

EDUCATION IN THE TE AROHA DISTRICT IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

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

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

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

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

ESTABLISHING A SCHOOL

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

¹ *Te Aroha News*, 10 February 1948, p. 5.

² *Te Aroha News*, 7 July 1883, p. 2.

be built which they could then use for their services, in May 1881 the Wesleyans decided to erect a church; it opened in that August.³

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

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

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

⁴ See paper on his life.

⁵ See paper on his life.

⁶ *Thames Advertiser*, 12 January 1881, p. 3.

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

⁸ Board of Education, *Auckland Weekly News*, 29 January 1881, p. 19.

⁹ See paper on his life.

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

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

¹² See paper on the Battery Company.

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

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

¹³ *Thames Star*, 14 April 1881, p. 2.

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

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

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

¹⁷ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Thames Advertiser*, 2 June 1881, p. 3.

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

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

school in the Waikato.²⁰ On 11 June a meeting was convened to elect a school committee.²¹

Mary Harvey opened her school on 4 July, as a correspondent reported enthusiastically: 'Mrs Harvey opened her school on Monday with an attendance of over 20 on the first day, and without any announcement, though probably there will be 40 as an average. The children all looked as happy as their parents at the commencement of the good work'.²² The first pupils were reputedly 'a motley lot clothed in all manner of garb but freshly scrubbed'.²³ It was later believed that one room of Mrs Harvey's 'barely completed home' home was used for her school,²⁴ but in fact the Wesleyan Church had been rented. Late in that month both the school and the teacher's residence were described as 'quite inadequate'.²⁵ The former building must have been very cold in winter, for not till mid-1882 was it 'lined and made comfortable'.²⁶

Those who had subscribed to the Wesleyan church fund, not all of whom were Wesleyans, had understood that this building could be used for a school at a nominal rent, but then discovered that the church wanted 'a rental of 12s per week, a sum which the Education Board is not likely to grant'.²⁷ A resident clarified that when the building had been offered for 8s a week, including the cost of cleaning, the school committee had proposed the higher amount.²⁸ When the committee first asked the board to meet the rent and provide an allowance for cleaning, it declined, but at its next meeting granted 5s a week towards rent and urged the committee 'to provide closets', meaning toilets; the application for a school was 'deferred

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

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

²² Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 7 July 1881, p. 2.

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

²⁴ *Te Aroha News*, 10 February 1948, p. 5; Priest, p. 11.

²⁵ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 26 July 1881, p. 2.

²⁶ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Thames Star*, 13 July 1882, p. 2.

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

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

until funds are available'.²⁹ After awaiting the inspector's report on a renewed request, at the end of October it ordered plans prepared for a school, and two weeks later, having received a 'Memorial for a School District', approved forming one.³⁰ Not until December 1882 were its boundaries fixed.³¹

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

THE TE AROHA SCHOOL IN THE 1880s AND 1890s

Providing adequate accommodation and facilities took much time and effort. Just before Christmas 1881 the lowest tender for the school building, £325, was accepted.³⁴ Two weeks later, when considering the school committee's request for both a school and teacher's residence, the board decided: 'Cannot at present erect School buildings. Enquiry to be made as to renting House for Teacher'.³⁵ In mid-February 1882 the committee was 'informed that if site of two acres is obtained Board will erect School building'.³⁶ In the following month, the board authorized the payment of

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

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

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

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

³³ *Thames Advertiser*, 19 December 1881, p. 3.

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

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

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

rent, authorized employing a pupil teacher, 'subject to accommodation being provided for residence', and would 'favourably entertain the question of erecting a Teacher's Dwelling upon site being conveyed'.³⁷ At the end of April, it accepted George Lipsey's offer of a 21-year lease of two acres 'with agreement for conveyance of freehold to Board if acquired by Mr Lipsey'³⁸ (the land was owned by his Maori in-laws). In June, after the committee was told that this land had been leased, it ordered plans and specifications to be prepared.³⁹ In addition, the teacher was instructed to 'make arrangements with Proprietors of church relative to use of building for [a] Night School'.⁴⁰

