13 December 1899, Mines Department, MD 1, 99/2019, ANZ-A.

<sup>399</sup> Waiorongomai Correspondent, *Te Aroha News*, 3 November 1908, p. 2.

<sup>400</sup> Waiorongomai School Committee, *Te Aroha News*, 20 August 1887, p. 3.

<sup>401</sup> *Waikato Times*, 10 August 1889, p. 2.

<sup>402</sup> See paper on Clement Augustus Cornes.

year-old son Harry,<sup>403</sup> the *Thames Advertiser* headlined its report: ‘Mr Northcroft Gives Good Advice’:

It appears that the boy was annoying some of the girls at the school by throwing dirt at them, and he was suitably caned by Mr [William] Hooper. A good deal of evidence was given, some of it being most laughable, it being difficult at times to preserve order in the Court-house. The Resident Magistrate gave the verdict in favour of the defendant, and in doing so gave some excellent advice to the plaintiff. He said that it was imperative that discipline should be preserved in the schools, and that parents who acted as the plaintiff had done were making the larrikin of the future. He stated that there was too much maudlin sentiment nowadays about flogging school children. It was this that had brought about the deplorable condition in some of the large cities in Australia, and was the cause of the larrikinism in our own colony. If one of his own lads had told him such a lie as Harry Cornes had told his mother, he would himself have given him such a flogging that he would not have been able to sit down for a fortnight. He was of opinion that boys should be taught and made to respect girls, and any boy who was rude to a girl deserved to be flogged. Discipline must be maintained in our schools, or otherwise larrikinism would be the inevitable result.<sup>404</sup>

Not all parents were convinced, and in the 1904, for instance, there were a series of anonymous letters, now lost, in the local newspaper complaining of ‘pedagogic brutality’.<sup>405</sup> For children, caning was an accepted, if disliked, part of school life. One former Te Aroha schoolboy recalled the older boys singing

Here we suffer grief and pain  
Under old Cockey Marsdon’s cane.<sup>406</sup>

## ARBOR DAY

Arbor Day had moral and social purposes in addition to planting trees. When the first day was held in 1892, the Te Aroha pupils ‘were marched

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<sup>403</sup> Te Aroha Magistrate’s Court, Criminal Record Book 1881-1896, 16/1893, BCDG 11220/1a, ANZ-A.

<sup>404</sup> *Thames Advertiser*, 28 July 1893, p. 2.

<sup>405</sup> *Observer*, 23 April 1904, p. 16.

<sup>406</sup> Recollections of J.E. Wild, *Te Aroha News*, 9 September 1936, p. 5.

from the school-house and placed in order where the first tree was to be planted'. James Mills, chairman of the school committee, then addressed them:

He reminded them that the object of Arbor Day was not only to give them another holiday, but to instill into them habits of unselfishness. They were to plant and care for the trees that they might have a part in the beautifying of their native place. It was a grand thing to teach children and grown-up people to think more of others and to forget themselves, and he thought that the planting and caring for these trees would tend to do that.

After contrasting education when he was young with today, he hoped that Arbor Day would maintain 'our glorious climate'. After his speech, the 'elder scholars' planted the trees, under supervision.<sup>407</sup>

As celebrated at Waiorongomai on a Wednesday in 1895, the day was more of a sports day. 'The business of the day was first disposed of, the children planting barberry plants for a hedge inside the fence on the school front. They then sat down to enjoy the cake, sandwiches, etc, which had been prepared'; oranges were distributed later.

The balance of the day was devoted to a programme of sports, numbering some sixteen events, with prizes ranging from half-crowns [2s 6d] downwards. All the races were keenly contested, and in most the finishes were so close that picking the winners was no sinecure. The boys' hurdle races brought about the usual number of falls incidental to most country events, but the girls showed wonderful aptitude.

Parents had subscribed £6 5s, sufficient for 'the substantial refreshments' and the prize money. 'The races were followed by an interesting ceremony in the distribution by the Chairman, of the attendance certificates for the June quarter'. Afterwards, 'an enjoyable dance in the schoolhouse wound up a highly successful day'.<sup>408</sup>

### SPECIAL TREATS

Annual 'treats' had become a tradition by the late 1880s. In December 1887, the Te Aroha pupils put on a concert 'to defray expense of Annual

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<sup>407</sup> Te Aroha Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 13 August 1892, p. 37.

<sup>408</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 10 August 1895, p. 2.

