TE AROHA TOWNSHIP DURING THE FIRST RUSH: 1880-1881

Philip Hart

Te Aroha Mining District Working Papers

No. 113

Revised on January 31, 2024

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

ISSN: 2463-6266

© 2016 Philip Hart

Contact: prhart1940@gmail.com

THE UNIVERSITY OF WAIKATO
Te Whare Wānanga o Waikato

TE AROHA TOWNSHIP DURING THE FIRST RUSH: 1880-1881

Abstract: *The most exciting time for a mining township was during the first rush. At Te Aroha, canvas settlements appeared close to the hot pools and between the mountain and the river, and because of the high hopes for a payable field all the features of a permanent settlement soon appeared. Shops of all varieties were erected, the original hotel soon had competition, church sites were chosen, government offices appeared, and because so many of the settlers were family men a start was made to provide schooling and health care. Sport, horse racing, and other entertainments became part of social life, with the hot pools a particular focus for 'rest and recreation'. Within a few months, more substantial buildings were erected (very necessary because of the high wind common to the district), better roads to and within the settlement were constructed, and a better punt across the river provided. As the prospects of the goldfield faded in 1881, so did the township, but the discovery of gold at Waiorongomai meant that it would quickly revive and indeed flourish.*

EXCITING DAYS

Writing of mining camps in America's Rocky Mountains, Duane Smith noted that life in them was frequently

> pictured as adventuresome and exciting. The first months or year of a community's existence probably justified this description. The excitement of new discoveries, the great plans for the camp and district, the general optimism, the stimulation of boom times all blended to create a bright illusion. Men and women were caught up by it and swept along, happily hoping the end would be as rosy. The camps were a beehive of activity – people moving in, prospecting parties coming and going, buildings and houses constructed, new stores opening, saloons and dance halls going full blast, a little criminal activity, and perhaps the stir of local politics. All the adventures, the zest of opening up a new frontier were rolled into one small area, where all could watch and participate.[1]

[1] Duane A. Smith, *Rocky Mountain Mining Camps* (Bloomington, Ill., 1967), p. 74.

All these points applied to early Te Aroha, on the frontier of Pakeha expansion into the upper Waihou Valley, as did his assessment of the excessive enthusiasm of the first settlers:

> In this first period, before the worth of the district became established, hope and optimism could be easily substituted for realism. Even against the optimistic background of the whole mining cycle this remains the highpoint. Never again would hopes be so high, with only the sky as a limit. Few of the participants were completely immune to the air of confidence and even visitors were caught in the spell. A person might ask himself how long this could continue, but caution was not a characteristic to be long debated in the face of prosperity and promise.[2]

ITS PROSPECTS

Many participants in the rush to Te Aroha expected it to become 'the largest inland town in New Zealand'.[3]

> A more favourable locality for a goldfield could not well be met with. With freight from Auckland at 25s a ton on the one hand, and a land "flowing with cattle and sheep" on the other, there would be no fabulous prices to pay for tucker, etc, and prospecting would be a comparatively easy and inexpensive task.[4]

The same argument applied to Te Aroha as a tourist centre or in any other capacity: it was well situated for economical living and had thermal waters that would attract visitors, making it a mining town with a difference, as discussed in the chapter on the hot springs.

BEFORE THE GOLD RUSH

In 1887, a prominent mine manager and mining reporter, John McCombie,[5] recalled his first visit, in 1880, before the discovery of gold was widely known. 'There were only two wooden structures in the whole place, and then the European residents could be counted on the fingers of one

---

[2] Smith, p. 75.

[3] *Thames Star*, 15 November 1880, p. 2.

[4] Waitoa Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 19 October 1880, p. 2.

[5] See paper on Billy Nicholl.

hand, whereas the Maori population was quite numerous'.[6] One of the first miners to come to Te Aroha, John O'Shea,[7] recalled these buildings as being George Lipsey's house[8] and the Hot Springs Hotel.[9] Another early settle recalled three wooden buildings: the hotel and the houses of Lipsey and Mokena Hou,[10] his father-in-law.[11] In 1948, Ellen Grattan, widow of Thomas Arthur Grattan, a surveyor who worked in this district during the 1880s,[12] and who had lived at Waihou before the rush, recalled the site of Te Aroha as 'wild wild country' with high manuka growing between the hotel and the river.[13] Because the small hotel, run by George Stewart O'Halloran,[14] could not accommodate all the new arrivals, McCombie recalled that 'all hands were obliged to go in for tent life, with occasional visits to the hotel for square meals'. Standards were relaxed:

> Frequently the diggers assembled at the dining-table sans coat and vest, without any protest on the part of the proprietor. One day, however, Mrs O'Halloran met us at the dining room door, and said, "Now, gentlemen, I want you all to wear coats to-day, because there are two tourists coming to dinner."[15]

Before the settlement was established, Pakeha settled on the Waikato side of the river, three kilometres downstream from the future township at the Te Kawana landing, where there was 'a very good hotel and store ... a large warehouse for goods, one or two cottages, and a cabinet maker's workshop'. The latter, on the Te Aroha side of the river, was connected by a

---

[6] 'Aboriginal' [John McCombie], 'On the Wallaby', *Thames Advertiser*, 23 December 1887, p. 3.

[7] See *Te Aroha News*, 7 February 1885, p. 2, 22 August 1885, p. 2, 11 February 1888, p. 2, 24 April 1889, p. 2, 5 December 1930, p. 5.

[8] See paper on his life.

[9] Recollections of John O'Shea, *Te Aroha News*, 28 November 1940, p. 5.

[10] See paper on his life.

[11] Letter from 'Old Settler', *Te Aroha News*, 22 November 1910, p. 2.

[12] See *New Zealand Herald*, 11 June 1901, p. 2, 14 March 1917, p. 8; *Auckland Star*, 29 March 1928, p. 8.

[13] Ellen Grattan, recorded by Mobile Unit of the New Zealand Broadcasting Corporation, 1948, MU 351A.

[14] See paper on his life.

[15] John McCombie, 'Early Days of Te Aroha', *New Zealand Herald*, 2 December 1910, p. 7.

punt,[16] owned by William Everett, who later also operated one in the township.[17] The hotel, the Waihou, 'was a favourite house of call for travellers journeying overland between the Waikato districts and the Thames and at times the business ... was of such an extensive nature as to make it envied by better situated establishments'.[18] William Dibsell,[19] who would become a storekeeper at Te Aroha for many years,[20] was its owner. On this side of the river the government intended to site the township,[21] but the discovery of gold led to the establishment of Te Aroha Goldfields Township on the eastern bank instead.

ESTABLISHING THE SETTLEMENT

On opening day, an observer counted over 90 tents above the Hot Springs Hotel, 'while there were perhaps half as many that could not be seen, and a dozen or more on the other side of the river'.[22] When the first Methodist minister to visit Te Aroha, James T. Pinfold,[23] arrived by steamer on the evening of 16 December 1880, he saw a sight that was still fresh in his memory in 1931. 'All at once, as we turned one of the bends, the Te Aroha mountain appeared, having tents largely covering it, through the canvas of which candles were seen shining brightly. It was a fairy scene'.[24] At that time tents provided almost the only shelter, and the only accommodation, recalled a farmer who participated in the rush, was 'one small "pub" kept by a Mr O'Halloran. Our tent was carried away by one of your Te Aroha zephyrs, and we had to spend the balance of the night in the "pub" sitting on an upturned beer-cask. The tent I never set eyes on

---

[16] Travelling Reporter [S.E. Smith], *Waikato Times*, 27 March 1880, p. 2.

[17] See *Observer*, 6 August 1904, p. 4.

[18] *Te Aroha News*, 9 June 1883, p. 2.

[19] *Thames Advertiser*, 25 October 1880, pp. 2, 3.

[20] See paper on his life.

[21] See map ML 1966, DOSLI, Hamilton; Lands and Survey Department, 1879 map in LS 1/2344, ANZ-W.

[22] *Auckland Weekly News*, 4 December 1880, p. 11.

[23] *New Zealand Gazette*, 27 January 1882, p. 174.

[24] *Strong Blow the Winds: A brief record of the history of the Te Aroha Methodist Church and Circuit 1881-1956* (Te Aroha, 1956), no pagination [pp. 3-4].

again'.[25] As Pinfold was not used to living in a tent, O'Halloran allowed him to sleep under the bar counter.[26] Another hotel was being built at the end of November, which a local correspondent wrote would 'supply a good deal of accommodation', which was 'much required here now, many gentlemen coming up for a visit being compelled to sleep in cold, damp tents or the holds and cabins of the steamers'.[27] A visitor confirmed that travellers had difficulty in 'obtaining shelter of the most meagre description'.[28]

Residence sites were not surveyed until shortly after the opening:

> Every section was taken up within a few hours after the survey had been finished, and preparations are being made for putting up buildings on several of them. The main street will run in a straight line from the foot of the hills, between Mr Lipsey's house and the hotel, to the river, at a point where the county council contemplates erecting a large bridge, and where the river steamers are sure to make their landing when the river is too low to allow of them going up to the present place of stopping.[29]

A few tents had 'a weatherboard or two at the ends to stiffen them'.[30] The child of an early settler, blacksmith and then farmer, John Mace,[31] recalled his mother being 'determined to accompany his father, and share the hardships when he came to Te Aroha and so that they could have a place to live in on arrival she made a large tent. This they lived in for several months while his father was building a house'.[32]

It very quickly became apparent that tents would have difficulty coping with Te Aroha's winds. Two days after the opening of the goldfield, the 'high wind'

> played fantastic tricks with the tents of the noble diggers. I, with others, had a "change come over the spirit of our dreams," when a fiercer gust than usual towards midnight took our tent bodily

---

[25] Letter from C.J.W. Barton, 27 October 1930, in *Te Aroha and the Fortunate Valley: Pioneering in the Thames Valley 1867-1930*, ed. F.W. Wild (Te Aroha, 1930), p. 351.

[26] *Strong Blow the Winds*, [p. 4].

[27] Te Aroha Correspondent, *Thames Advertiser*, 30 November 1880, p. 3.

[28] *Waikato Times*, 4 December 1880, p. 2.

[29] Te Aroha Correspondent, *Thames Advertiser*, 1 December 1880, p. 3.

[30] *Observer*, 6 August 1904, p. 4.

[31] See *Te Aroha News*, 19 April 1918, p. 2.

[32] Recollections of George William Mace, *Te Aroha News*, 26 October 1927, p. 5.

> away, leaving us exposed to the tender mercies of the storm. We had little time for prayer, and getting on our ordinary apparel was no easy matter. We were not alone in our misfortune, which was some consolation, and to recover our lost tent required all our attention. After a time we found our particular piece of canvas, and re-erected it, but comfort for the rest of the night there was none.[33]

Less than a month later, tent-dwellers 'suffered great hardships ... owing to the severity of the gale, which sufficed to tear the covering off at least 50 or 60 who sought repose in vain for that night'.[34] Another account stated that for the previous week the weather had been 'very uncomfortable for men under canvas, indeed it was almost impossible to keep under it at all, the tents showing a strong inclination to go prospecting across the Thames Valley on their own account'. After rain fell, there was

> a gale such as is rarely felt in New Zealand, and even those who were accustomed to the winds of Wellington were forced to admit that the supremacy of that district in this respect was in danger. A large amount of damage was done; a great number of tents were split to ribbons, and several buildings in course of erection were much injured.[35]

Residents learnt from experience; in one 'perfect hurricane', no damage was done and no tents blown down because the owners had 'secured them in such a manner that the wind could not draw the pegs'.[36] But later that month 'half a gale' blew down 'about a dozen canvas tenements'.[37]

John O'Shea recalled houses being 'brought in sections by barges and punts up the Waihou river from Thames and we used to see them put together in a couple of days'.[38] By late January, there were 68 wooden buildings (including all the commercial buildings) and 105 tents.[39] Small houses were being built 'in all parts of the township'.[40] One miner's whare

---

[33] Te Aroha Correspondent, *Thames Star*, 29 November 1880, p. 2.

[34] Te Aroha Correspondent, *Thames Advertiser*, 16 December 1880, p. 2.

[35] Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 18 December 1880, p. 2.

[36] Te Aroha Correspondent, *Thames Advertiser*, 19 January 1881, p. 3.

[37] Te Aroha Correspondent, *Thames Advertiser*, 28 January 1881, p. 3.

[38] Recollections of John O'Shea, *Te Aroha News*, 28 November 1940, p. 5.

[39] *Thames Star*, 25 January 1881, p. 2.

[40] Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 22 January 1881, p. 2, 29 January 1881, p. 2.

was 'constructed of light saplings from the bush, and covered with raupo. The roof ran from the ridge-pole to the ground without any side walls'.[41] The census taken on 3 April recorded 50 houses made of wood and iron, six from raupo, four from cob or sod, and one from stone and clay; there were 41 tents.[42]

Although a raupo house might sound extremely primitive, in 1948 Ellen Grattan still had fond memories of living in one. When her family arrived in Te Aroha shortly after the rush, they first boarded in the Hot Springs Hotel because there was nowhere else to live. They then lived for four years in a very comfortable whare with two large rooms abandoned by a woman who had moved into a house. The walls were made of slabs of timber, the roof was raupo, and cut-open sacks papered over sealed the inside. But one night a gale blew off the roof of the bedroom containing her three small children.[43]

The settlement was typical of a new mining township. A visitor in March 1881 noted 'a strange feeling of familiarity':

> I had been on the Thames in the very early days, and here was something like a repetition of the scene. Tents straggling about on the flat, or peeping from the fern and bush on the ridges of the hills; buildings here and there in the township roughly put together, and not yet marking out the lines of the streets; storekeepers busy getting in goods; groups standing before the doors of the hotels; men coming off shift with their billies, and making their way to their tents.[44]

By April, the *Waikato Times* correspondent described it as 'a lively little place; and if it doesn't grow very much like its big relations, Bendigo or Ballarat', two prominent Victorian mining towns, 'it will not be its own fault'. After crossing the river, 'a newcomer will find himself in a very busy scene of rapidly constructed new wooden buildings of the shanty class for

---

[41] *Thames Star*, 2 March 1881, p. 2.

[42] *Results of a Census of the Colony of New Zealand, taken for the Night of the 3rd of April, 1881* (Wellington, 1882), p. 58.

[43] Ellen Grattan, interviewed in 1948, Mobile Unit of New Zealand Broadcasting Company, MU352A.

[44] 'XYZ', 'Te Aroha by Waikato and Back by Thames', *Auckland Weekly News*, 5 March 1881, p. 11.

the most part, as easily taken down and removed as they have been put up, if they do not turn out sufficient'.[45]

TENT LIFE

The tent life of the first few months inevitably created a degree of close interaction, not all desirable, as described by John McCombie in his recollection of the 'Fog Horn Club':

> There was one lot of tents grouped together, and these were occupied by a number of men who were well known as members of the above mentioned "club." Two of them, who slept together in one tent, were credited with being their champion snorers of New Zealand, and there is no doubt that their joint performance on the nasal organ entitled them to some credit. Whenever they were both in full blast the noise reminded one of a double cylinder engine when loaded beyond its capacity, and close neighbours averred that the walls of the tent used to flop in and out with every breath of the sleepers. Eventually the snoring partnership was broken up by a paragraph appearing in one of the local papers. The substance of this was as follows:- "We are pleased to chronicle the fact that the abilities of two of our well known residents have at last been recognised by the Government of the Colony. Messrs - - have been advised that they are to be established on Tiri Tiri Island instead of the more expensive light house which the Government at one time contemplated erecting there. We are well acquainted with the gentlemen in question, and we know that their powerful nasal organs will be heard by passing ships miles away, and sound, we believe, is preferable to light where dense fogs are prevalent."[46]

A Thames newspaper provided another example of the lack of privacy:

> A returned Te Arohan relates an amusing story of tent life in that locality. Lying in his bed of fern he was reading to his mate an account of the cricket match Australians v. Cornwall - won by the former. A drunken Cornishman going past heard his native county mentioned and listened to the reading. No sooner had our

---

[45] Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 5 April 1881, p. 2.

[46] John McCombie, 'Random Recollections: Te Aroha Goldfield', pp. 3-4, typescript, n.d. [1910], MS 838, Library of Auckland Institute and War Memorial Museum; reprinted as 'Te Aroha's Early Days: Some Reminiscences', *Thames Star*, 24 December 1910, Supplement, p. 2.

> friend finished than cousin Jack [the Cornishman] shoving his head through the tents exclaimed vehemently "Yer a liard. The Austreilians never won."[47]

Tent life also created a fire hazard. The first fire occurred in a tent occupied by Jim Philp, the sole reporter for the *Te Aroha Miner*,[48] and his mate James Simms,[49] a surveyor who had participated in the rush and was a partner in one claim:[50]

> About 3 o'clock one of the neighbours was awakened by a crackling, and on opening his eyes saw that the tent was in flames. He gave the alarm, and several persons soon congregated on the spot. The occupants must have been stupified by the smoke, for they were deaf to all cries, and at last they had to be pulled out of the burning mass. Philp, who had only taken his coat off when lying down, had the clothes burnt off his body, and received a very severe scorching, especially about the arms. Simms' hair was singed, and his coat burnt; but he escaped better than his companion. Three suits of clothes, four pairs of boots, a spare tent, a quantity of provisions and some books were consumed in the fire. The loss to the owners is about £8 or £10.[51]

Over a week later, 'quite a commotion' was caused one evening when a large blaze was seen.

> The fire soon drew together about a couple of hundred men, who found that it was of no consequence, being only a trivial one. Had it not been for the promptitude displayed by several gentlemen, a couple of tents and their contents would have been destroyed, as the flames reached within a foot or two of them.[52]

---

[47] *Thames Star*, 5 March 1881, p. 2.

[48] See *Thames Star*, 21 June 1879, p. 2, 26 July 1880, p. 2; *Observer*, 21 April 1906, p. 4.

[49] See *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 7, p. 23.

[50] Te Aroha Warden's Court, Miner's Right no. 312, issued 25 November 1880, Miners' Rights Butt Book 1880, BBAV 11533/1a; Register of Te Aroha Claims 1880-1888, folio 153, BBAV 11567/1a, ANZ-A; 'Te Aroha Arrows (From our Special on the Spot)', *Observer*, 19 February 1881, p. 236.

[51] Te Aroha Correspondent, *Thames Advertiser*, 15 January 1881, p. 3; see also *Auckland Weekly News*, 22 January 1881, p. 21.

[52] Te Aroha Correspondent, *Thames Advertiser*, 28 January 1881, p. 3.

Tents were not only vulnerable to fire and insecure in high winds but were also very cold. In 1924, George Horne[53] recalled arriving in Te Aroha about 44 years previously 'with another young fellow'. While building houses for others they 'lived in a tent and the nights were so cold that he and his mate had to take turns getting out of bed so they could pile fuel on the fire'.[54]

INSECTS

In late December 1880, a suffering reporter gave details of some of the unpleasant features of the new settlement:

> What with mosquitoes, fleas, gales and heavy rains, the dwellers in tents are having nice times of it. The former visit us in myriads almost every night, and it is next to impossible to dislodge them. Mosquito netting affords little protection against their attacks, smoke appears to have no effect on them, and it is not an unusual thing when they are plentiful to see numbers of men walking about the township up to 2 and 3 a.m., preferring to pass away the time in that manner than to be eaten alive by the little wretches.[55]

Mosquitoes were regularly complained about,[56] but less so after wooden houses were built.