In the following month, the plans for both the school and the teacher's house were approved.⁴¹ In August, an alteration to the latter was approved and Lipsey was 'asked to give further undertaking to convey site',⁴² a process which clearly was still incomplete. Finally, in October, it was agreed to call tenders for both school and house, at an estimated cost of £1,240, 'upon completion of conveyance of site'.⁴³ In the meantime, the Wesleyan chapel continued to be rented, for 10s a week.⁴⁴ As there were eight tenders ranging from £1,561 to £2,590, a decision was postponed until an estimate was obtained of the lowest possible price for a 'substantial building to accommodate 150 Scholars, and a teacher's dwelling'.⁴⁵ One board member's

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

attempt to require the district to subscribe £200 towards its school was withdrawn after other members protested; another asked whether, 'if we do not build, are the whole of the children of the district to go without any education whatever?' Clark now strongly supported providing a large school:

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

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

In 1930, a former pupil of the nearby Waihou school had recalled the difficulties facing teachers in these small communities. At Waihou, 'all the pupils were herded together in one room, and a teacher had to have kindergarten experience as well as qualifications to train pupils for scholarships'. He considered that the teachers 'did very well', working 'six days a week for one-quarter of the salary received to-day. If an analysis was

⁴⁶ Board of Education, *Auckland Weekly News*, 21 October 1882, p. 5.

⁴⁷ Board of Education, *Auckland Weekly News*, 2 December 1882, p. 19.

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

made it would be found that those old pupils stood as high or higher to-day than those who had a more efficient education'.⁴⁹

Commencing with 29 pupils, despite 17 leaving the school by the end of the year 97 were being taught.⁵⁰ The inspector's report for its first year noted that there was 'not much' singing but that drawing was taught, elementary science was well taught, and recitations, needlework, discipline, and drill were good.⁵¹

In February 1883, tenders of £700 to erect the school and £459 for the teacher's house were accepted.⁵² The latter was completed in May, but as the contractor 'had departed from plans with regard to length of studs', £17 1s 3d was deducted from the contract price.⁵³ Later, because the contract had gone over time, a £3 penalty was imposed.⁵⁴ The new schoolhouse, with one part for boys and one for girls,⁵⁵ was described as a splendid building containing two rooms, one 40 feet by 21 feet and the other 35 feet by 41, the height of both being 14 feet. Both were 'closely panelled throughout' with 'ample' fireplaces in a double brick chimney. It could accommodate 160 pupils; three classes were held simultaneously in each room, 'the sounds being deadened', the local newspaper reported, perhaps over-confidently.⁵⁶ An historian described it as 'austere, nothing was done to brighten the interior, there were no playing fields laid out, no lawns or gardens or trees'.⁵⁷ As the heating was inadequate, in 1887 the head teacher was granted permission to dismiss the children on very frosty mornings.⁵⁸ 'Parts of the original building continued in use until 1936'.⁵⁹ It had to stand up to

⁴⁹ Recollections of Christopher James Parr, *Te Aroha News*, 2 July 1930, p. 5.

⁵⁰ *AJHR*, 1883, E-1, p. 45.

⁵¹ Te Aroha Goldfields School, Class Lists for 1882, YCAF 4135/7a, ANZ-A.

⁵² Auckland Education Board, Minutes of Meeting of 2 February 1883, Minute Book 1881-1883, p. 408, YCAF 5491/3a, ANZ-A.

⁵³ Auckland Education Board, Minutes of Meeting of 18 May 1883, Minute Book 1881-1883, p. 488, YCAF 5491/3a, ANZ-A.

⁵⁴ Auckland Education Board, Minutes of Meeting of 6 July 1883, Minute Book 1883-1884, p. 49, ANZ-A.

⁵⁵ *Te Aroha News*, 9 June 1883, p. 2.

⁵⁶ *Te Aroha News*, 30 June 1883, p. 2.

⁵⁷ Priest, p. 13.

⁵⁸ *Te Aroha News*, 16 September 1887, p. 3.