School Treat'.<sup>409</sup> Two years later, one was held on New Year's Day in George Lipsey's 'paddock'.<sup>410</sup> The most elaborate details of the Te Aroha school's annual treat to have survived are those for the one held on New Year's Day of 1890 on a Te Aroha West farm:

The place itself, when reached, is very suitable, the ground being nicely level, well grassed, with plenty of shelter trees all round, etc, but being some miles out of Te Aroha, some of the parents and those in charge of little children, who were unable to get away by the punt in the morning, complained of having to walk and carry the little ones, pay for a conveyance, or remain at home, owing to the distance. All who left at the appointed time in the morning were conveyed free of charge, and all who liked to leave at the general time of re-embarking were also brought back free of charge; a most capacious punt, towed by steam launch ... having been charged for the occasion by the Committee of management. The assembly was at the school house at 9.30 a.m. From thence all marched down through the main street in procession with banners, flags flying, etc, as far as the Bank corner and back to Bridge-street Landing, headed by the Te Aroha Brass Band. All quickly embarked.... The trip up river was a very enjoyable one, occupying about half-an-hour, the Band playing a number of selections, and throughout the day the Band added greatly to the enjoyment of the "outing" by most good naturedly remaining on the ground and playing at intervals, and also during the return trip. On arriving on the ground, the first concern of course was a hearty luncheon for everybody. Good things in great abundance had been provided, with tea, lemonade, etc, galore; and were available to all comers at all hours throughout the day. The sports commenced about 1 p.m., and continued throughout the afternoon, close on thirty events being decided. The prizes consisted principally of books specially purchased for the occasion; many of them being very attractive volumes.

Various games were also in progress in which many of the adults present took part, such as cricket, rounders, jolly miller, kiss in the ring, etc.

A Shaftesbury farmer brought the pupils from that district with him, 'together with a plentiful supply of gooseberries, etc. At one time between 300 and 400 persons must have been present. Tea was served round at 5 p.m.', after which the Methodist minister 'distributed the prizes to the

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<sup>409</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 17 December 1887, p. 3.

<sup>410</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 2 January 1889, p. 2.

successful contestants. Te Aroha was again reached shortly before seven o'clock, and all dispersed to their homes, after spending a most enjoyable day, which was however slightly marred by some heavy showers'. The newspaper published a full list of the winners of all 28 events, as this would 'have special interest for our young friends'. There were 'flat' races for boys and girls in several age groups, the older children running longer distances, in addition to blindfold, three-legged, sack, skipping, obstacle, hurdle, hopping, all fours, and coupled races. There were also high and long jumps.<sup>411</sup>

The following year, the Te Aroha treat was held indoors because of rain, races being held the following day.<sup>412</sup> In 1895, Waiorongomai had 'the most successful' school picnic 'for many years'. The public subscribed £13 0s 6d, out of which '£5 1s 6d was expended on prizes. Various games were indulged in, the programme of sports being a lengthy one, embracing as it did some 23 events'.<sup>413</sup> The annual picnic remained an institution until the early 1930s,<sup>414</sup> although it was not always an annual event. 'Many would like to know why the children were deprived of their annual picnic', a columnist wrote in January 1900.<sup>415</sup>

In 1888, the break-up for the Easter holidays was celebrated by an entertainment arranged by several Te Aroha women, who arranged sports and distributed fruit and sweets.<sup>416</sup>

Excursions were held, erratically. In April 1898, it was noted that for the past two summers the local schools had not had an excursion.<sup>417</sup> Two years later, 465 pupils and adults were taken on a very successful excursion to Rotorua.<sup>418</sup> A 'young lady' who had 'just entered her 14th year' had her letter enthusiastically describing the experience published in the newspaper.<sup>419</sup>

## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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<sup>411</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 4 January 1890, p. 2.

<sup>412</sup> 'Te Aroha', *Observer*, 10 January 1891, p. 11.

<sup>413</sup> Waiorongomai Correspondent, *Te Aroha News*, 29 December 1895, p. 2.

<sup>414</sup> Priest, p. 31.

<sup>415</sup> 'Night Whisperings by the "Owl"', *Te Aroha News*, 9 January 1900, p. 2.

<sup>416</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 31 March 1888, p. 2.

<sup>417</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 7 April 1898, p. 2.

<sup>418</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 24 February 1900, p. 2.

<sup>419</sup> Alvina Crombie, 'School Excursion to Rotorua', *Te Aroha News*, 3 March 1900, p. 3.