TEMPESTS

Bad weather sometimes had destructive consequences. For instance, in December 1880, 'about once a week we are visited by a gale, which deals destruction everywhere, and almost every second day it is raining, so that altogether we are enjoying ourselves greatly.[57] In one gale 'several tents have been razed to the ground, amongst them being the large canvas house' used by John Leydon,[58] an auctioneer, for his business. 'The canvas was

---

[53] Not traced.

[54] Recollections of George Horne, *Te Aroha News*, 13 November 1924, p. 5.

[55] Te Aroha Correspondent, *Thames Advertiser*, 20 December 1880, p. 3.

[56] For example, Te Aroha Correspondent, *Thames Advertiser*, 27 November 1880, p. 3, 6 January 1881, p. 3.

[57] Te Aroha Correspondent, *Thames Advertiser*, 20 December 1880, p. 3.

[58] See *New Zealand Herald*, 8 April 1927, p. 12.

split, and the ridge pole broke in the middle'.[59] Six months later, the weather was 'extremely bad, and a large quantity of rain fell'. The river 'rose about five feet, and the punt was washed away'. Some 'tents and even wooden buildings were blown down, several sheets of iron were blown off the roof of the battery, and considerable damage was done'.[60] Another report of this storm noted 'considerable damage', with 'sign boards and out-buildings being blown down, and houses shifted several feet by the intensity of the gale, putting an entire stop to what little business was doing in our midst'.[61] Late that month, 'in consequence of the wet weather, the roads and streets, especially in the low-lying portion of the township', were 'very bad'. A gale 'did some damage - fences were blown down, and one or two houses have a decidedly drunken appearance'.[62] One month later, 'all the rain and floods so ardently desired all the autumn' came 'all at once, and Te Aroha has suffered considerably thereby'. There was

> terrible havoc played with outhouses of all descriptions, linen hung out to dry, tents and other hardware, wherever exposed to the fury of the storm, and the culverts and bridges washed away. The river overflowed its banks, and the high road being impassable the coach running between this place and Hamilton had to make a detour across country, to the peril of the passengers' lives.[63]

Early in October, the coach to Thames was blown over just after it had left the settlement, but without any injuries.[64]

RUAKAKA

Allotments in the Ruakaka block, on the downstream side of Te Aroha and near the Tui mines, advertised for sale in December 1880, were regarded as a good speculation by the *Thames Star*.[65] The map produced for the sale gave the location of 217 allotments surveyed along streets named

---

[59] Te Aroha Correspondent, *Thames Advertiser*, 16 December 1880, p. 3.

[60] Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 7 June 1881, p. 2.

[61] Te Aroha Correspondent, *Thames Advertiser*, 7 June 1881, p. 3.

[62] Te Aroha Correspondent, *Thames Advertiser*, 29 June 1881, p. 3.

[63] Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 21 July 1881, p. 2.

[64] *Waikato Times*, 4 October 1881, p. 2.

[65] *Thames Star*, 6 December 1880, p. 2.

after British poets and playwrights, a non-existent Ruakaka Hotel for which one of the vendors, Samuel Stephenson, a Thames publican whose hotel had recently burnt down in suspicious circumstances,[66] had not obtained permission to erect (and would never), reserves for a church and a public hall, and the road to the Waikato shown as passing the Public Landing Reserve and crossing the river by ferry and 'Proposed Bridge' to the 'Present Landing and probable Railway Station' adjoining a goods store and Dibsell's Hotel on the far side. The perspective implied the estate was close to the Hot Springs Hotel, the springs, and the goldfield.[67] The advertisement was a prose poem, misleading in its declaration that the so-called 'township of Ruakaka' adjoined Te Aroha's business sites, for there was over a kilometre between the two:

> The position of this magnificent estate is so situated by Nature as to command the whole of the traffic from Hamilton, Cambridge, Tauranga, Ohinemuri, Thames, and Piako Counties and Rivers, and is the pick of the far-famed Aroha block, of Broomhall, Grant, and Foster notoriety,[68] commanding, as it does, a Magnificent River Frontage, Splendid Soil, abundantly Watered by mountain streams, crystallized through quartz of gold-bearing stone. The eye could not depict more delightful scenery and charming views than are to be witnessed in this beautiful locality, the bosom and Valley of the Thames, as depicted by the great navigator Cook, to be extensive and fertile enough to sustain the whole population of England. It is no exaggeration to say that purchasers of allotments in the Township may some day develop a mine of wealth.
>
> Without detracting from the merits of other places in the Aroha district, the Auctioneer would call particular attention to the fact that this is the only Freehold Land adjoining the new Goldfield of Te Aroha, and a glance at the Lithographic Plans will at once show its relative position to that of other places in the district of Te Aroha as compared with that of the new Township of Ruakaka, bounteous Nature, having provided in the wooded ranges at the back an inexhaustible supply of timber for fencing, and fuel of the most valuable description.
>
> The terms are most Liberal - 1/4 cash - the balance at three, six, and nine months, with bank interest.[69]

---

[66] *Thames Star*, 25 August 1878, p. 2, 24 June 1880, p. 2.

[67] NZ Maps 4557, also catalogued as C995.1580 Te A, 1880, Auckland Public Library.

[68] See paper on special settlements in the Te Aroha district.

[69] Advertisement, *Thames Advertiser*, 6 December 1880, p. 2.

Despite a large attendance at the auction, there was almost no bidding,[70] reflecting 'the extreme cautiousness of the Auckland public'. The auctioneer,

> after expatiating on its merits, especially since the recent discovery of gold, could not elicit more than one or two bids from a large and influential audience, who looked upon the thing as a mere gold swindle, and consequently would wait the further development of the field. We are informed that a number of choice lots have since been sold privately at higher prices than the auction sale.[71]

One vendor's offer to 'treat with purchasers' to dispose of sections[72] was unsuccessful.

THE GROWING TOWNSHIP

A 'large number' of residence sites were pegged off in January, which to the *Waikato Times* signified confidence in the goldfield.[73] However, an attempt in July to sell 16 sections up to 15 acres in size in what was described as Te Aroha's suburbs was a failure, only one small section being sold, to the Methodist Church.[74]

John McCombie described the business centre as 'flat land, varying in width from 200 yards to 400 yards between the river and the ranges'. Government buildings were erected on an 11-acre reserve; on opening day these comprised 'the Warden's office (a wooden building), the police camp, and the Warden's tents'. Below the Hot Springs Hotel were 'a couple of fenced paddocks, where horses can be left by night at a reasonable charge'.[75] Another correspondent reported that on on the day the goldfield opened the only wooden structures were the Hot Springs Hotel, a butcher's shop, the warden's office, and two or three other buildings, but with 'a large quantity of timber on the ground' building would be 'pushed ahead as soon as the claims to the sections' were settled. Stables would be erected 'in a few

---

[70] *Thames Star*, 18 December 1880, p. 2.

[71] *Thames Advertiser*, 20 December 1880, p. 3.

[72] *Thames Star*, 23 December 1880, p. 2.

[73] *Waikato Times*, 20 January 1881, p. 2.

[74] Advertisement, *Thames Star*, 15 June 1881, p. 3; *Thames Advertiser*, 4 July 1881, p. 3.

[75] Te Aroha Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 4 December 1880, p. 11.

days'.[76] The main part of the settlement was known as Morgantown, after the owner of the land, Mokena Hou.

> Previous to the day of opening, of course, no one could get a title to an allotment; but, notwithstanding this, Mr Thomas Veale, of the Thames,[77] had erected a commodious building for a general store, to which a bakery was attached, and was doing a good business. Besides Mr Veale, one or two others had also commenced to put up weather-board buildings, trusting to good fortune to securing their allotments.[78]

Veale later revealed that his store and bakehouse had been erected on a surveyed road, but the warden, Harry Kenrick,[79] 'to his credit would not have the building removed'.[80]

Because of the demand for business sites, the area originally surveyed was insufficient, and when another five acres were surveyed on 1 December there was 'quite a little rush'.[81] Early in December, the *Te Aroha Mail* commented on 'the gradual disappearance of some of the canvas residences'. Their replacement with 'substantial, or at any rate useful wooden buildings, bespeaks that spirit of enterprise which characterizes a number of the pioneer men of business', and confirmed 'the faith in the future of the district which has been evinced throughout'.[82]

Another small rush took place in mid-December to peg out the large paddock in front of Lipsey's house, added to the settlement because businessmen 'from all parts' had been seeking sites.[83] This area, between Morgantown and Ruakaka, became known as Lipseytown, after its owner, Ema Lipsey, wife of George. Some missed out in the ballot for these allotments.[84] There was 'a good deal of speculation in this, several

---

[76] Te Aroha Correspondent, *Thames Star*, 27 November 1880, p. 2.

[77] See *Thames Advertiser*, 8 July 1873, p. 2, 13 August 1874, p. 2, 3 January 1877, p. 2; *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 6 (Christchurch, 1908), pp. 112, 124.

[78] Te Aroha Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 4 December 1880, p. 11.

[79] See paper on his life.

[80] Recollections of Thomas Veale, *Te Aroha News*, 3 October 1927, Supplement, p. 3.

[81] *Thames Star*, 1 December 1880, p. 2.

[82] *Te Aroha Mail*, n.d., reprinted in *Thames Advertiser*, 7 December 1880, p. 3.

[83] Te Aroha Correspondent, *Thames Advertiser*, 16 December 1880, p. 3; Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 18 December 1880, p. 2.

[84] *Thames Star*, 18 December 1880, p. 2.

gentlemen having taken a large number of licenses and pegged off sites for purely speculative purposes, but the largest number have been taken up with bona fide intention of building should sufficient inducement offer'.[85]

At the beginning of 1881, 'Hamilton people' seemed 'determined to try their luck' and businessmen were 'eagerly' seeking 'allotments in the Warden's latest fancy spot'.[86] In mid-January, a visiting reporter noted 'some steady progress made' since his visit a few weeks previously, 'but the townships have not sprung up with such mushroom rapidity as was at first anticipated'.[87]

MERCHANTS SET UP SHOP

Like miners, 'relying upon economic conditions based on a future unsure at best', businessmen 'gambled as much as anyone' in setting up shop.[88] On opening day, there were two restaurants, four bakeries, and four butcheries either open or about to be opened.[89] Three days later, four butcheries, one bakery, two stores, a blacksmith's shop, a bootmaker, and a timber yard were recorded.[90] A Cambridge correspondent reported one hotelkeeper there planned to erect a hotel if there was 'encouraging news next week', and that 'under similar circumstances' two leading storekeepers would open branches. One baker had 'already flitted' to Te Aroha, 'and other small tradesmen only wait confirmation of the hoped-for success to join in the stampede'.[91] By the beginning of December, several merchants with business sites in Lipseytown were erecting buildings, giving the carpenters 'a busy time of it'. A 'restaurant and pork shop' and an office for the *Te Aroha Mail* were being built there, while in Morgantown a second hotel was almost completed and a butcher's shop and a store were under construction.[92] A week later, another restaurant was being erected, two shops (one for a draper) were nearly completed, and offices were being built for an auctioneer and general agent and for a surveyor and land and

---

[85] Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 18 December 1880, p. 2.

[86] Te Aroha Correspondent, *Thames Advertiser*, 6 January 1881, p. 3.

[87] Visiting Reporter, *Thames Advertiser*, 17 January 1881, p. 3.

[88] Smith, p. 101.

[89] Te Aroha Correspondent, *Thames Advertiser*, 27 November 1880, p. 3.

[90] Te Aroha Correspondent, *Thames Advertiser*, 30 November 1880, p. 3.

[91] Cambridge Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 4 December 1880, p. 9.

[92] Te Aroha Correspondent, *Thames Advertiser*, 2 December 1880, p. 3.

commission agent.[93] All the necessary timber, sashes, doors and 'builders' ironmongery' had arrived, and a painter and glazier was at work.[94] 'Heavy arrivals of timber' were reported in the middle of the month, carpenters being 'kept working early and late'. Many Thames and Waikato businessmen intended to build as soon as the development of the goldfield warranted.[95] A Hamilton hairdresser set up a branch, 'as so many of his friends have come out here, he could do no less than make arrangements to attend to their requirements'.[96] By the end of December, buildings were 'going up everywhere, and substantial weather board structures' were replacing tents. A new bakery was finished, as were two 'large and handsome shops' and an ironmongery store, Patrick Quinlan's[97] hotel was almost completed, as was a billiard-room and a dining room. A second billiard-room was being erected, and tenders were about to be called for 'extensive alterations and additions' to the Hot Springs Hotel.[98]

In late December, a Reefton merchant who had pegged out a business site during the initial rush informed a friend that he was preparing to establish his business after the Christmas holidays.

> I have been dubious of the place, or I should have commenced sooner, but confidence in the ultimate prosperity of Te Aroha is gradually gaining ground. New buildings are going up every day, and the carpenters are having a busy time of it. Three hotels are already in full swing and plans and specifications have been prepared for two more, then we have four restaurants, five stores, two drapery establishments, five butchers, three bakers, and representatives of every other trade or profession including stockbrokers, surveyors, auctioneers, chemists, and last but not least a printing office, where is printed and published the Te Aroha Miner, a tri-weekly pioneer. During the last few days, members of the various religious denominations have selected sites for the erection of places of worship. The Anglican, the Wesleyan, the Roman Catholic, the Presbyterian, the Baptists and the Congregationalists are all represented. We have also had a visit of Mr Murdoch the inspector of the Bank of New Zealand,

---

[93] Te Aroha Correspondent, *Thames Advertiser*, 8 December 1880, p. 3.

[94] *Te Aroha News*, 28 November 1888, p. 2; *Waikato Times*, 14 December 1880, p. 2.

[95] Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 16 December 1880, p. 2.

[96] Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 18 December 1880, p. 2.

[97] See paper on his life.

[98] Te Aroha Correspondent, *Thames Advertiser*, 28 December 1880, p. 3.

> but I have not heard whether it is the intention to establish a branch of that bank here as yet.
> Of all the goldfields I have ever been on, new or old, this is the most easy and convenient of access. Steamers run from Auckland and the Thames right up to our very doors so to speak…. In consequence everything is very cheap, almost at Auckland prices, meal 4d to 6d per lb, bread 4lb loaf 9d, new potatoes 8s per cwt, timber, Kauri, 10s per 100ft, and everything else in proportion. Passage per steamer from Auckland right through 15s, freight for goods 25s per ton.[99]

In January, according to the Te Aroha correspondent of the *Thames Advertiser*, growth slowed while people awaited the result of the first battery crushings before committing themselves to more building, causing a 'large number' of carpenters to leave.[100] The building trade began 'to slacken' and was expected to remain 'somewhat dull' until more gold was found.[101] Nonetheless, a few more buildings were being constructed: an ironmongery, livery stables, a butchery, a bakery, and three or four houses. Business was 'inclined to be dull, and the storekeepers, like everyone else, hoping that gold will soon be obtained in such quantities as to cause people to remain here, and others to take up their residence amongst us'.[102] Customers were certainly needed for the bakers: four bakeries were operating in January, and another was to be built.[103] Contradicting the estimate of the *Thames Advertiser*'s correspondent, the *Waikato Times* wrote on 22 January that as 'a number of small stores and dwelling-houses' were being built 'in all parts of the township', carpenters were 'again pretty well employed'.[104] By late January, 61 wooden buildings had been constructed since the field opened, including three hotels, three restaurants, six general stores, two drapery stores, four bakeries, four butcheries, two chemists, two bootmakers, three blacksmiths, two barbers, and two livery and bait stables.[105]

---

[99] Charles Brunn to James Grieve, n.d. [late December 1880], printed in *Inangahua Times*, 7 January 1881, p. 2.

[100] *Waikato Times*, 13 January 1881, p. 2.

[101] Te Aroha Correspondent, *Thames Advertiser*, 15 January 1881, p. 3.

[102] Te Aroha Correspondent, *Thames Advertiser*, 31 January 1881, p. 3.

[103] Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 22 January 1881, p. 2.

[104] Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 22 January 1881, p. 2.

[105] *Thames Star*, 25 January 1881, p. 2; Te Aroha Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 29 January 1881, p. 9.

At the beginning of March the result of all this construction was described by John McCombie: the 'broad flat, thickly-studded with manuka scrub and flax bushes', had been replaced by 'long rows of neatly-finished wooden buildings, many of them being large, commodious, and substantial, and would do credit to any city in the colony'.[106] The following month, another correspondent noted 'several good stores, dining rooms announcing that they find board and lodging, at least three busy growing inns, in which the amount of business done is already larger than anybody would expect', and an officials' office, though with 'several tents' still remaining.[107]

ACCOMMODATION FOR OFFICIALS AND PRISONERS

Warden Kenrick lived in a tent when the goldfield opened, using as his office a small wooden building in the Hot Springs Reserve.[108] There was such a general opinion that the main goldfield would extend 'further up the river' that Kenrick advised the government 'to await the further development of the field before going to any great expense' in erecting permanent buildings.[109] In May 'the small shed that does duty for a public building' was noted.[110] The 'government tent' had a wooden frame.[111]

The police lived in tents and had no building in which to house prisoners.[112] In December, the 'urgent necessity for a lock-up was demonstrated' when a miner, Thomas Cooney, who two years later would be convicted of being an habitual drunkard,[113] 'was arrested for drunkenness and obscenity. The police were under the necessity of keeping him handcuffed all night in one of their own tents much to their discomfort and annoyance'.[114] Two month later, the same correspondent considered it

---

[106] Te Aroha Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 5 March 1881, p. 9.

[107] Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 5 April 1881, p. 2.

[108] Letter from Albert J. Allom, *Te Aroha News*, 23 April 1898, p. 2.

[109] Te Aroha Correspondent, *New Zealand Herald*, 30 November 1880, p. 6.

[110] Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 5 May 1881, p. 3.

[111] *Thames Advertiser*, 11 August 1881, p. 3.

[112] *Thames Advertiser*, 23 November 1880, p. 3, 27 November 1880, p. 3.

[113] See Te Aroha Warden's Court, Register of Te Aroha Claims 1880-1888, folio 155, BBAV 11567/1a, ANZ-A; Magistrate's Court, *Thames Star*, 27 December 1882, p. 2.

[114] Armed Constabulary Force, Report of Charges taken at Te Aroha Lock-up 1880-1903, no. 2, in private possession; Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 23 December 1880, p. 2.

'absolutely shameful that in a place with a population as large as this and with the bad characters which are incidental to every new rush, the police should be without the means of confining any drunken or refractory persons except chaining them to a tent-pole'.[115] This pole was in the police dining tent, which substituted as a prison until arrested men were bailed out or taken before the magistrate.[116] In June, when the police had to take refuge in a private house because their tents had blown down, there still was no lock-up.[117] At the end of July, a local correspondent complained that residents lacked 'the blessing of a lock-up', a schoolhouse and a church, and were 'suffering generally from neglect'.[118]

PUBLIC AMENITIES

A post office was established when the field opened.[119] Five days later, a meeting asked Kenrick to set aside several acres as a recreation reserve and to ask for a telegraph office.[120] He was informed that at this stage it was 'considered undesirable to incur the expenditure' of opening a telegraph office.[121] Early in December, a hospital site was selected near the hot springs and a cemetery site nearby.[122] Nothing further was done about either site, and in June 1881, when two children died of scarlet fever, because there was no cemetery they had to be buried close to the township in 'Morgan's Paddock', near the river (later the Herries Memorial Park).[123] Three months later, the Crown Lands Board considered 23 residents' request for land for a recreation ground and cemetery. 'The proportions were not defined, and it appeared that a portion of the reserve was intended for a racecourse. It was agreed to allow five acres for a cemetery', the

---

[115] Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 19 February 1881, p. 2.