⁵⁹ *Te Aroha News*, 10 February 1948, p. 5.

periodic gales; in 1888, for instance, 17 or 18 panes of glass were ‘slightly cracked’ after the building swayed.⁶⁰

On the evening of 4 July,

the new schoolhouse was formally opened by a treat to the children, a concert interspersed with addresses following, and a dance which did not conclude till early hours, to wind up with. There was a very large attendance, both of juveniles and their elders, the former number close on 200. A very good tea was provided by the committee,

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

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

After ‘ample justice’ had been done to the meal, Charles Stanislaus Stafford, a farmer, who had ‘kindly consented to preside’ in the place of his close friend Henry Ernest Whitaker,⁶¹ spoke on the importance of education. ‘He paid a high and well-deserved tribute to the perseverance and energy of the committee’ in obtaining the school and ‘considered that the community owed a deep debt of gratitude’ to Lipsey for providing the site, ‘a magnificent free gift to the cause of education in the district. (Great cheering.)’ The concert commenced with ‘a little band of children’ singing, ‘very nicely, “My Own New Zealand Home”’, and after songs and recitations ‘most creditably rendered’ by eight girls, ‘several ladies and gentlemen gave valuable service’. One teenaged boy’s performance ‘excited quite a little furore amongst his young friends and was twice encored’. Three women provided the piano accompaniments. ‘Short addresses’ were given by three Protestant clergymen, the first dwelling

⁶⁰ *Te Aroha News*, 4 July 1888, p. 2.

⁶¹ See the paper on Harry and Charles: Henry Ernest Whitaker and Charles Stanislaus Stafford.

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

The second clergyman then 'spoke of the wondrous talent displayed by the boys and girls who appeared before them'. Their future depended on their education, not on their birth, and 'amongst the children then present would be thoughtful politicians, and statesmen, who would bless the land of which the elders now were the early pioneers'. The third clergyman also 'referred in warm terms to the advantages of education generally' and emphasized 'the value of girls being instructed in domestic economy'. He urged the children 'to do all in their power to support the schoolmaster and help him by all possible means by close and unremitting attention to their studies'. After the national anthem was sung 'with great heartiness', dancing 'was kept up with great spirit till late'. The newspaper considered that 'the opening ceremony passed off very well indeed'.⁶²

Starting 1883 with 79 pupils, by the end of that year there were 109.⁶³ A request for a singing teacher was declined in August.⁶⁴ At the beginning of 1884, the board declined to meet costs incurred in repairs, apart from spending £2 12s repairing the school bell.⁶⁵ In March, it authorized fencing the school site for an estimated cost of £31 10s.⁶⁶ The year had commenced with 103 pupils and ended with 108; 88 joined during the year and 83 left,⁶⁷ which would have increased the difficulties of teaching. Another difficulty for teachers was the 'most irregular' attendance of the pupils and some

⁶² *Te Aroha News*, 7 July 1883, pp. 2-3.

⁶³ *AJHR*, 1884, E-1, p. 47.

⁶⁴ Auckland Education Board, Minutes of Meeting of 17 August 1883, Minute Book 1883-1884, p. 85, YCAF 5491/4a, ANZ-A.

⁶⁵ Auckland Education Board, Minutes of Meeting of 11 January 1884, Minute Book 1883-1884, p. 208, YCAF 5491/4a, ANZ-A.

⁶⁶ Auckland Education Board, Minutes of Meeting of 14 March 1884, Minute Book 1883-1884, p. 282, YCAF 5491/4a, ANZ-A.

⁶⁷ *AJHR*, 1885, E-1, p. 53.

members of the school committee, including the chairman, did not attend their meetings regularly.⁶⁸

Despite these difficulties, in its annual report the committee stated that the head teacher had run the school in an 'excellent manner' and referred to 'the high state of proficiency existing among the pupils. This has been testified to by the inspector'.⁶⁹ When this inspector had examined the pupils at the end of October, he had found the results to be 'on the whole very satisfactory. Most of the work was very creditable', although more attention was needed to spelling, grammar, and drawing. Discipline was 'satisfactory'.⁷⁰ Of almost 70 children presented for examination, 90 per cent had passed. All those in Standards 2, 3, and 4 passed, and only a few in Standard 1 failed. Several of those who had failed lived 'at some distance from school, and being irregular in their attendance, were not quite so well prepared'.⁷¹ He considered the school to be in an 'excellent state of efficiency'.⁷²

Early in 1886, a school library was established, which a year later had 130 books and a small 'museum' in a glass case.⁷³ Because it cost 2d a month to use the library, not much use was made of it, the committee was asked to remove the charge; it declined, both because it was so small but also because 'throwing the library open' would probably mean 'much injury to the books'.⁷⁴ The education board granted £10 towards the library, but at first declined to pay for 'gravel, fender, and other requisites'.⁷⁵ One month later it agreed to contribute to the cost of the gravel, providing £1 12s, but 'Declined to alter previous decision as to request for sundry repairs &c'.⁷⁶

⁶⁸ *Te Aroha News*, 29 November 1884, p. 2.