In July 1883 permission was granted to use the Waiorongomai schoolhouse for a Sunday School.<sup>420</sup> The following month, the Wesleyan minister, Rev G.T. Marshall, asked for the use of the Te Aroha schoolhouse 'for one hour during the week after school hours to impart religious instruction to any children sent to him by parents. After a warm discussion the request was refused'.<sup>421</sup> This decision, by four votes to two, prompted the newspaper to 'very much' doubt whether it was in accordance with the spirit of the Education Act, for this was the first time such a request had been refused.<sup>422</sup> Marshall's letter protesting at the decision, which the newspaper was 'very glad' to insert,<sup>423</sup> cited one member arguing that his request was 'the thin-edge of the wedge'. Marshall considered it 'extraordinary that the Committee should think' his request would 'interfere with secular education', and argued that it was acting 'contrary to the general opinion of the country'.<sup>424</sup> He appealed to the education board, which resolved that the committee was free 'to grant or refuse any application'; a rider that the board disapproved of the decision was defeated.<sup>425</sup>

The decision created 'some little hubbub even in Auckland'.<sup>426</sup> A *New Zealand Herald* editorial suggested that there might 'be something in the demeanour of the clergyman, or in his relations with the committee, or in personal objections which they may have to himself, qualifying the nature of this refusal'. The board's support for the committee was unsurprising considering 'the present reign of foolishness, and whimsicalities in the Board', and stressed that the Act gave unqualified approval for religious education after school hours.<sup>427</sup> The *Te Aroha News* approvingly quoted long extracts from this 'powerful and well written article'.<sup>428</sup> The *Te Aroha Observer* Man more succinctly noted that 'the Heathens have had the best of

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<sup>420</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 7 July 1883, p. 2.

<sup>421</sup> *Waikato Times*, 14 August 1883, p. 2.

<sup>422</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 11 August 1883, p. 2.

<sup>423</sup> Editorial Note, *Te Aroha News*, 11 August 1883, p. 2.

<sup>424</sup> Letter from G.T. Marshall, *Te Aroha News*, 11 August 1883, p. 2.

<sup>425</sup> Board of Education, *New Zealand Herald*, 18 August 1883, p. 6; *Te Aroha News*, 25 August 1883, p. 2.

<sup>426</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 25 August 1883, p. 2.

<sup>427</sup> Editorial, *New Zealand Herald*, 20 August 1883, p. 4.

<sup>428</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 25 August 1883, p. 2.

it at the School Committee meeting, and the little olive branches are to remain in heathen darkness'.<sup>429</sup>

The committee's decision produced considerable local concern. In early October, a 'reconstructed' committee, on which only three of the earlier members remained,<sup>430</sup> voted, by three votes to two, to rescind the earlier decision, and resolved, by the same number of votes, that Bible study would be permitted at Waiorongomai. Those voting to rescind were two Wesleyans and a Presbyterian; those who voted to uphold the original resolution were a Catholic (Thomas Lawless) and a Wesleyan, both of whom considered a school was not the correct place for religious instruction.<sup>431</sup> The previous committee had contained two Anglicans, two Wesleyans, a Presbyterian, and a Catholic; their votes were not recorded.<sup>432</sup> On 12 October the education board referred the committee 'to provisions of Act as to disqualification of members of Committee',<sup>433</sup> and later that month it was 'reconstructed'.<sup>434</sup>

Once the decision was reversed, and children whose parents so wished could now attend Bible study in Te Aroha every alternate Tuesday afternoon, the *Observer* tried to take the credit. 'This decision was severely condemned at the time by our Te Aroha correspondent, and we are glad to see that his remarks have been productive of good'. Before the second vote, Lawless 'took occasion to pass some strictures on the OBSERVER for its condemnation of the dog-in-the-manger policy', but as the second decision 'practically endorses every word we said, and justifies the views we expressed, there is no necessity to say more on the subject'.<sup>435</sup> (In the almost-complete copies of this journal to survive, neither the condemnation by the correspondent – apart from the brief quote cited – nor any 'strictures' by the editor were published.) An Auckland columnist reproved the committee for its original decision:

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<sup>429</sup> 'Te Aroha', *Observer*, 15 September 1883, p. 15.

<sup>430</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 11 August 1883, p. 2, 6 October 1883, p. 2, 20 October 1883, p. 2.

<sup>431</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 6 October 1883, p. 2.

<sup>432</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 11 August 1883, p. 2.

<sup>433</sup> Auckland Education Board, Minutes of Meeting of 12 October 1883, Minute Book 1883-1884, YCAF 5491/4a, ANZ-A.

<sup>434</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 20 October 1883, p. 2.

<sup>435</sup> *Observer*, 20 October 1883, p. 14.