[116] *Thames Advertiser*, 5 February 1881, p. 3.

[117] Te Aroha Correspondent, *Thames Advertiser*, 21 June 1881, p. 3.

[118] Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 21 July 1881, p. 2.

[119] *Thames Star*, 29 November 1880, p. 2; *Thames Advertiser*, 30 November 1880, p. 3; *New Zealand Gazette*, 19 May 1881, p. 639.

[120] *Thames Star*, 1 December 1880, p. 2; Te Aroha Correspondent, *Thames Advertiser*, 2 December 1880, p. 3.

[121] Superintendent, Post Office and Telegraph Department, to Harry Kenrick, 10 January 1881, Te Aroha Warden's Court, General Correspondence 1881, BBAV 11584/1b, ANZ-A.

[122] *Thames Star*, 9 December 1880, p. 3.

[123] *Waikato Times*, 11 June 1881, p. 2.

balance to be used 'for recreation purposes'.[124] A month later, the board, clearly anticipating the growth of a large settlement, increased the size of the cemetery to ten acres.[125]

Before 1880's Christmas holidays, community leaders had collected promises of £70 to erect a public hall.[126] By February, £100 had been subscribed.[127] It was not built, but residents subscribed enough money to construct a shed over one of the hot springs in August, Kenrick donating the timber until recently used for the 'government tent'.[128]

SCHOOLING

The census of April 1881 revealed 95 women lived in the township.[129] As many miners and townspeople had brought their families, education had to be provided, and within days of the opening of the field Lipsey gifted three acres as a school site.[130] The Board of Education promised to build a school and appoint a teacher 'as soon as they received a list of 25 children of a school age'.[131] Although a list of 33 children was sent along with the information that land had been set aside, the matter was adjourned, creating 'great disappointment'.[132] In April, when there were 36 children of school age, the board reconsidered the matter, but as its members disagreed about whether the population was sufficiently stable Kenrick was asked for his advice.[133] The chairman, James McCosh Clark, later one of the main investors in the Waiorongomai battery,[134] wanted to wait to see whether gold existed before building a school.[135] In response to a petition sent via

---

[124] *Waikato Times*, 3 September 1881, p. 2.

[125] *Waikato Times*, 1 October 1881, p. 2.

[126] *Thames Star*, 3 January 1881, p. 3.

[127] *Freeman's Journal*, 4 February 1881, p. 7.

[128] *Thames Advertiser*, 11 August 1881, p. 3.

[129] *Results of a Census … taken for the Night of the 3rd of April, 1881* (Wellington, 1882), p. 24.

[130] Te Aroha Correspondent, *Thames Advertiser*, 1 December 1880, p. 3.

[131] *Thames Advertiser*, 12 January 1881, p. 3.

[132] Board of Education, *Auckland Weekly News*, 29 January 1881, p. 19; Te Aroha Correspondent, *Thames Advertiser*, 26 January 1881, p. 3.

[133] Board of Education, *Auckland Weekly News*, 9 April 1881, p. 11.

[134] See paper on the Battery Company.

[135] *Thames Star*, 14 April 1881, p. 2.

Kenrick, the following month Te Aroha was formally declared a school district and a school committee was to be elected. Although not prepared to build a school yet, the board would provide a capitation fee of £4 per child per year towards paying a teacher. A meeting of parents was told that from 40 to 70 children would attend, that make-shift accommodation was possible, and that the Anglican clergyman at Hamilton could provide a male teacher for a salary of £150. A committee was formed to obtain an exact list of the pupils and to ask the board for assistance with fittings 'and the advisability of the payment of a fixed salary to a teacher. It was generally supposed that after the winter, when the stability and progressive power of the settlement shall have been thoroughly tested, the government will not refuse the building required'.[136] Kenrick did all he could to assist in opening a school.[137]

In June, Mrs Harvey[138] (who had been matron of the Auckland Industrial Home when her husband, Dr William Harvey, was briefly its superintendant)[139] was appointed as teacher. Residents found her both a home and a schoolroom.[140] Early in July, within a week of arriving, she opened her school

> 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, and such an exhibition of chubby cheeks, all wreathed with smiles, was enough to break the heart of the local undertaker, who thought, perhaps, that scarletina was going to be a good thing for him.[141]

---

[136] Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 7 May 1881, p. 2, 14 May 1881, p. 2.

[137] Te Aroha Correspondent, *Thames Advertiser*, 21 June 1881, p. 3.

[138] First name not traced.

[139] See *New Zealand Herald*, 19 July 1880, p. 6, 11 December 1880, p. 3, editorial, 18 December 1880, p. 4, 3 January 1881, p. 4, 10 February 1881, pp. 4, 5, 8 March 1881, p. 4, 12 March 1881, p. 6, letter from 'A Visitor', 1 April 1881, p. 6; *Auckland Star*, 11 March 1881, p. 2, editorial, 19 March 1881, p. 2, editorial, 8 April 1881, p. 2; *Observer*, 25 December 1880, p. 135, 22 January 1881, p. 183, 19 February 1881, p. 228, 26 Marc 1881, p. 288, 9 April 1881, p. 315, 28 May 1881, pp. 397, 398.

[140] Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 18 June 1881, p. 2; Te Aroha Correspondent, *Thames Advertiser*, 29 June 1881, p. 3.

[141] Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 7 July 1881, p. 2; Te Aroha Correspondent, *Thames Advertiser*, 14 July 1881, p. 3.

By the end of the month the buildings used for both school and teacher's residence were found to be quite inadequate.[142] In early August, a correspondent wrote that the

> depressed state of the field is daily reducing the number of children attending the school here, the present average being, I am informed, only about 26. Even for this number, however, the accommodation available is inadequate. When the Wesleyan Church was being erected, it was generally understood by the subscribers to the fund, who, I may say, are not members of the Wesleyan body alone, that the use of the church would be granted for school purposes at a nominal rental, but it now turns out that Church Committee ask a rental of 12s per week, a sum which the Education Board is not likely to grant. As it is very unlikely the Board will see its way to erect a school building, I think the Church authorities ought to make every possible concession.[143]

It was explained that the use of the church had been offered for 8s a week, including cleaning, but as the school committee considered this too low it had proposed 12s.[144] At the end of the year, Mrs Harvey left Te Aroha with 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'.[145]

HEALTH

The need for a local doctor was highlighted in May 1881, when there was 'a prevalence of sickness amongst the children' in 'the form of low fever, which, though hardly perhaps typhoid', was 'of a somewhat similar character'.[146] Five days later, Alexander, the six-year-old son of Peter Martin, mine manager in the Prince of Wales claim,[147] died of scarlet

---

[142] Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 26 July 1881, p. 2.

[143] Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 13 August 1881, p. 2.

[144] *Waikato Times*, 25 August 1881, p. 3.

[145] *Thames Advertiser*, 19 December 1881, p. 3.

[146] Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 14 May 1881, p. 2.

[147] See *Thames Advertiser*, Police Court, 21 February 1873, p. 3, 22 May 1875, p. 3, 17 December 1875, p. 3, 3 December 1880, p. 3, 29 April 1881, p. 3, 20 May 1881, p. 2,

fever.[148] As neither Te Aroha nor Paeroa had a cemetery, the body was brought to Thames but the sexton refused to bury it as he had not received the death certificate. By the time this document was procured, a few hours later, the sexton had gone home, and the mourners 'were compelled to dig the grave and bury the body themselves'. Their grieving was all the more intense because another child, suffering from the same disease, not being expected to recover.[149] This child did not die, nor did those in neighbouring houses who caught the disease.[150] As the fever spread, residents became 'much alarmed'; one storekeeper's child caught it, and there were fears for other family members. One man sent his children to Thames 'in order that they may be in safety',[151] and 'several families' had 'nearly all their children down with fever'.[152]

The Te Aroha correspondent of the *Waikato Times* attempted to assess the cause and nature of this 'low fever':

> It is called scarlet fever here, but whether it is that or the milder form of scarletina, or may be typhoid does not appear to be distinctly understood. In all low-lying districts like this too much care cannot be taken to preserve the sweetness and purity of the water used for drinking, and I am sorry to say that that absolute necessity for good health is not sufficiently attended to here, the creek that affords the only supply for upper parts of the settlement being largely impregnated with the decomposed carcasses of cats and puppies, and with the sewerage that must drain through the soil - where it is not openly emptied into the creek - mingled with the soap-suds of the upper ten on washing days, that are floated down to form the drink of the lower ten. There is a law that the creek shall not be used for a sewer nor for washing purposes, and no doubt if anyone was caught breaking the law he or she would be punished; but there is also no doubt the people do have to drink highly flavored water, or soap and water sometimes, and illness is a result that must naturally follow.[153]

District Court, 17 February 1886, p. 2; *Thames Star*, 26 February 1890, p. 2, 27 February 1890, p. 2.

[148] Death Certificate of Alexander Martin, 19 May 1881, 1881/2216, BDM.

[149] *Thames Advertiser*, 23 May 1881, p. 3.

[150] *Thames Star*, 21 May 1881, p. 2.

[151] *Thames Advertiser*, 25 May 1881, p. 2.

[152] *Auckland Weekly News*, 28 May 1881, p. 9.

[153] Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 24 May 1881, p. 2.

Two decades were to pass before a purer water supply was provided.[154] That impure water caused scarlet fever was the accepted view: when a child died at Thames in June from the same cause, a doctor blamed the disease on 'the effluvia from the drain'.[155] A Hamilton doctor visited briefly, confirmed it was scarlet fever, and prescribed medicine.[156] A correspondent reported 'a great improvement in the health of the patients, and there does not appear to be any fear of a further spread of the sickness at present'.[157] However, ten days later Henry Andrew, aged 15, son of William, a Hamilton carter,[158] died of scarlet fever after a 14-day illness.[159] The last child to lose their life of this infection died on 7 June.[160] By the middle of that month, the outbreak was abating,[161] and no further deaths were recorded.

In reporting the third death, the *Waikato Times* correspondent wrote that 'the want of a medical man' was 'felt greatly'.[162] Residents lacked the means of getting medical attention because of the cost.

> And even supposing the combination of 2 or 3 raised the sum demanded by some local medical charlatan as his righteous meed of profit by other people's misfortunes, of what use is one mere flying visit of a few minutes' duration in the cure of a case of violent fever, bronchitis, or diptheria.... We have not even a drug vendor in the place just now, and the only person to apply to for advice even is supposed to be a druggist, but with no drugs, and certainly not qualified to treat cases of violent or complicated sickness.[163]

---

[154] See paper on Te Aroha in the 1890s.

[155] *Thames Advertiser*, 3 June 1881, p. 3; for modern explanation of this disease, see *Black's Medical Dictionary*, ed. C.H.W. Havard 36th edition (London, 1990), pp. 595-596.

[156] Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 26 May 1881, p. 2; *Thames Advertiser*, 1 June 1881, p. 3.

[157] Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 26 May 1881, p. 2.

[158] *Waikato Times*, 7 June 1881, p. 2.

[159] Death Certificate of Henry Andrews, 5 June 1881, 1881/248, BDM; Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 7 June 1881, p. 2.

[160] Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 9 June 1881, p. 3.

[161] Te Aroha Correspondent, *Thames Advertiser*, 14 June 1881, p. 3.

[162] Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 9 June 1881, p. 3.

[163] Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 11 June 1881, p. 2.

The latter comment provoked an angry response from Thomas Wright Hector, the only local chemist and druggist. While not pretending to be a medical man, he would 'never, in the absence of a certified practitioner, refrain from giving my neighbour the benefit of my medical experience, which I can say without boasting is larger and more varied than that of many an M.D.'.[164] The correspondent responded that he had not been referring to Hector as being a charlatan, but that in writing of the want of a doctor or a chemist he 'expressed the feeling of many of the most respectable of inhabitants, more especially those who were among the sufferers'.[165] That Hector, like his wife Elizabeth, was a drunkard,[166] was another reason for the disdain of the respectable.

Chemists acting as doctors were not unusual at Te Aroha or elsewhere. In December 1880, when a miner in the Don claim was knocked unconscious after being hit on the top of the head by a boulder that had rolled down the hill, George Denby, a Thames chemist who had set up a branch in Te Aroha,[167] 'plastered up' the serious wound.[168]

In mid-June 1881, a meeting of residents decided to apply to the government 'for a sum in aid of the public health'.[169] Just before this meeting, they were told that the new teacher, Mrs Harvey, would be accompanied by her doctor husband.[170] William Harvey acquired 'some patients on his list' within a week of arriving.[171] His first act of note was to send James Beattie, or Beatty, a miner,[172] to the Thames hospital because he was believed to have scarlet fever.[173] As it was discovered that he had quinsy, or inflammation of the tonsils, a Thames newspaper sarcastically commented that 'the advent of a doctor at Te Aroha furnishes grounds for

---

[164] Letter from Thomas Wright Hector, *Waikato Times*, 21 June 1881, p. 3.

[165] Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 23 June 1881, p. 2.

[166] Magistrate's Court, *Te Aroha News*, 23 June 1883, p. 2, 27 October 1883, p. 2.

[167] *New Zealand Gazette*, 28 April 1881, p. 476; advertisement, *Thames Star*, 19 May 1885, p. 1.

[168] Te Aroha Correspondent, *Thames Advertiser*, 23 December 1880, p. 3.

[169] Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 23 June 1881, p. 2.

[170] Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 18 June 1881, p. 2.

[171] Te Aroha Correspondent, *Thames Advertiser*, 14 July 1881, p. 3.

[172] Te Aroha Warden's Court, Register of Te Aroha Claims 1880-1888, folios 227, 280, BBAV 11567/1a, ANZ-A; *Waikato Times*, 30 April 1881, p. 2.

[173] *Thames Advertiser*, 12 July 1881, p. 3.

alarm upon the simple outbreak of inflamed tonsils'.[174] The Te Aroha correspondent of the *Waikato Times*, provoked by this comment to investigate, revealed the related problems of illness and poverty, and how residents helped the afflicted:

> The man had been ill for some five or six weeks, and was living in utter destitution by himself. A storekeeper here found him the means of living, and a working woman had charitably nursed him. As he got weaker, Dr Harvey was asked to see him, and finding that he was, though still suffering from the after effects of scarlet fever, in more danger from want of nourishment and nursing than from the illness, he said merely in the spirit of humanity that the best thing to do would be to try and get him to the hospital. Dr Harvey was not a paid district medical officer, and had not attended the case, and gave no certificate of the man's health; he merely pronounced an opinion as to the best means of treating the condition in which he found him.[175]

Harvey treated an accident victim in November, but he and his wife left the district in the following month,[176] leaving the district without a resident doctor.

Health would have been affected by shortages of good food. In June, a 'dirth of butter and eggs' was 'inexpressibly trying and though the settlers around do make scores of pounds of butter to send away somewhere and could make hundred-weights more, we are butterless and eggless and completely baconless'.[177] In August, a travelling reporter noted that Paeroa was regularly supplied with fish and vegetables from Thames, 'which we at Te Aroha have to long for in vain'.[178]

ACCIDENTS

Mining districts were dangerous for children. In mid-June, the four-and-a-half-year-old son of William Wood, mine manager in the Morning Star,[179] 'was playing with other children with a sledge axle for carrying

---

[174] *Thames Advertiser*, 13 July 1881, p. 3.

[175] Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 16 July 1881, p. 2.

[176] *Waikato Times*, 10 November 1881, p. 2; *Thames Advertiser*, 19 December 1881, p. 3.

[177] Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 4 June 1881, p. 3.

[178] Travelling Reporter, *Waikato Times*, 4 August 1881, p. 4.

[179] *Thames Advertiser*, 23 December 1880, p. 3.

quartz, when the sledge fell over upon the child, inflicting severe injury'. Sent to Hamilton for treatment, he died three days after the accident from a ruptured lung.[180]

Accidents involving horses were common in colonial society. The only one in this period occurred in November 1881:

> A miraculous escape from a fearful death, writes our correspondent, occurred here in Tuesday to a lad named John Milen, 13 years of age. Along with another lad his own age, he mounted a horse, and set out in search of some animals that had gone astray. Milen wrapped the tether-rope round his wrist, in order, as he stated, to be able to hold the horse in the event of his being thrown. Both lads were thrown at the same time, and the horse getting startled rushed away down a hill. With the tether-rope still twisted round his arm the unfortunate lad was dragged through the fern, over and between boulders, and in short dashed from side to side against whatever obstacles happened to be in the way of the mad career at which the horse was now going. On reaching the township bridge at the foot of the hill, the horse was turned, but only to dash off again in another direction. In that way, the horse still dragging the boy in a most pitiable state behind it, rushed in between Wilson's new building and a stack of timber. Happily the lad cleared both, otherwise he must have been killed on the spot. The hue and cry having now arisen, efforts were made to stop the further progress of the horse. These, however, did not succeed until it had got between Mr Cooke's shop and McConnell's bakery, where Mr [Nicholas] Cleary, of the armed constabulary [and later a miner],[181] threw himself boldly in front, and at the imminent risk of his own life managed to check its further progress. No one who witnessed the event ever expected the boy could have been alive, but, to the astonishment of every one, he soon gave signs of revival. Dr Harvey was promptly in attendance, and, on examination, it was found that although terribly bruised, no bones were broken. He has a hasty cut over the right eye, and a dangerous looking scalp wound, but they are not considered as being of fatal tendency. So much had the lad recovered yesterday (Wednesday) that his friends were enabled to set out with him *en route* for the Thames hospital. Too much praise cannot be awarded to Constable Cleary, to whom the lad is most undoubtedly indebted for the preservation of his life. On finding he could not get hold of the horse by the head, the

---

[180] Death Certificate of John Wood, 17 June 1881, 1881/251, BDM; *Thames Advertiser*, 20 June 1881, p. 2.

[181] See *Thames Advertiser*. 30 March 1875, p. 3, 2 August 1880, p. 2, 19 September 1880, p. 2, 3 February 1882, p. 2, 8 November 1882, p. 2, 8 June 1886, p. 3.