The notorious case of the Te Aroha School Committee has satisfactorily ended, that body having voluntarily repaired the outrage it had done to the education system of the colony. In refusing to allow the use of the schoolroom after school hours for the purposes of religious instruction, the committee adopted a course in direct defiance of the law, and in reversing the former decision and sanctioning the use of the buildings for religious purposes, they have put themselves in sympathetic accord with the common sense of the community.... It is just because [the system] is favourable to the utmost possible facilities being afforded for the teaching of religion by those who are competent and willing to do it that it has won a position impregnable in the minds of the people.<sup>436</sup>

The Anglican minister formed a Bible class in 1886, held after school hours.<sup>437</sup> In April 1889, because of denominational tensions there was a much larger vote than normal in the committee elections:

More than usual interest was evinced in the election, one section of the community showing a determination to break down a certain sectarian monopoly of power, which has hitherto ruled. This, to a certain degree, they have accomplished, notwithstanding the somewhat unaccountable number of plump votes granted to one of the candidates, (Mr [John] Ilott), no fewer than seven of the description (representing 49 votes), being recorded for him. Although the hitherto dominant party is still represented on the committee by three members, the other four are expected to take a firm and independent stand, and are not likely to be awed from the duties of their office through much veneration for the pulpit or any respect for the local press.<sup>438</sup>

Of the 1888 committee, three had been Wesleyans, including a minister, plus two Anglicans, including a minister, one Presbyterian, and one Catholic. Four were re-elected, giving the new one four Wesleyans, including the minister, two Anglicans, and one member whose religious affiliation has not been traced.<sup>439</sup> Ilott, the editor of the *Te Aroha News*, whose return had offended the correspondent, was a leading Wesleyan.<sup>440</sup>

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<sup>436</sup> 'Pollex', 'The Sketcher', *Auckland Weekly News*, 27 October 1883, p. 5.

<sup>437</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 30 April 1887, p. 2.

<sup>438</sup> Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 30 April 1889, p. 2.

<sup>439</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 25 April 1888, p. 2, 9 April 1890, p. 2; *Waikato Times*, 30 April 1889, p. 2.

<sup>440</sup> For example, *Te Aroha News*, 23 July 1890, p. 2.

The last time that religious instruction was an issue, in a very minor way, was in August, when the Presbyterian minister sought permission to give Bible instruction and the Lord's Prayer from 9.00 to 9.20 one day a week, before school commenced. As Anglicans and Wesleyans had provided this after school hours, he was advised to do likewise.<sup>441</sup>

As a footnote, in 1933 an overwhelming number of parents voted to permit religious instruction to be provided during school hours.<sup>442</sup>

## EDUCATION FOR ADULTS

As the papers on the careers of such leading miners as Henry Hopper Adams, Thomas Gavin, and Billy Nicholl indicate, many adults, even those who were successful in their chosen careers, had a weak educational background, as illustrated by their struggles to spell. In 1878, one in six adults in the Piako County were partly or completely illiterate, whereas in Thames, because of the concentration of miners, this ratio was one in three.<sup>443</sup> That semi-literacy was not restricted to miners was illustrated by an 1890 letter from a farmer to the county council which caused 'roars of laughter'. That it was typical of his regular letters was indicated by the newspaper noting that his style was 'now pretty well known':

Gentlemen

my children was coming from school and at Mr Murrays gate the wheal of my trap went over bouth of her legs only cutting them and blacking them

Last year she was opening one of them and the wind blue the gate back on her, she was then caught by the bottom bar and the ground, had the horse when on what would have been the result I dond no

This is gate that J. McNichol brooke his splendid trap at. he sent aman to pick up the pices and tak them a way. the harness was smashed. The horse had to stop at Richmond untill he com to. suppose you send me 10..0.0 for loose of time and damages to the child legs.

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<sup>441</sup> School Committee, *Te Aroha News*, 10 August 1889, p. 2.

<sup>442</sup> Priest, p. 40.

<sup>443</sup> *Results of a Census of the Colony of New Zealand, taken for the night of the 3rd of March, 1878* (Wellington, 1880), p. 139.

And so on, reproduced by the newspaper for the amusement of its readers.<sup>444</sup>

The occasional proposals for adult education were not concerned with basic instruction in grammar and spelling. In July 1881 the education board sought information 'regarding Night School',<sup>445</sup> but nothing further was heard of this idea. Two years later, a man announced he would open a night school in a vacant store;<sup>446</sup> nothing further was heard of his venture. In March 1887, Marsdon, the head teacher at Te Aroha, announced that, in response to many requests, he would open a night school, assisted by his brother, James,<sup>447</sup> who was 'highly qualified, and has had considerable experience as a teacher, and will be the chief instructor'. The *Te Aroha News* hoped young people would take up this chance to improve their education, for a night school was a 'much felt want'.<sup>448</sup> An advertisement stated that the classes would be 'Ordinary and Civil Service Subjects, Book-keeping, Shorthand, etc'.<sup>449</sup> At the end of the following month, these classes had 'not been taken advantage of so fully as was expected', and the newspaper hoped for a larger attendance soon,<sup>450</sup> but no more was heard of them. As pupils who passed the Standard 6 examinations were entitled to free admission to the Thames High School,<sup>451</sup> there may have been little need for them. Was he the J.N. Marsdon who, because he was absent from a teacher's examination at Taotaoroa in January 1886, had his appointment terminated?<sup>452</sup> James was re-employed by the education board and passed later examinations.<sup>453</sup>

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<sup>444</sup> G. Given to County Clerk, 27 January 1890, printed in *Te Aroha News*, 22 February 1890, p. 2.

<sup>445</sup> Auckland Education Board, Minutes of Meeting of 22 July 1881, Minute Book 1881-1883, p. 127, YCAF 5491/3a, ANZ-A.

<sup>446</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 14 July 1883, p. 3.

<sup>447</sup> See *Tauranga Electoral Roll, 1887*, p. 15.

<sup>448</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 12 March 1887, p. 2.

<sup>449</sup> Advertisement, *Te Aroha News*, 12 March 1887, p. 3.

<sup>450</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 30 April 1887, p. 2.

<sup>451</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 20 February 1889, p. 2.

<sup>452</sup> Auckland Education Board, Minutes of Meetings of 22 January 1886, 26 February 1886, Minute Book 1885-1887, pp. 270, 290, YCAF 5491/5a, ANZ-A.

<sup>453</sup> For example, *AJHR*, 1891, E-1, p. 16; *Auckland Star*, 23 February 1899, p. 5.

Not till 1931 were evening classes established, for dressmaking, bookkeeping, shorthand, and typing.<sup>454</sup>

### A POPULAR TEACHER

James William Rennick was born in Russell, Bay of Islands, in June 1868, to James, then a hotelkeeper, and Rachael Pickens.<sup>455</sup> His father later moved to Thames, where he was licensee of the Imperial Hotel.<sup>456</sup> Rennick was educated at the Waiotahi Creek school for nine and a half years before receiving a certificate of proficiency in the scholarship examination for Thames High School, where he spent one and a half years.<sup>457</sup> In April 1884, out of 80 candidates examined for the civil service junior examination he was ranked twenty-fourth.<sup>458</sup> Two months after turning 16 he became a pupil teacher at Kauaeranga Boy's School.<sup>459</sup> The following April, a Thames newspaper reported that 'Master J. Rennick, pupil teacher at Kauaeranga Boy's School, is about to be transferred to Tararu', at the northern edge of Thames, 'where a male teacher is required'.<sup>460</sup> In 1888, he became sole teacher and subsequently head teacher at Awitu, on the Awhitu Peninsula.<sup>461</sup> In 1894, he was appointed head teacher at Waiorongomai.<sup>462</sup>

His popularity with parents and pupils was indicated when, in January 1898, at the age of 29 he was married to Annie McLean, aged 20,

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<sup>454</sup> Priest, p. 40.

<sup>455</sup> Birth Certificate of James William Rennick, 1868/10915; Death Certificate of James William Rennick, 20 May 1942, 1942/19801, BDM; Waiotahi Creek School, Admissions Book 1874-1912, no. 5, Public Library Archives, Thames.

<sup>456</sup> For example, Thames Magistrate's Court, Criminal Record Book 1881-1883, entry for 22 June 1883, BACL 13736/35a, ANZ-A.

<sup>457</sup> Waiotahi Creek School, Admissions Book 1874-1912, no. 5; Thames High School, Register 1880-1942, no. 102, Public Library Archives, Thames; Thames High School Board of Governors, Minute Books, Memoranda of 31 March 1880, 7 February 1883, High School Archives, Thames; *New Zealand Gazette*, 29 May 1884, p. 890.

<sup>458</sup> *New Zealand Gazette*, 29 May 1884, p. 890.

<sup>459</sup> Thames High School, Register 1880-1942, no. 102, Public Library Archives, Thames; *AJHR*, 1885, E-1, p. 19.

<sup>460</sup> *Thames Advertiser*, 13 April 1885, p. 3.

<sup>461</sup> *AJHR*, 1889, E-1, p. 16; 1890, E-1, p. 14; 1891, E-1, p. 14; 1892, E-1, p. 15; 1893, E-1, p. 14; 1894, E-1, p. 15.