> constable leapt right on to its back, a feat of the greatest danger, considering the rate of which the horse was dashing along. As it was, he could not manage to secure a proper seat, and eventually slipped fairly off the horse's back, falling behind its heels. How he escaped without getting his brains kicked out, is a mystery. Happily the horse's career had been arrested by this time, and its stoppage altogether was easily accomplished by the bystanders.[182]

According to another account, which gave the boy's name as Miller, his arm had been 'caught in a rope attached to a horse he approached. He was repeatedly cautioned to keep clear of the animal, but without avail, and the result was that the horse bolted, dragging Miller after it for a distance of two miles'.[183]

Life-threatening accidents also happened to adults. In early December 1880, there was the first near-drowning when a man employed as a lumper on the steamers went walking along the riverbank one evening. 'His foot slipped, and he fell into the stream. Owing to the rain of the previous evening, the current was very swift, and although the man was a good swimmer, he experienced considerable difficulty in reaching land'.[184]

PUNTS

A bridge over the river and a wharf were high priorities for the settlers.[185] Before a bridge was constructed, at first two punts were used. The first, sited at the Te Kawana landing on the western bank of the river, was described most unflatteringly in March 1880:

> Among the various contrivances which go under the name of Punts adorning the rivers of this part of the colony none, we imagine, can present a more grotesque aspect than that over the Waihou river at Te Kawana.... The contrivance doing duty at the present is a flat bottomed barge about 20 feet long by 8 feet broad, worked by means of a wire rope to which it is attached by a short piece of line which enables it to present its side to the current. There are no railings along the side, and so unstable does it appear to be that a restive horse would have no difficulty in upsetting it. It is fortunate that the river at this point is very

---

[182] *Waikato Times*, 10 November 1881, p. 2.

[183] *Thames Advertiser*, 10 November 1881, p. 2.

[184] Te Aroha Correspondent, *Thames Advertiser*, 8 December 1880, p. 3.

[185] *Waikato Times*, 21 December 1880, p. 2.

> shallow, or we very much questions whether anybody would be found with sufficient courage to venture on to the Punt at all.[186]

One early resident recalled her brother crossing the river once a week on this punt to sell butter and eggs to a drainage contractor: he was always afraid, as his horse was very frisky because there were no railings.[187] In December, a woman using it at about six o'clock in the morning was halfway across when the punt

> made a plunge downwards, and thinking it was going to sink, she sprang into the stream, which was running rapidly, owing to the recent rains, and made an effort to reach the river bank. She sank twice, and was going down for the third and last time, when she caught hold of the wire rope, and managed by it to keep her head above the water until a man put off in a boat and rescued her.[188]

Also in December, the owners of the Ruakaka Block offered £200 towards a bridge if it was built at Dibsell's hotel, thereby advantaging both Dibsell and their hopes of selling land.[189] As this site would mean traffic by-passing the township, it was not constructed. After July 1881, when this punt was removed,[190] all traffic went through Te Aroha township.

O'Halloran's punt, opposite the hot springs and his hotel, was described in October 1880 as 'a fine punt and wire rope'.[191] He charged 3d per person for its use.[192] As wagons and other large vehicles could not be carried, only people and animals, in early 1881 an unsuccessful appeal was made to the government to construct a bridge.[193] By the time the goldfield opened, the punt was owned by the Thames County Council and operated by William Everett, a Thames pioneer who became the first Te Aroha

---

[186] Editorial, *Waikato Times*, 23 March 1880, p. 2.

[187] Mary Ann Turnbull, recorded by Mobile Unit of the New Zealand Broadcasting Company, 1948, MU 348A.

[188] Te Aroha Correspondent, *Thames Advertiser*, 16 December 1880, p. 3.

[189] *Thames Star*, 2 December 1880, p. 2.

[190] Te Aroha Correspondent, *Thames Advertiser*, 19 July 1881, p. 3.

[191] Waitoa Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 19 October 1880, p. 2.

[192] *Waikato Times*, 20 November 1880, p. 2.

[193] *Thames Advertiser*, 7 April 1881, p. 3, 7 December 1880, p. 3.

cabinetmaker.[194] When he died, it was recalled that 'the punt had a busy time of it, night and day', because of all the traffic coming from Waikato. People sometimes arrived in the dark and shouted, hoping to wake him up to ferry them across.[195] Everett's operation was seen as unsatisfactory, but when William Parker, a carter,[196] was authorized in January 1881 to take control of it Everett said 'he would see the Council in the infernal regions first'.[197] After this quarrel went on for some time, a councillor was delegated to 'interview the belligerents in order to conciliate matters'.[198] In March, William Cumming, a Hamilton brewer and publican,[199] described the punt as 'a miserable concern, and appeared to be nearly one-third full of water below, causing it to oscillate in a very unpleasant if not dangerous manner'.[200] A month later, he complained of excessive charges because the slumbers of the 'amiable youth' had been disturbed.[201] Parker replied that as the punt was his own, he was entitled to make 'any fair charge'.

> My usual charge for passengers is 6d per head, not by any means an exorbitant charge, and for horses or luggage I charge according to the amount of labour required. Mr Cumming on Friday morning required a buggy and pair ferried over, and my charge was only 2s. He refused payment unless I summoned him; and as he was disagreeable and inclined to be pompous, I was not inclined to be knocked up at 1 o'clock in the morning to bring the gentleman back again the next night, without insisting that he should pay me my price, and I charged him 7s 6d.[202]

Late in 1881, Everett's tender of £70 to construct a new punt was accepted.[203] He was 'allowed to collect very moderate fees for one year', during which time it was hoped that the 'long-talked of bridge' would be

---

[194] His Sash and Door factory is shown on 'Plan of the Township of Ruakaka, Omahu, December 1880': DRO H 7, DOSLI, Hamilton.

[195] *Observer*, 6 August 1904, p. 4.

[196] See Magistrate's Court, *Thames Star*, 7 February 1878, p. 2, 13 June 1879, p. 2.

[197] County Council, *Thames Advertiser*, 3 February 1881, p. 3.

[198] Thames County Council, *Thames Advertiser*, 3 March 1881, p. 3.

[199] See *Waikato Times*, Magistrate's Court, 29 May 1880, p. 2, advertisement, 17 August 1882, p. 3.

[200] Letter from William Cumming, *Waikato Times*, 19 March 1881, p. 3.

[201] Letter from William Cumming, *Waikato Times*, 16 April 1881, p. 3.

[202] Letter from William Parker, *Waikato Times*, 21 April 1881, p. 3.

[203] Piako County Council, *Waikato Times*, 15 October 1881, p. 2

erected.[204] This did not happen until the railway arrived in 1886; the government ignored all prompts, including an offer from some Te Aroha and Waitoa people to build a bridge on condition they could charge tolls for two years.[205]

The Thames and Piako county engineers were instructed in mid-January 1881 to report on the best site for a bridge that their councils demanded the government build 'at once',[206] but their choice of site was not made public. In late May, it was reported that the lack of a bridge was 'very much felt, and loudly complained of from time to time'. As a bridge would be part of the main road from the Waikato to Thames, either the government or the county councils should erect it. 'The want of it is a drawback to the growth of this place, not to mention others; the primitive punt for men and horses being rather out of date, and not sufficient for the traffic'.[207] Shortly afterwards, a meeting with the local Member of Parliament urged him to seek government funding for a bridge at a site yet to be decided,[208] again unsuccessfully.

RIVER TRAFFIC

McCombie, in November 1880, assessed 'the quickest, best, and easiest way of reaching Te Aroha from Auckland', for there was considerable rivalry between Thames and Waikato residents.

> The mountain stands about midway between Hamilton and Grahamstown, if anything a few miles nearer the latter place than the former. Via Hamilton the journey through from Auckland could be accomplished in a single day by taking the early train and riding through from Hamilton, but this route would not only prove very tiring, but also expensive, and for goods traffic it is altogether out of the question. By way of the Thames, if the visitor was in a hurry to reach Te Aroha, by choosing a day when the Thames steamer left Auckland early in the morning he could reach Grahamstown in time to ride through easily to Te Aroha the same evening, while the expenses would be a mere trifle. The only difficulty by this route is the very bad piece of

---

[204] Te Aroha Correspondent, *Thames Advertiser*, 30 November 1881, p. 3.

[205] *Thames Star*, 23 February 1881, p. 2.

[206] Te Aroha Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 22 January 1881, p. 21.

[207] Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 24 May 1881, p. 2.

[208] Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 28 May 1881, p. 2.

> road at the Komata. For goods traffic there is no comparison between the two routes, and this portion of the trade must be by way of the Thames.... The time taken by the boats at present running between Thames and Te Aroha is certainly rather long, but if the goldfield goes ahead, this will soon be overcome by placing boats of lighter draught and greater speed upon the river trade.[209]

A month later, he endured a 13-hour voyage without any refreshments apart from peaches thrown by some Ngati Hako to the 'hungry and thirsty passengers', and described the small steamers between Paeroa and Te Aroha as being 'altogether unsuitable'.[210] But as roads were often in disrepair and there were no all-weather ones,[211] travel by river was a necessity.

At first, steamers towed barges and even in one case a yacht to bring cargo to the settlement.[212] McCombie recalled 'small steamers with punts in tow'.[213] River steamers from Auckland could transport goods to Te Aroha's landing, at the foot of Rolleston Street, for 25s per ton.[214] As storekeepers in particular needed a jetty at this landing, in December 1880 Thomas Veale collected £21 from fellow businessmen to erect one.[215] Responding to a report that he had collected £50, in the following month he explained that, having been promised about £20 but 'not meeting with the success' expected, he did 'not feel justified in starting the work on my own responsibility'. As the goldfield's prospects were not 'quite so encouraging as they were some few weeks back', he believed 'some of the amounts promised would not be forthcoming'. Although still ready to donate towards 'this necessary object', he would not erect it unless 'the needful' was guaranteed.[216] Shortly afterwards, the introduction of the steamer 'Patiki', which could carry 120 passengers and 20 tons of freight, solved the problem of the irregular and inadequate service, for the Thames River Steamship

---

[209] Te Aroha Correspondent, *New Zealand Herald*, 30 November 1880, p. 6.

[210] Morgantown Correspondent, *New Zealand Herald*, 18 January 1881, p. 6.

[211] For example, *Waikato Times*, 21 December 1880, p. 2; Te Aroha Correspondent, *Thames Advertiser*, 31 January 1881, p. 3.

[212] *Thames Advertiser*, 6 December 1880, p. 3.

[213] John McCombie, 'Early Days of Te Aroha', *New Zealand Herald*, 2 December 1910, p. 7.

[214] *Waikato Times*, 28 October 1880, p. 2; *Te Aroha News*, 20 February 1886, p. 2.

[215] *Thames Advertiser*, 20 December 1880, p. 3.

[216] Letter from Thomas Veale, *Thames Advertiser*, 24 January 1881, p. 3.

Company immediately erected landing stages and goods stores on both sides of the river at Te Aroha.[217] The first voyage of the 'Patiki' in April was reported in detail; it was expected to considerably lessen traveling time because of being able to cope with the river's sharp bends.[218] Even with this new steamer, a local correspondent complained in November that the way the service was managed was 'certainly not creditable to the directory nor satisfactory to the public'.[219]

STREETS

After the initial survey, no work was done on Te Aroha's streets. In January 1881, an effort was to be made 'to get some of the goldfield revenue spent in improving the township as soon as the Warden has decided what has to be done'.[220] Later that month the council agreed to make the track between Te Aroha and the Waiorongomai Stream 'passable for horse traffic'.[221] In July, a correspondent wrote that mud was 'the predominant feature of everything here just at present, and everyone who has to travel either raves, or, grows melancholy, according to his disposition'.

> A Board, I am happy to record, has its gracious eye upon us, and relief is coming, when it is too late to be of any use, of course, for the gracious eye of a Board takes a long time screwing round to so small a place as Te Aroha. Men will at that remote period "before long" be employed in filling up the holes, and making the crooked ways straight, and we shall rise again; but at present the mud is a purgatory to all and sundry.[222]

The council was informed in August that the government had granted £116 14s 11d, half the cost of making and repairing the streets.[223] One month later, a correspondent hoped work would start soon, 'for never was a

---

[217] *Thames Star*, 7 April 1881, p. 2, 9 April 1881, p. 2; *Thames Advertiser*, 2 April 1881, p. 3, 17 May 1881, p. 2, 15 June 1881, p. 3.

[218] *Thames Advertiser*, 12 April 1881, p. 3.

[219] Te Aroha Correspondent, *Thames Advertiser*, 30 November 1881, p. 3.

[220] Te Aroha Correspondent, *Thames Advertiser*, 6 January 1881, p. 3.

[221] Te Aroha Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 22 January 1881, p. 21.

[222] Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 2 July 1881, p. 2.

[223] Piako County Council, *Waikato Times*, 16 August 1881, p. 3.

township more in need'.[224] An early resident recalled the footpath, made from narrow planks, alongside part of the main street.[225]

NEWSPAPERS

In its first, optimistic, days, the settlement acquired two newspapers. On 30 November 1880, the first issue of the *Te Aroha Miner and Thames Valley Agriculturalist* was published. According to its parent, the *Thames Star*, this 'most excellent publication', produced three times a week, would become a daily.[226] When the rival Thames newspaper countered with a daily newspaper, the *Te Aroha Mail*, the *Star* claimed that it published the *Miner* at Te Aroha whereas the *Mail* was printed at Thames.[227] In fact, as its rival promptly pointed out, both newspapers were printed in Thames, but the *Mail* was building a printing office in Te Aroha.[228] The *Thames Advertiser* maliciously referred to 'the proprietor of our contemporary' being 'seen in the small hours of the morning trudging along the road to Te Aroha with advance copies of his new venture', whereas the *Mail* 'was dispatched at an early hour by horse express, provided for the purpose daily, and was circulated on the goldfield the same morning'.[229]

McCombie considered the first issues of both newspapers were 'very creditably got up', containing 'a considerable amount of local news and all the latest Te Aroha mining news'.[230] All issues of both newspapers have long been lost, apart from extracts reprinted mostly in their parent newspapers. The first issue of the *Miner*, retained by Thomas Veale, when re-published in 1927 revealed its contents to be identical to the pigeongrams sent to the *Thames Star* by its Te Aroha reporter.[231] Jim Philp produced the

---

[224] Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 17 September 1881, p. 2.

[225] Recollections of William Hetherington, *Te Aroha News*, 26 October 1927, p. 5.

[226] *Thames Star*, 30 November 1880, p. 2.

[227] *Thames Star*, 2 December 1880, p. 2.

[228] *Thames Advertiser*, 4 December 1880, p. 2.

[229] *Thames Advertiser*, 3 December 1880, p. 2.

[230] Te Aroha Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 4 December 1880, p. 9.

[231] *Te Aroha Miner*, 30 November 1880 [no pagination], reprinted in *Shop in Te Aroha: Carnival Week October 17 to 24, 1927: Souvenir programme of events and competitions* (Te Aroha, 1927), pp. 63, 67, 71, 75, 79; Te Aroha Correspondent, *Thames Star*, 25 November 1880, p. 2, 26 November 1880, p. 2.

Miner and Jack Gibbons, later a leading newspaperman,[232] produced the *Mail*. Both reporters lived in tents for several months, sending their pigeongrams to Thames.[233] On 26 February 1881, the *Miner*'s plant was sent to Thames and publication ceased. According to the *Waikato Times*' correspondent, 'its circulation - never very great - had dwindled down to so low an ebb that its sudden death, without a word of farewell, was not unexpected, and caused neither excitement nor regret'.[234] The *Thames Advertiser*'s correspondent at Te Aroha in an ungracious farewell wrote that 'the only wonder' was that 'it dragged out its miserable career for long, respected by none and lamented only by those pecuniarily interested in it'.[235] The *Te Aroha Mail* expired at an unrecorded date, but was revived in May 1882 and was still being published a year later.[236] The date of its second and final decease was unrecorded; it does not appear to have been published once the *Te Aroha News* appeared in June 1883.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

The first steps to establish local government were taken in 1881. In June, signatures were collected to constitute a liquor licensing district, which would require the appointment of a justice of the peace and a licensing commissioner, which, to the *Waikato Times* correspondent, might be 'very gratifying to someone's vanity, even if no other good is effected'.[237] His cynicism, a marked contrast to his credulity about the prospects of the mines, flavoured a report in July:

> Te Aroha will be waxing fat and kicking against the pricks before long, it is rising so wonderfully in the world. It has been decided by the Piako County Council, and really it quite takes my breath away to tell it, that Te Aroha is to be constituted a riding, and to have its representative in the Council. One or two great patriots contemplate sacrificing their own interests to the good of their

---

[232] See *Thames Star*, 16 September 1903, p. 3; *Observer*, 21 April 1906, p. 4.

[233] *Observer*, 21 April 1906, p. 4.

[234] Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 1 March 1881, p. 2.

[235] Te Aroha Correspondent, *Thames Advertiser*, 7 March 1881, p. 3.

[236] *Waikato Times*, 13 May 1882, p. 2; *Thames Star*, 5 June 1882, p. 2, 9 March 1883, p. 2, Birth Notice, 18 May 1883, p. 2; see extracts reprinted in *Thames Advertiser*, 3 May 1883, p. 2, 7 May 1883, p. 2.

[237] Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 21 June 1881, p. 2.

> riding and standing for member, and there is much enthusiasm. The appointment of Lord Beaconsfield to the Congress of Berlin was nothing to it. We can imagine his triumphant return when he will inform the assembled citizens that he has obtained "roads with honour."[238]

CHURCH SERVICES

The Baptist minister at Thames planned to visit Te Aroha at the beginning of December,[239] but did not do so. In late December, James T. Pinfold was appointed as the 'Wesleyan minister for the Aroha district'.[240] In 1931 he claimed to have been the first clergyman to preach there, on 19 December,[241] but in fact William Calder, an Anglican clergyman based in Hamilton, held the first service on the morning of Sunday, 5 December. After first preaching at Waitoa, a service attended by 'several Te Arohans', Calder 'preached near the warden's office at eleven o'clock, and had about one hundred and fifty hearers'. His address was 'most telling' and 'applicable to the moral condition of men on a new rush, and we never before heard such general delight expressed at the ministrations of a clergyman, by persons belonging to all denominations'. A choir sang two hymns, led by Robert Bruce Baker Willis on his cornet.[242] Willis, a farmer, had recently arrived from the South Island to settle at Wairakau.[243] Another account of this service, written by a resident, was published in the Anglican *Church Gazette*:

> Amidst all the hubbub and din in this now busy locality Church matters have not been forgotten or neglected, and a very fair start has already been made. On Sunday December 5 the Rev W. Calder paid us a visit, on his usual monthly trip to Waihou and Piako. He called round on the Friday evening previous and spoke to many members of the Church, the majority of whom promised to meet him on Sunday and bring their friends. Sunday was one of those days only to be found in New Zealand, beautifully cool

---

238 *Waikato Times*, 7 July 1881, p. 2.

239 *Thames Advertiser*, 29 November 1880, p. 3.

240 Te Aroha Correspondent, *Thames Advertiser*, 21 December 1880, p. 3.

241 *Strong Blow the Winds*, [pp. 3, 4].

242 *Te Aroha Miner*, 7 December 1880, reprinted in *Waikato Times*, 9 December 1880, p. 2.

243 See *Waikato Electoral Roll, 1882*, p. 23; Marriage Notice, *Waikato Times*, 20 January 1883, p. 2; *Ellesmere Guardian*, 22 August 1933, p. 3.

> and calm, with brilliant sunshine - just such a one as would be chosen for an open air service. It had been intended to use for a church one of the numerous buildings in course of erection, but the number present utterly precluded any such arrangement; and from under the lee of the Warden's office went forth, for the first time at Te Aroha, the comforting words of the Gospel of Christ. A more attentive congregation could not be met with, although it consisted of men of all creeds and of many nations; and, as I heard a man remark, although some came there *to see the fun*, they remained to listen with pleasurable feelings, and marked attention, to the Word of God preached to them in forcible words, but withal in a simple style, every thought being expressed in language easily understood by all present. The scene was one not to be forgotten by those who saw it, the surroundings being simply charming - for no view more picturesque can be seen in this island than Te Aroha mountain on a fine day. The singing added considerably to the success of the gathering, being led by Mr R. B. Willis on his cornet in a manner surprising to everyone. Altogether the congregation were immensely gratified; and Mr Calder's next visit is looked forward to with pleasant anticipation by numbers on the field.[244]

'Verdant', one of the congregation, confirmed that Calder had held a successful service:

> Slap, bang, here we are again! - and feeling very much improved, morally, after the Rev Mr Calder's sermon, from the leeward wall of the Warden's Court. He is just the stamp of man to take in a rough community like ours, and many who went to scoff remained to pray. Mr Calder made a decided hit, and I trust he'll show up our way again before long. I'm told he is a bit of a bruiser too, and that perhaps helped to send him up in my estimation. Rumour has it that he once trounced a man at Hamilton for blaspheming in his presence. More honour to him say I.[245]

The *Church Gazette* was right to predict that the scene would not be forgotten. Thirty years later, McCombie, who had been a member of the congregation, recalled the hotel posting a sign 'Closed Till After Church Service' on its door:

---

[244] *Church Gazette*, 1 January 1881, pp. 2-3.

[245] Letter from 'Verdant', *Te Aroha Miner*, 7 December 1880, reprinted in *Waikato Times*, 9 December 1880, p. 2.

> Some of the hardest cases on the goldfields were to be seen singing the hymn "Galilee," at the top of their voices. Men belonging to all denominations were assembled around the parson, and the sermon was both appropriate and impressive. The hat was passed along by Manukau Jones, who succeeded in extracting coins from the pockets of men who were never known to attend a religious meeting before.[246]

McCombie had muddled the hymns: two were sung, 'The Old Hundredth' and 'Our Blessed Redeemer'.[247] 'Manukau' Jones was Hugh Robert Jones, who had made his fortune in the Manukau mine at Thames.[248] In 1930, 'Old Timer', who had attended also, correctly remembered Willis leading the singing with a cornet but inflated the congregation to over 1,000. He also recalled that afterwards 'a number of miners and others stayed behind to thank the Rev gentleman for his address'.[249]

On the same afternoon, a Mr Law, of an unspecified denomination, 'preached in front of the Warden's Court, the service being well attended'.[250] When Pinfold held the first Methodist service in the doorway of the warden's office on Sunday 19 December, he preached to about 100 men and collected 30s.[251] He preached twice, outdoors at 11 o'clock in the morning and in Wilson and Moore's new store at 6.30 that afternoon.[252] (William Wilson, formerly a draper at Thames,[253] and Edward O'Brien Moore, a river steamer captain and general storekeeper,[254] had erected a 'large, handsome'

---

[246] John McCombie, 'Early Days of Te Aroha', *Auckland Weekly News*, 8 December 1910, p. 17.

[247] *Te Aroha Miner*, 7 December 1880, reprinted in *Waikato Times*, 9 December 1880, p. 2.

[248] See *New Zealand Herald*, 26 August 1922, Supplement, p. 1.

[249] Letter from 'Old Timer', *Te Aroha News*, 28 July 1930, p. 5.

[250] *Te Aroha Miner*, 7 December 1880, reprinted in *Waikato Times*, 9 December 1880, p. 2. Was he John Law, a Thames ship's carpenter?: see *Thames Electoral Roll, 1880*, p. 24.

[251] *Strong Blow the Winds*, [p. 4].

[252] Te Aroha Correspondent, *Thames Advertiser*, 21 December 1880, p. 3; Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 23 December 1880, p. 2.

[253] See *Thames Advertiser*, 1 August 1874, p. 3, 15 September 1873, p. 3, 20 October 1874, p. 2, 25 March 1878, p. 3, 26 March 1878, p. 3, 3 October 1881, p. 2.

[254] See *Thames Advertiser*, 20 November 1877, p. 3, 15 March 1879, p. 3, 29 September 1879, p. 3, 25 November 1880, p. 3, 30 November 1880, p. 3, 29 June 1881, p. 3, 10 June 1882, p. 3.

store at the junction of two streets, and their 30 feet by 33 feet premises, with two show windows, was 'the largest of the kind in the district'.)[255]

On the same day and at the same time as Pinfold's morning service, Father Patrick O'Reilly, of Thames,[256] celebrated Mass in the same store. 'All the services were well attended and respectfully listened to'.[257] The arrangements caused some controversy, a Protestant newspaper being upset at a conflict over the use of the same building for the 11 o'clock services:

> We are informed that the other Sunday a religious service was held at Te Aroha under peculiar circumstances. Our informant tells us that a prominent Orangeman, whose name we are not quite certain about, had erected a large store for a Thames merchant, and that, as it was near completion, the Wesleyans asked for the use of it for a Sunday service, which request the builder readily granted. On the arrival, however, of the Rev Mr Pinfold,[258] Wesleyan minister, he found the building in the occupation of Father O'Reilly, and the Roman Catholic worship in progress. It is also said that Father O'Reilly, whom we personally know to be most courteous as a gentleman, publicly thanked the Orangeman who had given him the use of the building, and said all Catholics should thank Mr ____ , who was present in the congregation; for he had passed by his own people to let the Catholics have the building. He was reported to have said the gentleman who had so acted was not only a Protestant, but he was also a prominent Orangeman. We are also informed that "the Cardinal" is walking about the Thames slapping the Orangemen on the back and laughing in their faces about this affair.[259]

(The 'Cardinal' was Hugh McIlhone, former Inspector of Miner's Rights, and a prominent Catholic.)[260] The building firm Farrell Bros, comprising Robert and John, had erected the building and must have given permission to use it; both were Presbyterians, and Robert was a leading

---

[255] *Thames Advertiser*, 30 November 1880, p. 3, 10 June 1882, p. 3.

[256] *Thames Electoral Roll, 1880*, p. 33.

[257] Te Aroha Correspondent, *Thames Advertiser*, 21 December 1880, p. 3; Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 23 December 1880, p. 2.

[258] Printed as Watkin.

[259] *Free Press*, n.d., reprinted in *Thames Star*, 20 January 1881, p. 2.

[260] See *Thames Star*, 23 June 1880, p. 2, Warden's Court, 11 June 1880, p. 3, 26 November 1880, p. 3.

Orangeman.[261] The latter's providing O'Reilly with a building in which to celebrate Mass was not a unique example of his assistance, for he had helped the Catholics at Thames when their church was being erected. According to Farrell's account, he had been passing by when he saw the bell was ready for erection in a small belfry 'and as a practical builder saw at once that the crank was bent in a wrong direction'. He informed the priest and offered to make the necessary alterations, but when he returned with the bell and a trial was made, there was no sound. 'Non-plussed for a moment', he 'then saw what was the matter. "How can we expect a Catholic bell to ring," he said, "with an Orangemen's cap around its tongue?" It was even so. In bringing back the bell he had held it on his shoulder by the tongue, with his cap, and forgotten to remove it'. This story revealed 'that relations between the Arch-Orangeman and the Catholics of the goldfield were anything but unfriendly'.[262] Such fraternizing between Catholics and Protestants was relatively unusual whereas relations between the various Protestant denominations were normally cordial.[263]

On 15 December, the bishop chaired a meeting of Anglicans in the dining room of the Hot Springs Hotel. 'The attendance was large, the room being quite filled, whilst some were absent by mistake - the meeting having been notified to be held at two different places'.[264] The bishop stated he wanted to provide 'the ministration of the church for its members at Te Aroha, and likewise for members of other denominations'. Calder was willing to visit 'at least once a week from Hamilton, which was a long and trying ride, but Mr Calder did not like to see the spiritual wants of the people neglected, and was willing to inconvenience himself for their sake'. Calder hastily clarified that he would make the 40-mile trip only once a month. Kenrick was chosen as minister's churchwarden, [Alfred] Frank Puckey, a 'native interpreter',[265] became people's warden, and a vestry

---

[261] *Thames Star*, 29 November 1880, p. 2; Te Aroha Correspondent, *Thames Advertiser*, 30 November 1880, p. 3; Death Certificate of John Farrell, 23 July 1905, 1905/4489, BDM; entry for Robert Farrell, *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 2, p. 116.

[262] Fred W. Weston, *Thames Goldfields: A history from pre-proclamation times to 1927, gathered from authentic documents and living witnesses* (Thames, 1927), p. 205.

[263] See paper on religion in the Te Aroha district.

[264] *Church Gazette*, 1 January 1881, p. 3.

[265] See *Thames Electoral Roll, 1880*, p. 35; *Thames Advertiser*, 19 August 1880, p. 2; *New Zealand Herald*, 26 November 1880, p. 5, 27 March 1936, p. 14; *Auckland Star*, 28 March 1936, p. 12.

elected that included such local notables as Harry Whitaker, George O'Halloran, Adam Porter,[266] the warden's clerk, and Rewi Mokena,[267] youngest son of Mokena Hou.[268] Over the next couple of days, all denominations apart from the Catholics selected church sites on land granted by 'Messrs Lipsey and Mokena Hou and family'.[269]

Ecumenical feeling amongst Protestants was illustrated at the opening of the small Wesleyan Church at the beginning of August. Wesleyans numbered only 73 in the Piako County, compared with 522 Anglicans (out of a total of 981 residents),[270] yet were the first to erect a church. The circuit steward, a builder, James Lavery,[271] announced that 'use of the church would be free to the ministers of all denominations' (it was unlikely that he meant to include Catholics). Pinfold 'spoke on "Unity," with the history of his efforts in getting the building erected'; clearly there had been inter-denominational assistance. Amongst those who addressed the gathering were Whitaker, a farm manager, Charles Collins,[272] also an Anglican,[273] and 'the two Maori chiefs of the district', Mokena Hou, a staunch Anglican,[274] and Reha Aperahama, probably then an Anglican but who became a deacon in the Mormon church in 1886.[275] The rangatira 'expressed their pleasure at being present and seeing such a fine place of worship erected, and hoped all would attend it'. One of those performing 'musical and vocal selections' was Frances O'Halloran, an Anglican.[276] She had 'presided at the harmonium' at the Sunday services 'and kindly lent her piano for the entertainment'. The

---

[266] See paper on his life.

[267] Te Aroha Correspondent, *Thames Advertiser*, 16 December 1880, p. 3.

[268] See paper on his life

[269] *Te Aroha Miner*, 18 December 1880, reprinted in *Waikato Times*, 25 December 1880, p. 2.

[270] *Results of a Census of the Colony of New Zealand, taken for the Night of the 3rd of April, 1881* (Wellington, 1882), p. 233.

[271] See *Thames Star*, 17 May 1913, p. 5.

[272] See *Thames Advertiser*, 10 April 1876, p. 3, 3 July 1880, p. 4, 17 February 1881, p. 2.

[273] *Thames Advertiser*, 3 July 1880, p. 4; Burial Register Waihi 1900-1938, no. 377, 20.001, Anglican Diocesan Archives, Hamilton.

[274] *Thames Advertiser*, 24 June 1885, p. 3; Ida Outhwaite to Sir George Grey, 6 July 1885, Grey New Zealand Letters, vol. 25, p. 119, Auckland Public Library.

[275] Record of Ordinations to the Priesthood in the Te Aroha Branch of the New Zealand Mission, no. 2, Archives of the Church of Latter Day Saints, Hamilton.

[276] Death Certificate of Frances Ann O'Halloran, 15 December 1923, 1923/10216, BDM.

food was provided by six of the local married women, two of whom, Emma, wife of Charles Collins,[277] and Ema, wife of George Lipsey, were Anglicans; the denomination of another woman is unknown.[278]

Each denomination attempted to provide regular services for their own members, if possible in separate buildings. In February, the Presbyterians were holding their services in Josiah Clifton Firth's receiving store.[279] This was another illustration of interdenominational co-operation, as Firth was a Congregationalist who by the 1880s was transferring his allegiance to the Church of England.[280] By mid-1881, the Anglicans were using a 'shed, or an old deserted boarding-house'.[281] Calder made a regular monthly visit and was a 'most energetic and popular little parson'.[282] While the settlement was still frequented by large numbers of hopeful miners, services had to be held in the open air because of the numbers attending.[283] In April, one correspondent wrote that 'we ought not to complain that the "white choker" gentlemen do not pay us a visit now. We have a number of them of all tribes and countries'.[284]

Church services provided entertainment even to non-churchgoers: 'The next best thing to going to church at the Te Aroha, is to sit down in the shade of the woods and listen to the sound of psalm and hymn (accompanied by a cornet and concertina) borne upwards from the plain below'.[285]

HOTELS

In April 1881 all the hotels were doing 'a "roaring trade." Jollity be the grand moral of all diggers' lives'.[286] The original hotels in the district were Edwin Missen's at Waihou, William Dibsell's at Te Kawana landing, and

---

[277] See Avondale Asylum, Register of Admissions 1885-1896, no. 1649, YCAA 1021/2, ANZ-A.

[278] Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 11 August 1881, p. 2; Te Aroha Correspondent, *Thames Advertiser*, 12 August 1881, p. 3.

[279] *Thames Advertiser*, 21 February 1881, p. 3.

[280] Mona Gordon, *The Golden Age of Josiah Clifton Firth* (Christchurch, 1963), p. 158.

[281] Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 30 July 1881, p. 2.

[282] Te Aroha Correspondent, *Thames Advertiser*, 15 June 1881, p. 3.

[283] Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 27 January 1881, p. 2.

[284] 'Snooks', 'Jottings from the Upper Country', *Thames Star*, 14 April 1881, p. 2.

[285] Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 1 February 1881, p. 2.

[286] Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 5 April 1881, p. 2.

O'Halloran's Hot Springs Hotel. Because of increased population, permission was granted in December 1880 for the erection of the Rina Mokena Hotel, named after Mokena Hou's wife, and the British Hotel,[287] the first to be run by Patrick Quinlan, later a leading and very popular Auckland hotelier.[288] The British Hotel was a 'large' building, being 60 feet by 29; the Rina Mokena, originally operated by George Clotworthy,[289] was 'a neat and commodious structure, forty seven by forty'.[290] As accommodation was much needed, publicans' licenses were granted only when this was provided.[291] The original Hot Springs Hotel, recalled by an early resident as 'a grog shanty',[292] was soon extended and improved.[293] The *Observer* commented in January 1881 that 'the best-paying claim' was O'Halloran's hotel, 'for whether people are getting gold or whether they are not, they *will* drink'.[294] 'Some persons had a fine time of it' when Clotworthy opened his doors in December 1880, 'for free liquor was distributed all round'.[295] The bar was crowded, and 'the ringing cheers which were given at the opening spoke volumes as to the estimation' in which he was held 'by the large number of people in the district who know him'.[296] Quinlan's hotel was 'well-patronised' in January; in less than two weeks after opening he took over £20 from his bar trade.[297] Publicans served liquor seven days a week, not closing for Sunday.[298]

Although heavy drinking took place, the only occasion in the earliest days of the goldfield when a drunk man was brought before the magistrate was on 20 December, when 'Thomas Cooney was charge with having been

---

[287] Te Aroha Magistrate's Court, Publicans' Licenses 1880-1882, folios 1, 2, BBAV 11494/1a, ANZ-A.

[288] See paper on his life.

[289] See *Thames Advertiser*, 7 November 1878, p. 2, 8 November 1878, p. 2, 15 November 1880, p. 3, 30 November 1880, p. 3, District Court, 11 June 1881, p. 3.

[290] Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 16 December 1880, p. 2.

[291] *Thames Advertiser*, 19 November 1880, p. 3

[292] Letter from 'Old Settler', *Te Aroha News*, 22 November 1910, p. 2.

[293] *Thames Star*, 13 January 1881, p. 2.

[294] *Observer*, 1 January 1881, p. 147.

[295] Te Aroha Correspondent, *Thames Star*, 18 December 1880, p. 2.

[296] *Waikato Times*, 18 December 1880, p. 2.

[297] *Thames Star*, 13 January 1881, p. 2; *Auckland Weekly News*, 15 January 1881, p. 17.

[298] John McCombie, 'Early Days of Te Aroha', *Auckland Weekly News*, 8 December 1910, p. 17.

drunk and disorderly, and using bad language on Sunday. Constable Cleary proved the charges. Accused was fined £3 for the swearing, and the charge of drunkenness was dismissed, as it was his first offence'.[299] Like many of his drunken successors, Cooney, a miner aged 32, was an Irish Catholic;[300] two years later the Thames police described him as an habitual drunkard.[301] Six other men were imprisoned by December 1881 for being drunk and disorderly: a farmer, born in England, three Maori, and two Irish Catholics, one a bushman and the other a labourer.[302] That at least one teetotaller strayed from the paths of sobriety was implied by news of 'a Good Templar's *regalia*' being for sale, 'the owner having no further use for it'.[303] Could this be the same person referred to later as 'a good and muscular old gentleman of the ancient Pistol type, who is sound everywhere but in his head and his limbs', who was

> wheeled home in a barrow from a meeting of the local society for the promotion of teetotal ideas on Saturday. He has threatened what he calls a smack over the face to anyone who ever dares to mention it.... He is a very dear old man; one of the most tiddle-toddle old members of society to be met with out of the House of Representatives, and never omits getting speechless about 11 o'clock every night.[304]

ENTERTAINMENT AND SPORT

Two billiard rooms were completed in January 1881.[305] In addition to the hotels and billiard rooms, miners joined together to sing and dance.[306] Football was played on 'Lipsey's paddock' by several enthusiastic players,

---

[299] Te Aroha Correspondent, *Thames Advertiser*, 21 December 1880, p. 3.

[300] Armed Constabulary Force, Report of Charges taken at Te Aroha Lock-up 1880-1903, no. 2, in private possession.

[301] Magistrate's Court, *Thames Star*, 27 November 1882, p. 2.

[302] Armed Constabulary Force, Report of Charges taken at Te Aroha Lock-Up 1880-1903, nos. 6, 8, 10, 11, 11 [numbered twice], 14, in private possession.

[303] 'Pauvre Diable', 'Entre Nous', *Waikato Times*, 29 March 1881, p. 3.

[304] Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 5 July 1881, p. 2.

[305] Te Aroha Correspondent, *Thames Advertiser*, 15 January 1881, p. 3; *Waikato Times*, 29 January 1881, p. 2.

[306] Evidence of John Bergin, *Thames Star*, 25 February 1881, p. 3, and James White, *Thames Advertiser*, 2 March 1881, p. 3.

even in summer,[307] and a cricket team held matches with nearby clubs.[308] Informal wrestling bouts seem to have been common.[309] Shooting was also popular: 'The sporting fraternity has not found the game scarce in this district, and some say good bags have been made of pheasants, ducks, and quail. It is said that there are not so many birds as in former years but there are certainly plenty to furnish a good shot with five or six brace at any time'.[310]

The most popular recreation was horse racing, on a track at Ruakaka an early resident recalled as being 'probably the most uneven track in New Zealand - downhill and across gullies and finally uphill to the finishing-point'.[311] These defects were not admitted at the time, and contractors removed some of its less serious problems before the first race meeting on Wednesday, 9 February.[312] The course, 'situated on the fern flat a mile below the township, has been cleared and levelled, and saddling paddocks and committee's rooms' were being constructed.[313] 'The fern and scrub had been cut and burnt down, and a first-class circular course marked out' a week before race-day.[314] In contrast to this report, 'several' owners of horses described the course as 'badly laid off, some of the turnings being exceedingly sharp' and warned that heavy rain would create 'a sea of mud'.[315] A Thames doctor noted 'a lot of fern about the racecourse, and a lot of loose stones scattered about'; it was 'a rough-looking spot, with the exception of being tolerably level'.[316]

THE FIRST RACE MEETING

---

[307] *Te Aroha Miner*, n.d., reprinted in *Thames Star*, 3 December 1880, p. 3; *Thames Advertiser*, 21 June 1881, p. 3.