<sup>462</sup> *AJHR*, 1895, E-1, p. 19.

daughter of William,<sup>463</sup> a miner who formerly had managed the tramway.<sup>464</sup> The *Te Aroha News* waxed exceedingly lyrical:

“Happy is the bride the sun shines on,” and a happier bride than Miss McLean it has seldom been our lot to look upon. Yesterday was one of those days in which the average man is tempted, in the fullness of his heart, to exclaim, “Life is worth living.” At any rate we feel sure the School-master of Waiorongomai, Mr James Rennick, thought so as he passed down the aisle of the Te Aroha Anglican Church, through rows of smiling friendly faces, with his handsome young bride on his arm. Without being an expert in such matters we had not been long on the scene before we involuntarily re-echoed the sentiment of an old man in the crowd, who observed, with that ring of conviction in his voice, which we very properly associate with the oldest inhabitant, who has generally witnessed every wedding since the first chimney was built in a township, that this was one of the most popular he “recommended.” Long before 11 o’clock a well-dressed crowd besieged the doors of St Mark’s Church, and the appearance of the vicar (Rev E.J. McFarland), wreathed in smiles, was hailed by the struggling mass of humanity with a sigh of relief. On the opening of the doors the little church was filled to overflowing. Before many minutes had elapsed a carriage and pair was driven rapidly up the hill to the door of the church. From it stepped the bridegroom and his friends doing their best to look as much at ease as they possibly could under the circumstances. Then followed more carriages, and Mr William McLean assisted his daughter, pale as a lily but looking the charming bride all over, from the crown of her bridal veil to the tips of her dainty shoes, to alight.

After recording details of the bridesmaids and the ceremony, wedding presents provided by 68 family and friends were listed, ‘besides a number of other useful and handsome presents’.<sup>465</sup> After returning from his honeymoon, on the first day of school ‘a pleasing ceremony’ was held and Rennick received ‘a very handsome testimonial of the esteem in which he is held by his scholars, in the shape of an address and clock’. The presentation, by Mary Cronin and John Jennings ‘on behalf of their fellow pupils’, was made at the end of the morning’s lessons. Mary Kathleen Cronin, aged

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<sup>463</sup> Marriage Certificate of James William Rennick, 19 January 1898, 1898/217, BDM.

<sup>464</sup> See paper on the Piako County tramway at Waiorongomai.

<sup>465</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 20 January 1898, p. 2.

nearly nine,<sup>466</sup> was the daughter of Michael,<sup>467</sup> who had been a member of the school committee for a decade and was re-elected its chairman that year.<sup>468</sup> John Werahiko Jennings, aged ten,<sup>469</sup> was the son of Edward, variously a carpenter and amalgamator at the battery.<sup>470</sup> He was also a member of the committee for at least 16 years, and secretary for several years in the 1890s.<sup>471</sup> Mary Cronin read the address:

Dear Mr Rennick, - Being aware and pleased that since our school broke up for the Christmas holidays, you have been married, to a young lady of this district, who is well known and respected, we, the girls and boys of your school, do therefore humbly request that we be allowed to offer you our hearty congratulations, and that you may be pleased to accept this small gift: This clock to commemorate that happy event. And also to show our gratitude to you for your never failing zeal for our welfare. We offer you this small gift with right hearty good will, and ask you to accept it in the same spirit. Then, take this clock into your home, and let it ever be a token of the high esteem we hold for you, which ever will remain unbroken. That the choicest blessings of God may always rest on you and Mrs Rennick, is the prayer of us all. – Signed on behalf of the girls and boys of your school this 7th day of February 1898, MARY CRONIN, JOHN JENNINGS.

Mr Rennick, who expressed his surprise and gratification at receiving such a handsome gift, replied thanking the children in feeling terms. A half-holiday was granted in honour of the occasion.<sup>472</sup>

Being a ‘popular headmaster’, when he left early in 1902 to take charge of the Kirikiri school a ‘farewell social’ was held. ‘There was a large attendance testifying to the esteem’ in which he was held. ‘During the evening a presentation of a handsome Gladstone bag, and set of gold sleeve-links’, was made by the committee chairman, who described Rennick’s eight

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<sup>466</sup> Birth Certificate of Mary Kathleen Cronin, 18 March 1889, 1889/18873, BDM.

<sup>467</sup> See paper on Edward Gallagher.

<sup>468</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 30 April 1887, p. 2, 30 April 1890, p. 2, 28 April 1898, p. 3.

<sup>469</sup> Birth Certificate of John Werahiko [recorded as Werhaku] Jennings, 14 November 1887, 1887/1552, BDM.

<sup>470</sup> See *Thames Star*, 24 July 1890, p. 2; *Te Aroha News*, advertisement, 6 August 1903, p. 1, 27 October 1926, p. 8.

<sup>471</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 1 May 1886, p. 2, 25 April 1888, p. 2, 27 April 1895, p. 2, 28 April 1898, p. 3; *Auckland Weekly News*, 8 May 1902, p. 41.