[308] *Waikato Times*, 8 February 1881, p. 2; *Thames Star*, 3 February 1881, p. 2.

[309] See evidence of Karaka Kamura and Kingi Haira, *Thames Advertiser*, 2 March 1881, p. 3.

[310] Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 21 May 1881, p. 3.

[311] Recollections of Frederick Marychurch Strange, *Te Aroha News*, 30 April 1948, p. 2.

[312] *Waikato Times*, 1 February 1881, p. 2.

[313] Te Aroha Correspondent, *Thames Advertiser*, 4 February 1881, p. 3.

[314] Te Aroha Correspondent, *Thames Advertiser*, 10 February 1881, p. 2.

[315] Te Aroha Correspondent, *Thames Star*, 9 February 1881, p. 2.

[316] Evidence of Dr Charles Huxtable, *Auckland Weekly News*, 5 March 1881, p. 21.

This meeting comprised a Maiden Plate, two Maori Races, the Te Aroha Cup Handicap, Handicap Hurdle Race, Publicans' Purse Handicap, and Consolation Handicap.[317] Prizes totalled £170.[318] There were ten entrants for the Te Aroha Cup, three of them named after local mining claims: Yatapa, Sunbeam, and Golden Crown.[319] From 500 to 800 attended what was judged 'a great success'. The programme 'would have done credit to a far more pretentious place than this. Prizes were valuable ... and the attendance surpassed expectation.... Games of chance were plentiful, and appeared to be doing a good stroke of business'. In addition to betting on the races, 'a large amount of money also changed hands in the sweeps, many of which were for considerable sums'.[320]

Pigeongrams conveyed some of the excitement. By 8.30 in the morning, a 'large number of Thames and Waikato people' walked the streets getting up 'sweeps on the principal events. Mr Jacob Enco[321] arrived from Cambridge last night, and ever since has been hard at work making a book'. The reporter gave details of some of the betting and of the likely winners and listed the stewards, a combination of local landowners, a surveyor, a coach-driver, two hotelkeepers, a miner, the former warden, a clerk (Whitaker), and Rewi Mokena. Visitors included storekeepers and sharebrokers from Thames, Wirope Hoterene Taipari,[322] Robert Clementson (a black American known as 'Black Bob', who owned a shooting gallery in Thames),[323] 'and other members of the book-making and race game fraternity'. Quinlan had erected 'commodious publicans' and refreshment booths'. He had unexpected competition, for after the committee was granted the use of the course by two landowners, a third landowner, an unnamed Pakeha Maori, who, because of his family links must have been William Nicholls,[324] 'was "riled" at not being consulted, and gave permission

---

317 *Thames Advertiser*, 7 February 1881, p. 3.

318 *Thames Advertiser*, 15 January 1881, p. 2.

319 *Thames Star*, 3 February 1881, p. 2.

320 *Thames Advertiser*, 10 February 1881, pp. 2, 3; Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 12 February 1881, p. 2.

321 Later a fisherman in New South Wales?: see *Marlborough Express*, 16 March 1906, p. 2.

322 See paper on Maori in Hauraki.

323 *Thames Advertiser*, 6 July 1881, p. 3.

324 See paper on his life.

to an outsider to erect a booth on the course'.[325] The pigeongram dispatched at 11.30 was brief: 'There are fully 800 people on the course and the booths are doing a good business'. The 12.30 one reported the course was 'crowded, and the wheel-of-fortune men are accumulating small fortunes'. This message, and the one sent at 3 o'clock, gave details of the first three races, the winners being 'loudly cheered' and 'cheered right lustily'.[326]

The *Thames Advertiser* noted about 150 visitors from Thames, Paeroa, Piako, and various parts of the Waikato, who 'appeared to enjoy themselves as thoroughly as the residents'. Quinlan 'catered admirably. The day was a beautiful one, and a better could hardly have been wished for. The sky was rather cloudy, and this, together with a gentle wind, cooled the atmosphere nicely, and made it very pleasant for the holiday makers'. As it took only about 15 minutes to walk from the settlement, the 'couple of vehicles' providing transport

> only did a fair trade, the majority of the people preferring to walk. The owners of the games of chance, bookmakers, etc., mustered in strong force, and appeared to do a good business. Most of these gentry came from Auckland.... Reuben Parr [a farmer][327] and John Wood [a hotelkeeper and butcher][328] were in their elements as clerks of the course, and were kept busy flying around and keeping people out of harm's way. In this they were ably assisted by Sergt. Mulville and a posse of police.[329]

It was 'one of the best day's sport it was possible to have'.[330]

MORE RACING AND MORE GAMBLING

---

[325] Te Aroha Correspondent, *Thames Star*, 9 February 1881, p. 2.

[326] Pigeongrams, *Thames Star*, 9 February 1881, p. 2.

[327] See *Descriptive Handbook to the Waikato* (Hamilton, 1880), p. 69; *Thames Advertiser*, 3 July 1880, p. 4; Travelling Reporter, 'The Piako County', *Waikato Times*, 3 May 1881, p. 2.

[328] See *Thames Advertiser*, 23 March 1880, p. 3, 15 November 1880, p. 3; Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 22 January 1881, p. 2; *Te Aroha News*, 7 September 1921, p. 3.

[329] Te Aroha Correspondent, *Thames Advertiser*, 10 February 1881, p. 3.

[330] Te Aroha Correspondent, *Thames Advertiser*, 11 February 1881, p. 3.

In December 1883, it was recalled that 'in the early days horse races were a weekly occurrence, and many impromptu matches have taken place on our little race course'.[331] 'We are all racing mad here', wrote a correspondent in March 1881 who gave details of several races.[332] 'Despite the universal depression' residents were 'determined to enjoy themselves', and 'two or three horse races' took place every week. Stakes were 'substantial', never less than £5 a side, and once 'as high as £50'.[333]

Residents would gamble on anything, as exemplified by Edward Eccles, of the Kelly Gang.[334] In December 1880, 'considerable interest was evinced' in a bet by Edward Quinn, miner and contractor,[335] that one Murphy, an athlete well known in Auckland and Thames, would hop, step, and jump 42 feet. Constable Cleary wagered £5 that he could not achieve this: 'Murphy did 41 feet 10 inches, and Cleary won the fiver'.[336]

ENTERTAINMENTS

Organized evening relaxation had to be provided by residents, and many polite entertainments by amateurs raised funds for worthy causes. The first entertainment reported, under the headline 'Amusements', was at the nearby settlement of Waihou in May 1881. 'The amateur concert followed by a dance' to pay for a porch for the school 'was a complete success' both financially 'and as an entertainment and the efforts of all the leading settlers to promote the enjoyment and the success of the affair cannot be too highly praised'. James Lavery and his men provided the schoolroom with a stage and seating, and Charles Collins provided 'the tasteful decorations': the flowers, 'including chrysanthemums of every tint, shrubs, and creepers - were universally admired'. Edwin Graham, the Waihou storekeeper,[337] supplied 'unapproachable' refreshments. Both Graham and Collins gave up 'their residences for the comfort of lady

---

[331] *Te Aroha News*, 8 December 1883, p. 2.

[332] Te Aroha Correspondent, *Thames Star*, 3 March 1881, p. 3.

[333] Te Aroha Correspondent, *Thames Advertiser*, 16 March 1881, p. 3.

[334] See paper on social relations and class divisions in the Te Aroha district.

[335] See paper on his life.

[336] Te Aroha Correspondent, *Thames Advertiser*, 23 December 1880, p. 3.

[337] See paper on his life.

visitors'. Collins, Reuben Parr, and Thomas Rowe, a Waitoa storekeeper,[338] placed 'their traps at the service of visitors from Te Aroha during the whole evening', which 'was everything that the most hospitable of country gentlemen could do for his guests'. Seven men, including two miners, sang, there were cornet and trombone solos, and Parr's young son gave 'a capital recitation'. Two children 'created a pleasing sensation by their duet on the pianoforte' and their mother was thanked for loaning a 'fine instrument'. The festivities were supervised by a steward, who 'by his exertions and good tastes in the arrangements contributed largely to the success. Te Aroha undoubtedly did its duty in a truly liberal and exalted spirit'.[339]

Patriotic holidays were celebrated appropriately, as on Queen's Birthday in 1881. 'Being naturally anxious to celebrate the birthday of our beloved Majesty Queen Victoria in fitting style', residents held a cricket match 'and a *soiree dansante* of unexampled brilliancy'. The cricket teams 'exhibited some very tidy and spirited play. Unfortunately, that unaccommodating fellow the sun would not hold out longer than he had strictly engaged to do, and the game was not decided'. Dancing was held in a boardinghouse owned by Frederick James Lawrence,[340]

> which was very tastefully decorated for the occasion with branches of the fern tree and the charming evergreen shrubs of the neighbouring bush. About sixty visitors attended; the band was better than those of many places of more pretentions than Te Aroha, and kept excellent time in the dance music, and the refreshments were tasty and plentiful. The belles were, of course, adorable, and the young exquisites were energetically adoring, and the manner in which they strictly executed their steps backward and forward and round, and gracefully curved their lower extremities, while conscientiously turning their heads from the right shoulder to the left in the schottische or the varsoviana, was impressive. All, however, enjoyed the fascinating exercise so well that it was kept up till daylight, and Mr Lawrence obtained all praise for his manner of conducting the affair, which is to be hoped will be repeated, for it is a poor heart that never rejoices.[341]

---

[338] *New Zealand Gazette*, 29 April 1880, p. 597; *Descriptive Handbook of the Waikato* (Hamilton, 1880), p. 66.

[339] Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 5 May 1881, pp. 2-3.

[340] See *Waikato Times*, 16 December 1880, p. 2, advertisement, 2 January 1881, p. 2; *New Zealand Herald*, 16 May 1932, p. 11, 4 July 1932, p. 11.

[341] Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 26 May 1881, p. 3.

The stamina required to keep dancing until dawn would be a feature of many such extended festivities in future years. As the community became more established, dances became more common. In June, a 'quadrille assembly' with 'a very creditable little band' held well-attended weekly sessions in Lawrence's dining rooms. It was 'astonishing the number of the fair sex who come from a distance on such an occasion, despite sometimes the wind and rain'.[342] Another annual festivity was the Prince of Wales' birthday. In November 1881, 'the bachelors of Te Aroha put on a very successful and impromptu ball' in Lawrence's dining rooms,[343] he acting as M.C. Dancing 'was kept up with spirit until two o'clock in the morning' to music provided by two cornets and a violin.[344] Such very limited musical accompaniments were typical of later dances.

SOCIAL DIVISIONS

Even in early Te Aroha, social divisions existed, illustrated by where the 'upper ten' and the 'lower ten' lived and the quality of their drinking water, as noted in the earlier section dealing with the outbreak of scarlet fever.[345] An example of the jollifications enjoyed by some of the 'upper ten' is given in the following item of gossip:

> Since Jim Philp, the gallant editor of the *Miner*, was burnt out, he has taken to the noble art of swimming. The Waihou is a splendid river for total immersion, and it is highly diverting of a hot afternoon to see Harry Whitaker, Lindsay and Harry Jackson, big Charley McLean, of the Thames Scottish, "Slaughterman" Stafford, and other notables wallowing in the limpid, or entering with a jest of school boys into a mud fight from opposite sides of the river.[346]

---

[342] Te Aroha Correspondent, *Thames Advertiser*, 21 June 1881, p. 3.

[343] Advertisement, *Thames Advertiser*, 13 January 1881, p. 2.

[344] Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 19 November 1881, p. 2; John Waldron Wright, Diaries, entry for 6 November 1880, MSC 14, Hamilton Public Library; *Te Aroha News*, 18 August 1888, p. 2.

[345] Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 24 May 1881, p. 2.

[346] 'Te Aroha Arrows (From Our Special on the Spot)', *Observer*, 19 February 1881, p. 236.

Whitaker was a son of Frederick Whitaker, Attorney General and Premier in several governments,[347] and was soon to be in partnership with Charles Stanislaus Stafford as owners of the Wairakau Estate and a slaughterhouse.[348] McLean was a mine manager and prominent as Drum Major of the Thames Scottish Volunteers.[349] Lindsay Jackson was a surveyor, and Harry was his brother.[350] That at least some of the 'upper ten', whether of colonial birth or 'new chums', were not admired by many of the 'lower ten' is illustrated in the paper on social divisions.

SOCIAL UNITY

Despite the social divisions, there were examples of settlers working together for mutual benefit. For instance, McCombie recalled a soup kitchen:

> Although the Te Aroha Township, towards the end of 1880, was fairly well studded with "clout houses" [canvas tents], the one that will live longest in my memory was a bell tent occupied by "Manukau" Jones and Harry Whitaker…. These two men commandeered, from one of the river steamers, a kerosene tin which they converted into a stock pot. An abundance of bones were obtained daily from Jack Wood, the butcher, and Reuben Parr, who farmed some land in the neighbourhood, supplied the requisite vegetables. Every evening soup, both palatable and nutritious, was served out to all hands free of hands, subject to the consumers bringing in to the camp sufficient fuel to keep the pot boiling continuously.[351]

JESTS AT OTHERS' EXPENSE

---

[347] Russell Stone, 'Frederick Whitaker', *Dictionary of New Zealand Biography*, vol. 1 (Wellington, 1990), pp. 586-587.

[348] See paper on Harry and Charles: Henry Ernest Whitaker and Charles Stanislaus Stafford.

[349] See *Thames Advertiser*, 27 January 1881, p. 3; *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 2, p. 502.

[350] *Thames Advertiser*, 18 December 1880, p. 3, 25 January 1881, p. 3; *New Zealand Gazette*, 24 February 1881, pp. 173, 181.

[351] John McCombie, 'Random Recollections: Te Aroha Goldfield', p. 2, typescript, n.d. [1910], MS 838, Library of the Auckland Institute and War Memorial Museum.

Less innocent activities than the larks of the 'upper ten' and the genteel entertainments they helped to organize also occurred, although the larrikin problem, later a great worry to the respectable,[352] was not recorded, apart from one instance which could be viewed by the censorious as 'larrikin behaviour':

> An amusing incident occurred at Te Aroha, a few days ago. A man and his wife, who were staying in one of the hotels, were overheard by two or three young sparks planning a bathe in the hot springs behind the police camp. The youthful spirits resolved to have a bit of fun, so secreting themselves near the springs they awaited the arrival of the couple. Presently they appeared, and entered the baths, and gambolled in the warm water for about half an hour. The lady especially was extremely pleased with the dip, and on leaving the bath exclaimed, "That's kapai" [good].[353] This remark so tickled the young men that they made tracks to the hotel, where they spread the joke about, and when Mr J_____ and his wife entered they were greatly surprised and annoyed to hear everyone exclaiming "That's kapai; that's kapai." The mischievous young men of the town do not lose an opportunity when they see the poor woman close at hand to reiterate her unfortunate remark, and she is almost driven crazy in consequence.[354]

Probably the couple bathed naked, which would have heightened their embarrassment. Practical joking was common, but only one example was recorded during this period:

> A friend of the writer's, who was in the habit of keeping late hours, received a lesson the other night, which, it is satisfactory to know, has had a salutary effect upon him. Coming home about midnight, he found the door locked, and after doing a perish outside for about fifteen minutes was admitted by a stranger who was sleeping in the shanty at the time, and who had not been informed of the joke which our friend's mates intended to play on the midnight rambler. On entering he proceeded to search for a candle; but, singular to say, he could not find even the vestige of one, although only the previous day he had purchased a pound. Finding the search fruitless, he endeavoured to wake up his companions, but they were sleeping so soundly, as he thought,

---

[352] See paper on larrikinism in the Te Aroha district.

[353] Elizabeth and Harry Orsman, *The New Zealand Dictionary*, 2 ed., (Auckland, 1995), p. 140.

[354] Te Aroha Correspondent, *Thames Advertiser*, 31 March 1881, p. 2.

> that he was unable to do this, and after indulging in some extraordinary language, in order to ease his feelings, he sat down in the dark, and took his boots off, a proceeding which occupied fully twenty minutes, owing to his being unable to see how to untie the laces. His clothes off, he instituted another search for the missing sperms [candles made from sperm whale blubber], and was again unsuccessful, this time, however, burning his fingers several times with the lighted matches, a matter which, of course, did not tend to improve his temper. Another swear followed, and then our friend jumped into his bunk, but very soon sprang out again, the cause of such a hasty proceeding being that he had thrown himself on a bed of Scotch thistles, instead of one of fern, his practical joking mates having placed some of these plants in his couch, and hidden the candle in order that he might not see them before retiring to rest. The scene which followed in the shanty can be better imagined than described. Ever since that night the rambler comes home regularly at ten o'clock, and no one dares to refer to the joke in which he figured as the victim.[355]

CRIME

For a while, no very serious crimes were committed, the first man imprisoned being a Maori who sank the Te Kawana punt on 4 December 1880.[356] The next incident occurred between one and two o'clock on the morning of 18 December:

> The residents of the township were started out of their slumbers by hearing the cries of "Police, police," and "Stop thief," and on rushing into the open air they observed a man running in the direction of the landing, and followed by three others. The police were soon on the spot, and enquiries by them elicited that three young men had accused a fourth - a young foreigner - of having stolen their provisions and chased him about the township with sticks. The accusers failed to prove the charge, and the police warned them to desist from persecuting the foreigner.[357]

Early in January the *Te Aroha Miner* reported that

---

[355] 'Odds and Ends', *Thames Advertiser*, 27 January 1881, p. 3.

[356] Armed Constabulary Force, Report of Charges taken at Te Aroha Lock-up 1880-1903, no. 1, in private possession.

[357] Te Aroha Correspondent, *Thames Advertiser*, 20 December 1880, p. 3.

> again it is our unpleasant duty to call attention to the existence of a gang of petty thieves in our midst, who continue their depredations scathless of detection. One of the shareholders of the All Nations mine informs us that a most impertinent theft was perpetrated on the shareholders of that mine, a saw and adze being stolen during the temporary absence of the workmen. As this is not a solitary instance of the robbery of tools, it behoves miners to have their brands affixed to them as at the Thames.[358]

The police endeavoured 'to bring some of the offenders to justice',[359] without success. In January, two men were imprisoned, a miner for deserting his wife and children and a prospector for using obscene and abusive language to a constable.[360] In March, the first case of horse stealing occurred, the victim being John Wood, who had a livery and bait stable:

> He was waited upon on Monday by a man, who wished to hire a horse for a couple of days. Mr Wood lent him a good animal, and the fellow started off for Shortland. On reaching the shop of a saddler in Pollen-street, he obtained a pigskin saddle "on tick," leaving the one he had ridden down on to be re-stuffed. The following morning he rode to Paeroa, where he was met by his companion, who had also obtained a horse from Mr Wood by false representations that his mate had run away with a cheque of his, and he wished to recover it. After sporting about the township for a day, the rogues took their departure for Katikati, on reaching which they separated. One horse, with saddle and bridle was sold to a settler for £4 or £5, about £12 or £15 below their value, and the other was ridden to the Lakes, where it was also disposed of for a ridiculously low figures. Mr Wood becoming anxious about the animals made inquiries, and found what had become of them. The police took the matter up, and the result was they arrested the two offenders, who are now lying in Tauranga gaol, awaiting their trial and the recovery of the horses.[361]

The most serious crime was the killing of Himiona Haira.[362] After that, as a correspondent wrote, 'the police here have great times of it', meaning a quiet time. Since the murder 'nothing startling' occurred, apart from 'a

---

[358] *Te Aroha Miner*, n.d., reprinted in *Thames Star*, 8 January 1881, p. 2.

[359] Te Aroha Correspondent, *Thames Advertiser*, 8 January 1881, p. 3.

[360] Armed Constabulary Force, Report of Charges taken at Te Aroha Lock-up 1880-1903, nos. 4, 5, in private possession.

[361] Te Aroha Correspondent, *Thames Advertiser*, 17 March 1881, p. 2.

[362] See paper on the 'revolting murder' at Te Aroha in 1881.

public house row the other night, when Orange Brown, as he is called, accused a well-known station manager of stabbing him in the arm'. The police 'discovered that a pane of glass had been broken in the scuffle', which they believed caused the wound.[363] In April, a farmer was locked up 'on suspicion of being a dangerous lunatic', and in November a bushman stole two shillings from a hotel till.[364] In late December a man was accused of indecently assaulting a nine-year-old girl. She was alone in the house with her cousin, another girl, when he came to the door at 8 o'clock in the evening and asked for her parents and grandfather. He was told that they were out, and was given a light. The published version of the evidence omitted some of the offender's behaviour:

> He stepped into the house and threw the light on the floor. (Witness here illustrated the gestures of accused.) The children then ran upstairs, and stayed there about five minutes. When they came down again, accused was sitting at the door with his clothes still disarranged. He then repeated his previous signs. Prudence Holden went out with witness's infant brother, with the idea of putting the latter to sleep in a smaller house outside, as they were afraid accused would catch him, as he could not run away. In doing this she had to run past the door at which accused was sitting. She attempted to rush past, when she fell to the ground, and accused caught her. He pulled her towards him, but Prudence rushed forward and pulled her away. Both of them then ran upstairs screaming. Her father and mother then came in, and found Maurice still at the door. A few minutes later accused went away, and she informed her mother of his conduct.- Prisoner refused to cross-examine the witness.

After corroborating evidence was given, the accused 'stated that the charge was a complete fabrication - a falsehood'. Kenrick's judgment was that it 'was clear that some assault had been committed, coupled with gross acts of indecency. Whether there was sufficient evidence to substantiate a charge of indecent assault would be for a jury to decide', and committed him for trial in the Supreme Court.[365] There, the evidence 'excited the greatest disgust, owing to the character of the conversation stated to have been addressed to the prosecutrix and a child companion by the prisoner, and

---

[363] Te Aroha Correspondent, *Thames Advertiser*, 29 June 1881, p. 3.

[364] Armed Constabulary Force, Report of Charges taken at Te Aroha Lock-up 1880-1903, nos. 9, 12, in private possession.

[365] Police Court, *Thames Advertiser*, 30 December 1881, p. 3.

also on account of the tender age and intelligence of the two children'. Their parents had been visiting friends on Boxing Day, leaving the two girls in charge of some younger children who had been put to bed. The prisoner, previously employed by the father, had arrived at the house 'apparently the worse of drink', took the girl

> between his legs, and asked her a number of questions. (The child described the nature of the questions put by the prisoner and his behaviour.) She got away from him, and both children ran into the lobby, and the other into a bedroom, but they were chased by the prisoner. A very large proportion of the examination and cross-examination was adopted to test the memory of each of these young children, who only partially understood the nature of an oath.

After the 13-year-old witness gave 'some discrepancies relating to matters of importance' in the complainant's account, the defendant's lawyer drew attention to 'very important discrepancies, and the age of the children being considered', and it took the jury only a short time to decide in favour of the accused.[366] Thus ended the first sex case brought before the courts.

THE SETTLEMENT IN DECLINE

In late January 1881, the *Thames Star* reporter based in Te Aroha estimated the number of residents. The 68 wooden buildings and 105 tents in Morgantown had an average of three people per domicile, meaning 519 people. An area he described as the suburb towards the slaughterhouse upstream from Morgantown had 200, giving a total of around 700.[367] Ten days after the murder of Himiona Haira, according to a Thames newspaper's correspondent numbers fell drastically:

> Since the murder there has been a regular exodus from the place, and I do not suppose there are more than 150 or 200 persons - men, women, and children - left in the district. A number were scared away, others left because they were short of money, and the rest took their departure, believing it was not safe to work in the Omahu district. At night time there are not half as many people about as there was a month ago, when the streets were full of men; and the tradesmen are beginning to complain of bad

---

[366] Supreme Court, *Auckland Weekly News*, 14 January 1882, p. 19.

[367] Te Aroha Correspondent, *Thames Star*, 25 January 1881, p. 2.

> times, a rather unusual cry on a new goldfield. The building trade is very slack, and not more than two or three houses have gone up during the past month.[368]

Such a loss of population was denied by the *Waikato Times* correspondent. 'Not half-a-dozen people' had left because of the murder, neither was there 'the slightest scare or apprehension of any danger on the part of the people here, though reports to that effect' were 'sedulously circulated on the Thames with the view of deterring people from coming'. He estimated that there were 400 on the field,[369] which was a considerable decline. Three weeks later, a visiting *Thames Advertiser* reporter noted that the township looked 'almost deserted, a great number of people having taken their departure lately'. Business was 'very slack indeed', and tradespeople complained of 'dullness'. As very few houses had been erected since Christmas, the building trade was 'at a standstill'.[370]

The census of 3 April gave the most reliable figures. In the Waitoa Riding of the Piako County, Fraterville had five males, Morgantown had 160 residents (including 48 women), part of Te Aroha had 127 (including 42 women), the Prince of Wales mine had six men, and the All Nations mine two. The Tui district, within the Ohinemuri Riding of the Thames County, had 11 residents, five of them women. The total population of both men and women was 311.[371]

If the *Thames Advertiser*'s visiting reporter was correct, this number dropped dramatically over the next ten days. He found Te Aroha 'quite as deserted' as on his last visit, 'notwithstanding that I was told an accession in the population has recently taken place'. He did not think there were 'more than 100 people in the township'.[372] The *Waikato Times* correspondent, as always, saw a more positive side. On 9 April he stated that 'absentees' were returning along with new arrivals 'in anticipation of the coming work' resulting from the starting of the battery, 'and the little place seems all astir'.[373] On 2 May, Kenrick estimated that there were 300

---

[368] Te Aroha Correspondent, *Thames Advertiser*, 23 February 1881, p. 3.

[369] Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 26 February 1881, p. 2.

[370] Visiting Reporter, *Thames Advertiser*, 16 March 1881, p. 3.

[371] *Results of a Census of the Colony of New Zealand, taken for the Night of the 3rd of April, 1881* (Wellington, 1882), p. 24.

[372] Visiting Reporter, *Thames Advertiser*, 14 April 1881, p. 3.

[373] Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 9 April 1881, p. 2.

Pakeha, half of them miners.[374] 'From the 600 or 1000 men who were here six months ago, there would not be found 30 now', wrote the *Waikato Times* correspondent in late July,[375] referring to miners not residents. In August, a visiting reporter described Paeroa as 'a great improvement' on 'the seedy and irritating little pimple upon the banks of the Waihou' that was 'cursed by some, though, like all evils, it may be blessed with equal fervency, known as Te Aroha'.[376] Four days later, when George Thomas Wilkinson, the native agent,[377] visited, he 'found very few people…. The place looks quite deserted'.[378]

There were various indicators of decline. After the first three months of the goldfield, all licenses had to be renewed, but 'many business site applications were allowed to lapse'.[379] By March, the coach from Hamilton came only three times a week.[380] As early as April, the river trade to Thames was described as 'dormant', and by July the steamer, which previously came daily, called only once a week.[381] By May, only monthly court sessions were held.[382] From June onwards, the *Thames Star* no longer based a correspondent there, any Te Aroha news being reprinted from the *Waikato Times*. The local correspondent of the latter newspaper rarely sent any reports after early August. A storm in June for a time put 'an entire stop to what little business was doing in our midst'.[383] In July, the mining inspector forfeited a large number of business and residence sites on which no building had taken place.[384]

In 1930, when Frederick William Wild, formerly a policeman at Te Aroha and then clerk to the county council, edited a book on the development of the district, he received letters from men who were either present at the opening or had arrived shortly afterwards. Two letters

---

[374] Harry Kenrick to Under-Secretary, Gold Fields, 2 May 1881, *AJHR*, 1881, H-17, p. 13.

[375] Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 23 July 1881, p. 2.

[376] Travelling Reporter, *Waikato Times*, 4 August 1881, p. 4.

[377] See paper on Merea Wikiriwhi and George Thomas Wilkinson.

[378] George Thomas Wilkinson, diaries, entry for 8 August 1881, University of Waikato Library.

[379] Te Aroha Correspondent, *Thames Advertiser*, 7 March 1881, p. 3.

[380] *Waikato Times*, 3 March 1881, p. 2.

[381] *Thames Advertiser*, 2 April 1881, p. 3, 12 April 1881, p. 3, 12 July 1881, p. 2.

[382] Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 5 May 1881, p. 3.

[383] Te Aroha Correspondent, *Thames Advertiser*, 7 June 1881, p. 3.

[384] *Thames Star*, 5 July 1881, p. 2.

revealed the extent of the economic depression that succeeded the rush. The first recorded

> very hard times during the first winter after the opening of the field. Everybody who could got away. Some of the settlers were almost starving. I remember meeting two young farmers on the road to Te Aroha. On their shoulders they carried a pole, supporting a supply of cabbages which they intended to hawk from house to house. Once I saw six men who were peddling fruit racing to be first at a certain boarding-house.

Another wrote that 'we soon found that it was not a poor man's field, as the reefs were large and of low grade, so we took on road work, also sowing grass seed on the Waitoa Estate'.[385] These letters illustrated that men who worked permanently or temporarily as miners had to be multi-skilled, able to take whatever jobs were available. As another illustration, in September a correspondent detected a 'better feeling', with 'few idle men' because of 'the demand by drainage and fencing operations'.[386]

THE SETTLEMENT SURVIVES

Despite all this gloom, Te Aroha was not a ghost town, and was establishing its own social life and community networks, as the details of entertainments, sport, the churches and education given above illustrated. There were occasional reports of positive developments. For example, in June a goods store was erected at the landing for the Steam Navigation Company, and some other new buildings were being built. Hotelkeepers 'have had their houses lined, papered, and good brick chimneys built. Warm fires and comfortable rooms' were 'now the order of the day'.[387] John Allwood,[388] who took over Clotworthy's Rina Mokena Hotel in February and renamed it the Robin Hood and Little John,[389] was making 'considerable alterations' and converting 'an old shanty into a really first-class hotel' of 14

---

[385] *Te Aroha and the Fortunate Valley: Pioneering in the Thames Valley 1867-1930*, ed. F.W. Wild (Te Aroha, 1930), p. 279 [these letters no longer exist].

[386] Travelling Correspondent, *Thames Star*, 13 September 1881, p. 3.

[387] Te Aroha Correspondent, *Thames Advertiser*, 15 June 1881, p. 3.

[388] See *Waikato Times*, 24 May 1881, p. 2.

[389] *Thames Advertiser*, 25 February 1881, p. 3.

rooms.[390] These improvements were needed because increasing numbers visited the hot springs. At the beginning of that month, a a meeting of the warden's court combined with

> the arrival of a number of visitors both by the coach and the Patiki yesterday, contributed to lend to our rather primitive settlement quite a sparkling appearance. The *table d'hote* at the principal hotel reminded the host of the dazzling days of the rush and he cast off his influenza and he hopped and skipped like the gentleman who casts away crutches

after a miraculous cure.[391] Although the mines were being abandoned, the development of agriculture and the draining of swamps required labour. At the end of June, 'things generally are dull, but we live in hopes'.[392] And these were fulfilled. In early October, Hone Werahiko, who had found the first gold,[393] returned from Thames accompanied by men from Thames and Paeroa who wanted to inspect his new find:

> Our large party of horsemen quite astonished the quiet Te Arohans, who having seen their "city" abandoned, deserted, and forgotten, were unprepared for the present invasion. I saw great glee shining in the eyes of the hotel keepers, at the prospect of a few stray half-crowns finding their way to the till, also the chance of seeing the deserted streets again filled with a monied multitude, might have passed before their minds. All around us the *numerous* inhabitants of Te Aroha pressed, and poured into our ears tales of gold found, of the splendid show, of the great size of the reef, and of the populous Te Aroha streets of the future.[394]

The *Thames Star* once more acquired a local correspondent, who reported that residents were 'jubilant', believing there was 'a brilliant future in store'.[395] Sections 'abandoned during the dull season' were pegged out again, and 'great excitement prevails amongst the business people'.[396]

---

[390] *Waikato Times*, Te Aroha Correspondent, 25 June 1881, p. 2, advertisement, 10 November 1881, p. 1.

[391] Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 6 June 1881, p. 3.

[392] Te Aroha Correspondent, *Thames Advertiser*, 23 June 1881, p. 3.

[393] See paper on his life.

[394] A Correspondent, *Thames Star*, 12 October 1881, p. 2.

[395] Pigeongrams, *Thames Star*, 14 October 1880, p. 2.

[396] *Waikato Times*, 11 October 1881, p. 2, Te Aroha Correspondent, 13 October 1881, p. 2.

CONCLUSION

As Smith emphasized, every urban community required social cohesion if it was to survive.[397] Unlike in America, because many residents of Te Aroha was not strangers to each other it was relatively easy to create a community through promoting common interests such as churches, schooling, medical facilities, and sport and entertainment. Through such developments, Te Aroha became more than a temporary settlement, and, when economic developments permitted, would become a place where people would want to spend the rest of their lives.

Appendix

Figure 1: Plan of Te Aroha, c. November 1880, appended to G.E. Barton to Governor, 6 August 1886, Maori Affairs Department, MA 1, 13/27a, ANZ-W [Archives New Zealand The Department of Internal Affairs Te Tari Taiwhenua]; used with permission.

Figure 2: 'Plan of Te Aroha Goldfield Town', 1881, annotated by Harry Kenrick with location of Warden's Office and police huts, Mines Department, MD 1, 6/14, Part 1, ANZ-W [Archives New Zealand The Department of Internal Affairs Te Tari Taiwhenua]; used with permission.

Figure 3: Plan of Te Aroha, n.d., added to 1878 map of the district, ML 14312, University of Waikato Map Library.

Figure 4: Foy Bros?, Te Aroha from the landing at foot of Rolleston Street, c.December 1880 [note smoke and other signs of mining on the mountainside], Te Aroha and District Museum; used with permission.

Figures 5: Foy Bros?, Fraterville, with Prospectors' Spur workings, c.December 1880, Te Aroha and District Museum; used with permission

Figure 6: Foy Bros., Landing at foot of Rolleston Street, early 1881, Te Aroha and District Museum; used with permission.

---

[397] Smith, p. 118.

Figure 7: Residents in front of Hot Springs Hotel and Post Office, 1881, Te Aroha and District Museum; used with permission.

Figure 8: Te Aroha, c. 1881, Te Aroha and District Museum; used with permission.

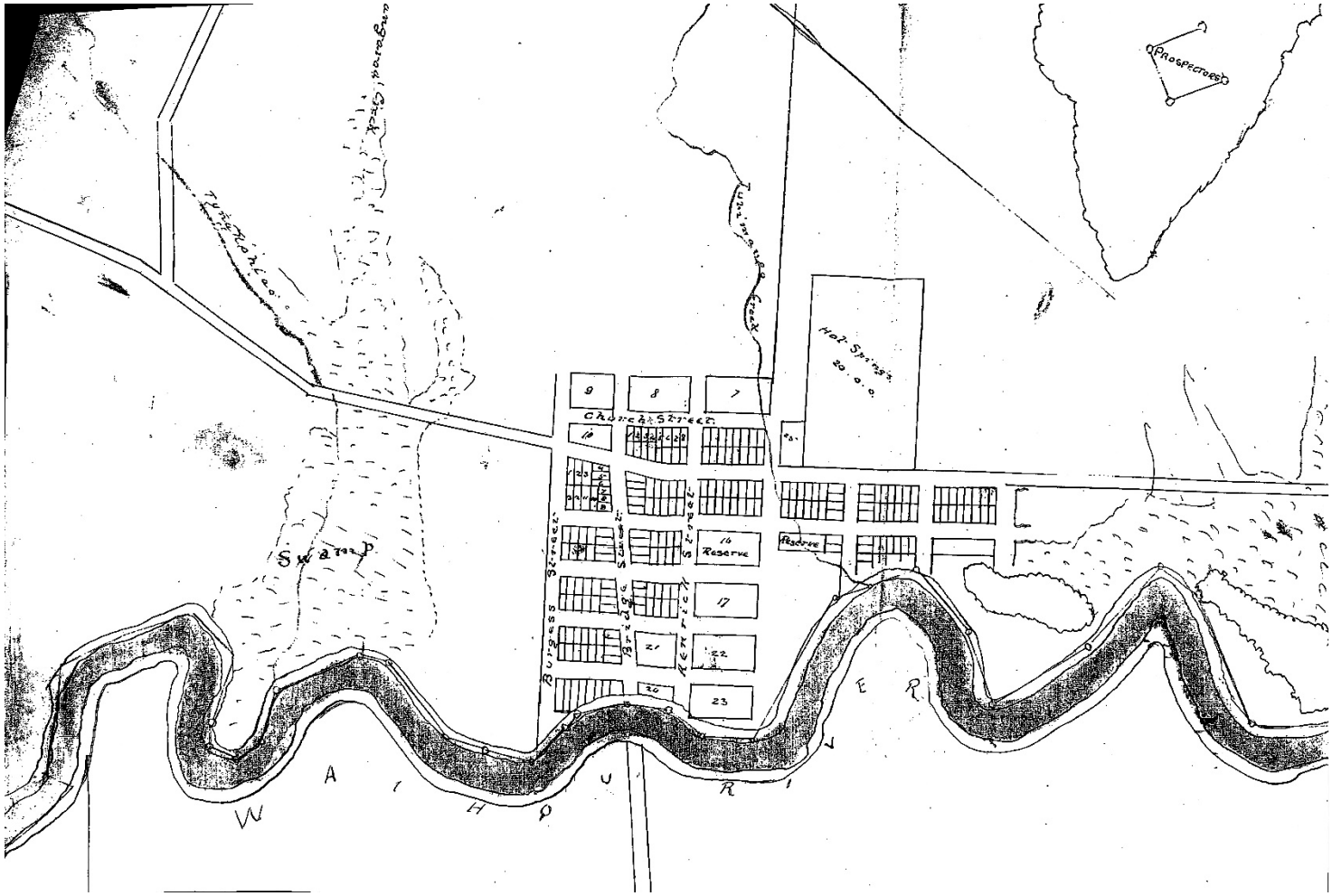

Figure 1: Plan of Te Aroha, c. November 1880, appended to G.E. Barton to Governor, 6 August 1886, Maori Affairs Department, MA 1, 13/27a, ANZ-W [Archives New Zealand The Department of Internal Affairs Te Tari Taiwhenua]; used with permission.