<sup>472</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 8 February 1898, p. 2.



years at the school 'as having been marked by careful work and good results; the relations between teacher, committee, and parents, had always been cordial; they were all sorry to lose such a good teacher, but they rejoiced at his promotion'. In reply, Rennick 'testified to the many kindnesses he had received'.<sup>473</sup>

Rennick's active involvement in the community was another reason for his popularity. In 1894, for instance, he helped organize a concert for the Anglican Church.<sup>474</sup> The following year, he acted as master of ceremonies at a Te Aroha social 'in his usual good style'.<sup>475</sup> Two years later, he was elected a vestryman of the Anglican Church and to the committee of the medical association that hoped to entice a doctor to settle.<sup>476</sup> He was active in the Jockey Club, being a steward in 1897 and its secretary in 1900 and 1901 at least.<sup>477</sup> As secretary he was regarded as very efficient.<sup>478</sup> In 1899 he was a steward for the Te Aroha West Hack Club races.<sup>479</sup>

In 1895, the newspaper described him as 'the popular captain of the Te Aroha football team'.<sup>480</sup> Secretary and treasurer of this club during 1896, in early 1897 he convened a meeting to re-form it.<sup>481</sup> Shortly afterwards he was secretary of a successful club social;<sup>482</sup> he was also treasurer, secretary, and occasional referee.<sup>483</sup> In the latter role, on at least one occasion he was not so popular. In mid-1898, when refereeing the match between Volunteers and Civilians, his decisions were frequently challenged, 'one player going so far as to serenade off the field because he could not get his own way'.<sup>484</sup> The following month, he was one of the 'most conspicuous' players for the

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<sup>473</sup> Te Aroha Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 6 March 1902, p. 33.

<sup>474</sup> *Auckland Weekly News*, 17 November 1894, p. 23.

<sup>475</sup> 'Te Aroha', *Observer*, 25 May 1895, p. 21.

<sup>476</sup> *Thames Advertiser*, 17 May 1897, p. 3, 24 July 1897, p. 2.

<sup>477</sup> *Ohinemuri Gazette*, 4 December 1897, p. 2, 19 December 1900, p. 2; *Te Aroha News*, 18 January 1900, p. 2; *Auckland Weekly News*, 10 May 1901, p. 26.

<sup>478</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 13 February 1900, p. 3.

<sup>479</sup> *Waikato Argus*, 14 October 1899, p. 3.

<sup>480</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 22 June 1895, p. 2.

<sup>481</sup> *Thames Advertiser*, 1 April 1896, p. 2; *Waikato Argus*, 6 April 1897, p. 2.

<sup>482</sup> *Thames Advertiser*, 26 July 1897, p. 2.

<sup>483</sup> *Thames Advertiser*, 22 January 1898, p. 2, 28 April 1898, p. 2.

<sup>484</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 7 June 1898, p. 2.

Civilians against the Volunteers; his team won.<sup>485</sup> When he was married, the club gave him a silver egg stand and a silver butter cooler.<sup>486</sup>

Rennick invested in mining during the 1890s boom. In September 1895, he applied for the Trident, on Fern Spur, but when surveyed it was discovered to include part of the township; perhaps for this reason he withdrew his application in the following March.<sup>487</sup> In October 1897, he was granted the Night and Morning, but did not uplift the license, which accordingly lapsed.<sup>488</sup> From at 1895 until at least 1900, he was secretary of the Cadman Syndicate.<sup>489</sup> In July 1898 he unsuccessfully asked the government to purchase the battery and convert it into a public crushing one, for if was sold and removed 'mining operations will probably cease'. He had been told that local ore could 'be successfully treated with very little alteration to the plant'.<sup>490</sup>

After leaving Waiorongomai, Rennick was headmaster at Kirikiri, to the south of Thames, for several years.<sup>491</sup> His next, and last, teaching position was at Kopu, nearby.<sup>492</sup> As at Waiorongomai, he was active in the community; for instance, for several years he was secretary of the Thames Jockey Club.<sup>493</sup> He continued to invest in mining, in July 1904 sending a sample of Kirikiri quartz to the Thames School of Mines; it contained a

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<sup>485</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 12 July 1898, p. 2.

<sup>486</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 20 January 1898, p. 2.

<sup>487</sup> Te Aroha Warden's Court, Mining Applications 1895, 37/1895, BBAV 11289/15a, ANZ-A.

<sup>488</sup> Te Aroha Warden's Court, Letterbook 1883-1900, pp. 451, 435, 480, BBAV 11534/1a; Register of Licensed Holdings 1887-01909, folio 119, BBAV 11500/8b, ANZ-A.

<sup>489</sup> Piako County Council, Letterbook 1897-1899, p. 252; Letterbook 1899-1901, pp. 99, 275, Matamata-Piako District Council Archives, Te Aroha; *Te Aroha News*, 9 October 1895, p. 2.