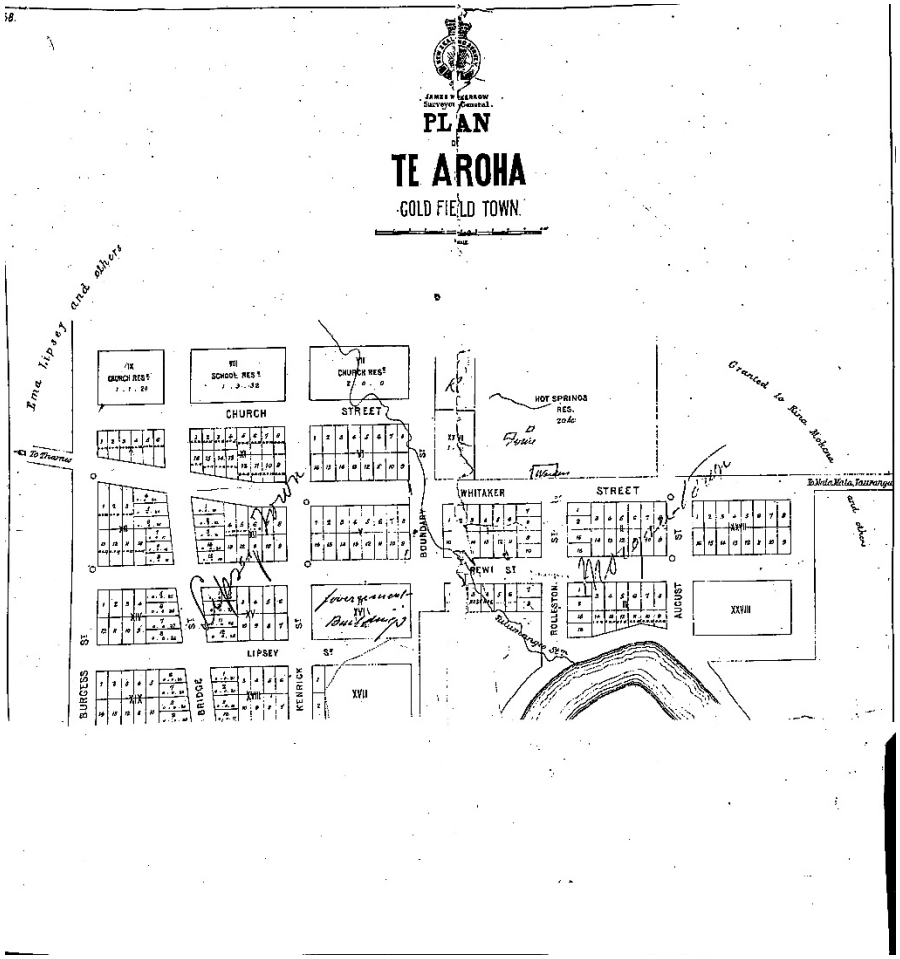

Figure 2: 'Plan of Te Aroha Goldfield Town', 1881, annotated by Harry Kenrick with location of Warden's Office and police huts, Mines Department, MD 1, 6/14, Part 1, ANZ-W [Archives New Zealand The Department of Internal Affairs Te Tari Taiwhenua]; used with permission.

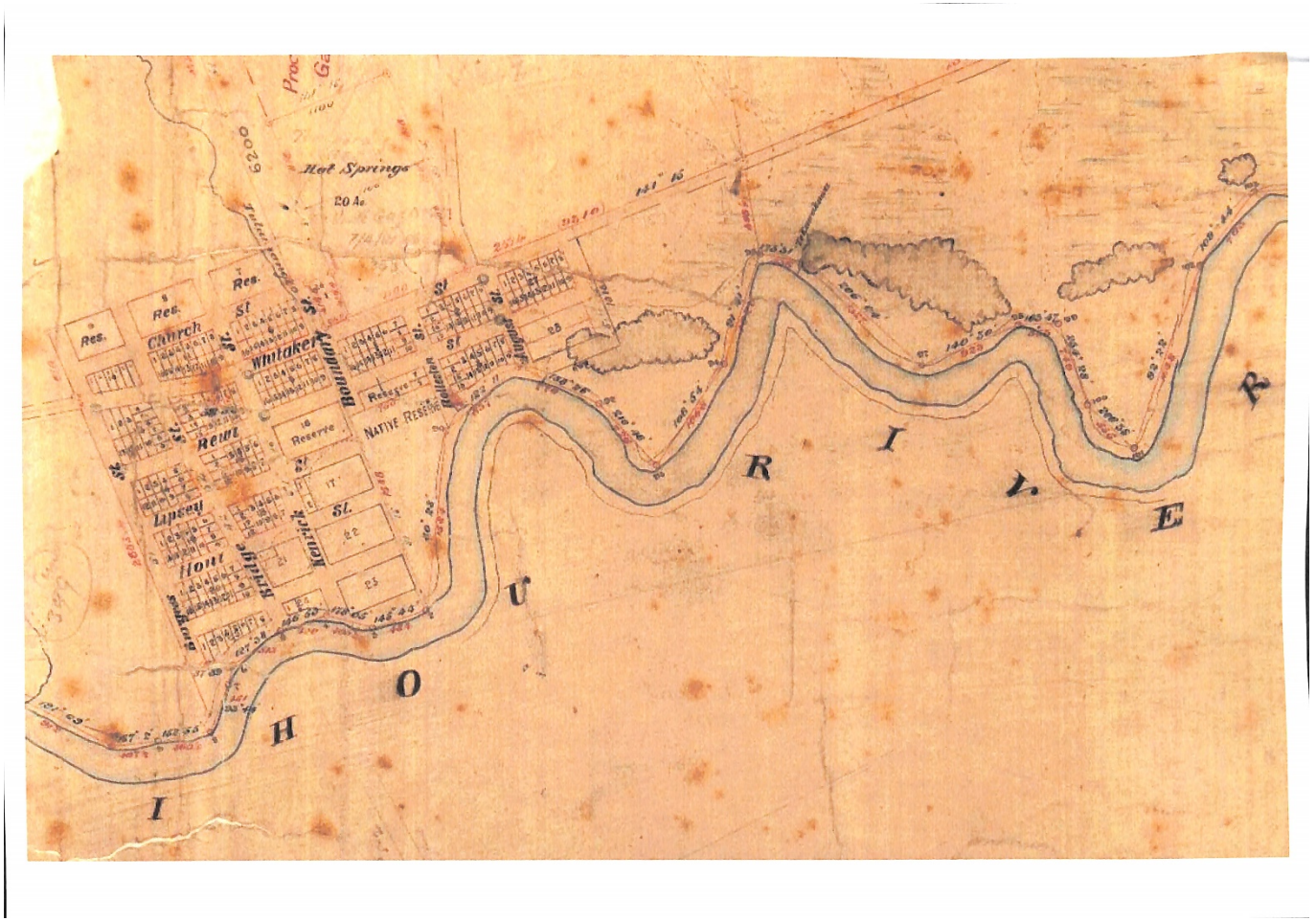

Figure 3: Plan of Te Aroha, n.d., added to 1878 map of the district, ML 14312, University of Waikato Map Library.

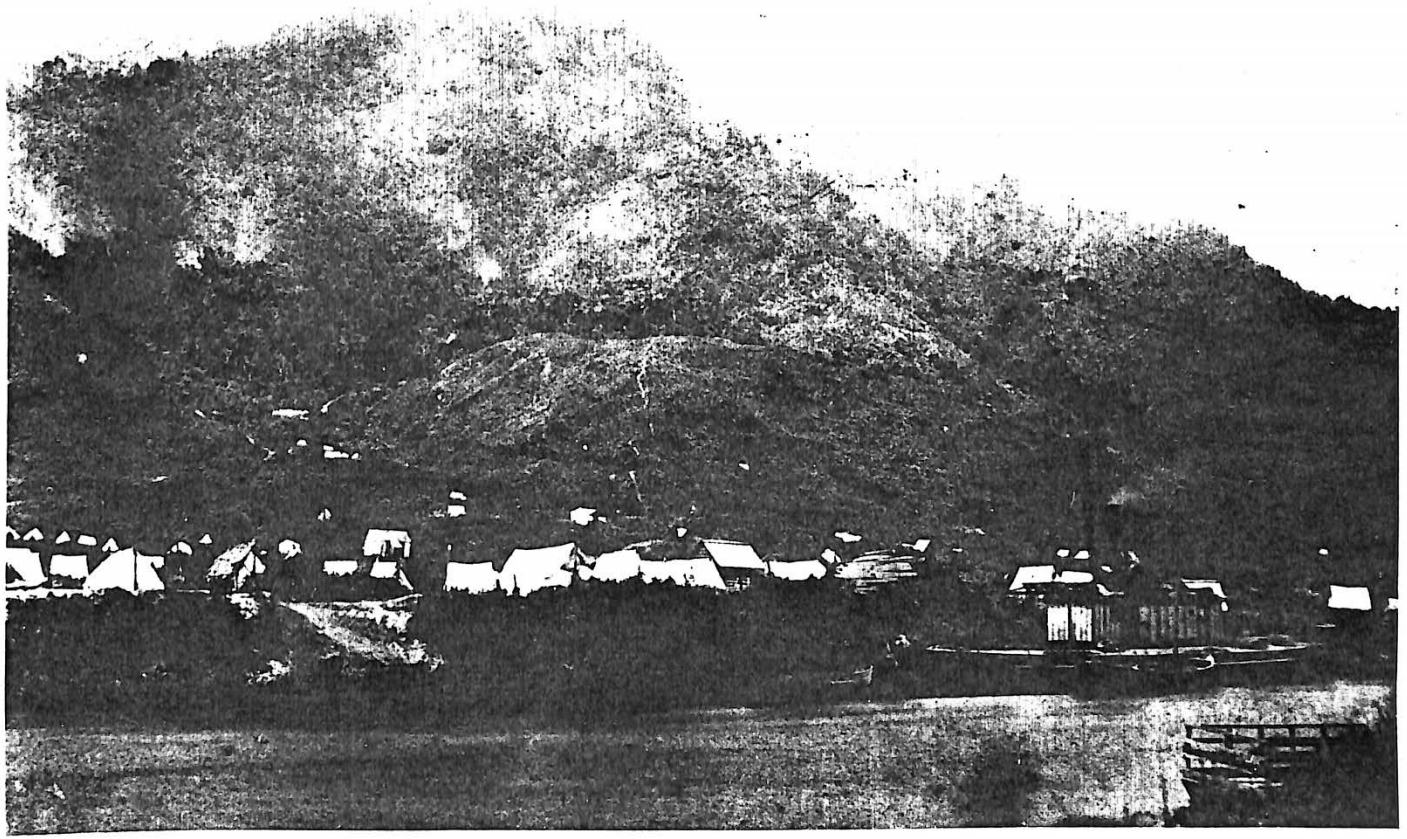

Figure 4: Foy Bros?, Te Aroha from the landing, c. December 1880, Te Aroha and District Museum; used with permission.

Figures 5: Foy Bros?, Fraterville, with Prospectors' Spur workings, c. December 1880, Te Aroha and District Museum; used with permission

Figure 6: Foy Bros., Landing at lower end of Rolleston Street, early 1881, Te Aroha and District Museum; used with permission.

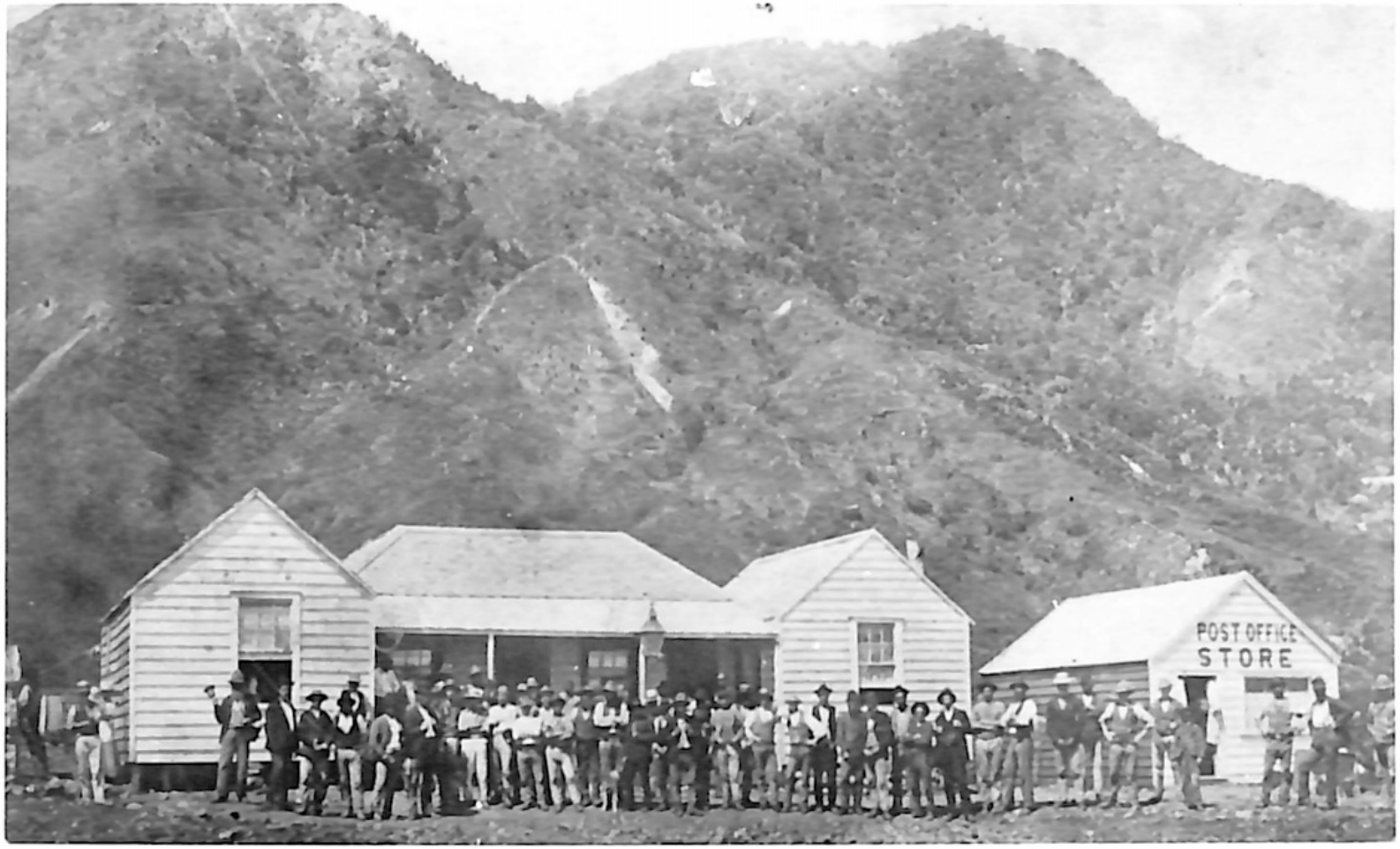

Figure 7: Residents in front of Hot Springs Hotel and Post Office, 1881, Te Aroha and District Museum; used with permission.

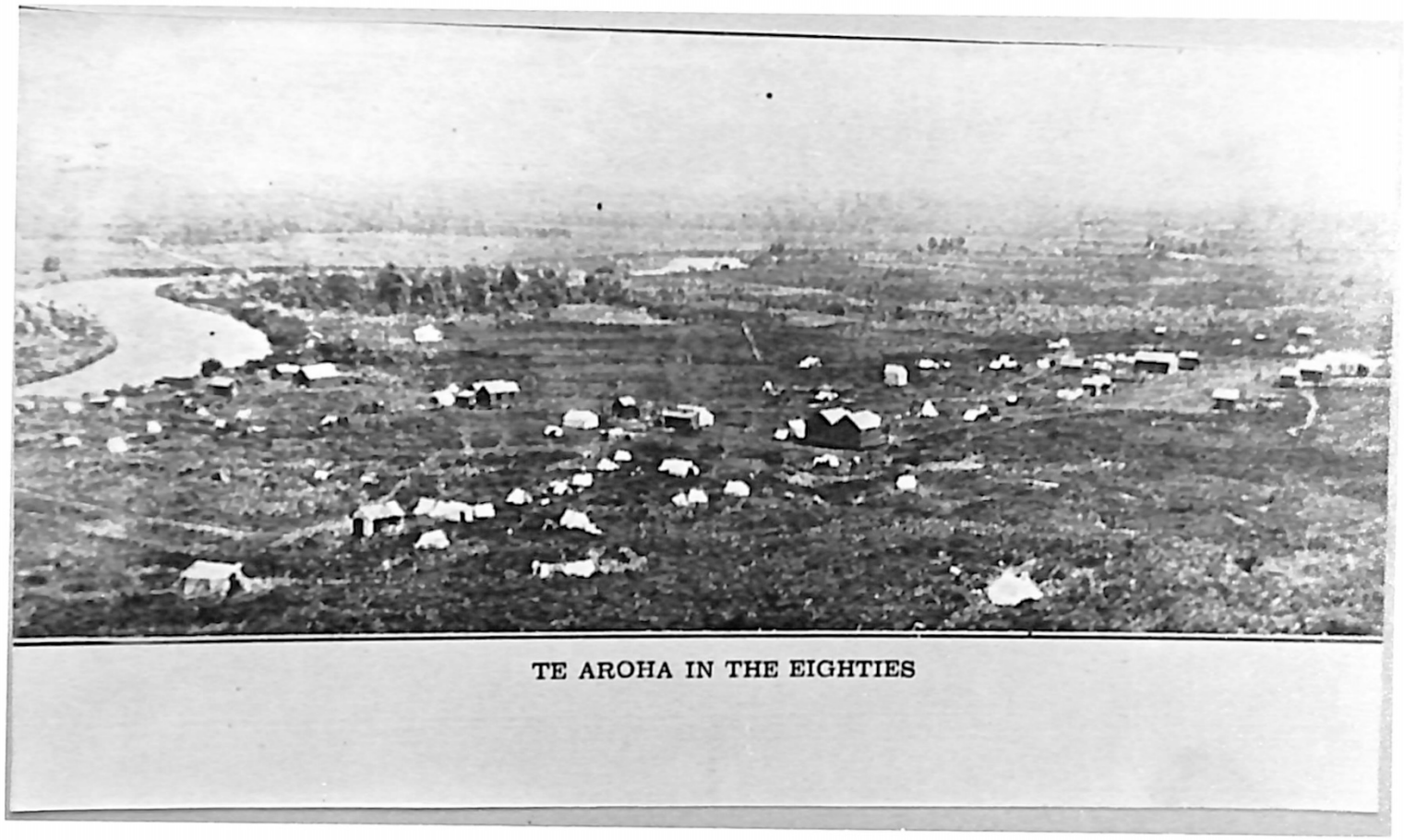

Figure 8: Te Aroha, c. 1881, Te Aroha and District Museum; used with permission.