<sup>490</sup> J.W. Rennick to Minister of Mines, 27 July 1898, Mines Department, MD 1, 8/50 Part 1, ANZ-W; *New Zealand Mines Record*, 16 September 1898, p. 73; *Ohinemuri Gazette*, 1 October 1898, p. 2.

<sup>491</sup> *Thames Star*, 29 January 1902, p. 2, 27 November 1906, p. 2.

<sup>492</sup> Probate of James William Rennick, Probates, BBAE 1570, 778/42, ANZ-A.

<sup>493</sup> *Thames Borough Centenary Souvenir*, 5 November 1973, ed. P. O'Neill (Thames, 1973), p. 165; Johnny Williams, *Racing for Gold: Thames and the goldfields with the history of the Thames Jockey Club* (Thames, 1987), p. 122.

trace of bullion of no value.<sup>494</sup> In September 1926 he was granted the Eclipse, at Thames, and within two weeks informed the warden that he intended to form a company. As it would cost ‘a considerable sum of money’ to prospect and develop the ground, ‘and as it is doubtful if there will even then be any return’, he sought, and was granted, protection and a reduction in rent.<sup>495</sup> Almost two years later, he established a ‘small syndicate’ to test the mine, employing two men.<sup>496</sup> He still owned this claim in late 1929.<sup>497</sup> Four years later, on behalf of a syndicate he asked the Thames Unemployment Committee to provide workers to form a track to the Sovereign, at Shellback Creek.<sup>498</sup>

Two of Rennick’s children were born at Waiorongomai: Thelma Rachel, born in March 1899, and Annie Gwendoline, born in September 1900.<sup>499</sup> Another daughter was born after he left the district.<sup>500</sup> When his father died in 1912, his estate was valued at £2,570,<sup>501</sup> but little of this went to Rennick; his mother inherited all the property, £100 was distributed amongst the four grandchildren, and any residue was shared amongst his four children.<sup>502</sup> After suffering from heart disease for six years, Rennick died in 1942, aged 74, when living at Remuera.<sup>503</sup> He left his widow an estate of a mere £98 5s 3d.<sup>504</sup>

## CONCLUSION

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<sup>494</sup> Thames School of Mines, Assay Book 1898-1907, entry for 8 July 1904, School of Mines Archives, Thames.

<sup>495</sup> Thames Warden’s Court, Mining Applications 1925-1927, 63/1926, BACL 14350/8a, ANZ-A.

<sup>496</sup> Thames Warden’s Court, Mining Applications 1927-1928, 27/1928, BACL 14350/9a, ANZ-A.

<sup>497</sup> ‘Complete List of Gold-Mining Licenses on Thames Register on 31 August 1929’, Mines Department, MD 1, 5/3/33, Part 1, ANZ-W.

<sup>498</sup> Inspector of Mines, Minutes of Thames Unemployment Committee 1932-1935, Meeting of 15 February 1933, YCAB 1248/1, ANZ-A.

<sup>499</sup> Birth Certificates of Thelma Rachel Rennick, 13 March 1899, 1899/628; Annie Gwendoline Rennick, 10 September 1900, 1900/16271, BDM.

<sup>500</sup> Death Certificate of James William Rennick, 20 May 1942, 1942/19801, BDM.

<sup>501</sup> *Auckland Weekly News*, 7 November 1912, p. 24.

<sup>502</sup> Probate of James Rennick, Probates, BBAE 1569/8614, ANZ-A.

<sup>503</sup> Death Certificate of James William Rennick, 20 May 1942, 1942/19801, BDM.

<sup>504</sup> Probate of J.W. Rennick, Probates, BBAE 1570, 778/42, ANZ-A.

Educating their children was a priority for most but by no means all parents. Those who took it seriously assisted the teachers by joining the school committee and in organizing the entertainments held to raise money and the school treats that were a highlight of the pupils' year. The constant turnover of assistant teachers probably made teaching more difficult for the head teachers and learning more difficult for the pupils. What was taught was elementary compared with what future generations were taught, and children left school with only an elementary education, perhaps with the harsh discipline as their main memories.

### *Appendix*

*Figure 1:* John Samuel Hill, pupils of Waiorongomai School, December 1908, Eric Hill Collection.

*Figure 2:* John Samuel Hill, Waiorongomai School, c. 1914, Eric Hill Collection.



*Figure 1: John Samuel Hill, pupils of Waiorongomai School, December 1908, Eric Hill Collection.*



*Figure 2: John Samuel Hill, Waiorongomai School, c. 1914, Eric Hill Collection.*