⁶⁹ *Waikato Times*, 29 January 1885, p. 2.

⁷⁰ Te Aroha Goldfields School, Class Lists for 1885, YCAF 4135/16a, ANZ-A.

⁷¹ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 5 November 1885, p. 2; *Te Aroha News*, 7 November 1885, p. 2.

⁷² Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 9 January 1886, p. 3.

⁷³ *Te Aroha News*, 30 April 1887, p. 2.

⁷⁴ School Committee, *Te Aroha News*, 11 June 1887, p. 2.

⁷⁵ Auckland Education Board, Minutes of Meetings of 21 May 1886, 11 June 1886, Minute Book 1885-1887, pp. 349, 362, YCAF 5491/5a, ANZ-A.

⁷⁶ Auckland Education Board, Minutes of Meetings of 16 July 1886, 6 August 1886, 20 August 1886, pp. 382, 395, 404, YCAF 5491/5a, ANZ-A.

At the beginning of 1887 the number of pupils rose by 20 to 143, and the committee wanted a drill instructor appointed.⁷⁷ In April the inspector considered that the school was 'being carefully conducted, [and] the discipline is excellent'.⁷⁸ In September, the head teacher reported that the school was running smoothly, attendance being 'well kept up'.⁷⁹ At the end of the year, it was noted that, since this man had taken charge, the pass average 'of those presented' had always been over 90 per cent.⁸⁰

By June 1888 there were 144 children on the roll.⁸¹ In his annual report, the inspector stated that the Primer classes 'are well taught; they are making good progress. These results are satisfactory; the weakest classes were standards 4 and 5. Those who passed showed neat and careful work'.⁸² The school was being 'conducted in a satisfactory manner', with both of the teachers showing 'zeal, energy, and diligence', and 'discipline, behaviour, and tone' were all 'good'. Of the pupils presented for examination, one was absent, five were exempted, six failed, and 44 passed.⁸³

The roll increased from 95 in late 1888 to 'over' 180 in the following February.⁸⁴ In May 1889, the inspector 'found everything in a very excellent condition, and the children all being well taught. The Inspector's report was most satisfactory in every way'.⁸⁵ In the following month, the school committee agreed to purchase more books for the library. Five panes of glass in the schoolhouse had been broken and replaced during the past month, and the school needed painting, while the teacher's house required painting and having its window frames refixed. To assist the committee to meet its half of the cost, the head teacher planned to hold 'a school entertainment', a proposal 'accepted with thanks'. A committee member

drew attention to the heavy expense the Committee were put to every year in replacing broken panes of glass in the schoolhouse

⁷⁷ School Committee, *Te Aroha News*, 6 February 1887, p. 2.

⁷⁸ *Te Aroha News*, 23 April 1887, p. 2.

⁷⁹ *Waikato Times*, 13 September 1887, p. 3.

⁸⁰ *Te Aroha News*, 24 December 1887, p. 2.

⁸¹ *Te Aroha News*, 6 June 1888, p. 2.

⁸² School Committee, *Te Aroha News*, 6 February 1889, p. 2.

⁸³ *Te Aroha News*, 1 May 1889, p. 2.

⁸⁴ *Te Aroha News*, 23 February 1889, p. 2, 1 May 1889, p. 2.

⁸⁵ School Committee, *Te Aroha News*, 3 July 1889, p. 2.

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

As 'within a very short space of time' in the previous year £1 10s had been spent replacing windows, the head teacher was asked 'to announce in the school, that in future scholars breaking the windows would be held responsible to have the damage made good'.⁸⁶

In 1891, the inspector noted that drawing was 'not up to the mark' and that arithmetic for the older children was 'weak'.⁸⁷ An extra pupil teacher was appointed in 1892 because of the increased enrolments,⁸⁸ but in October a correspondent complained that, with the transfer of one teacher to Waiorongomai, Te Aroha was 'now left with only four teachers, an assistant, two pupil teachers, and the head teacher, and two of these have charge of 90 children in one room'. The teacher had been removed because the average attendance was 'below 140, which is the minimum average entitling the school to a fifth teacher', but her loss when there were over 180 on the roll meant 'a consequent retarding of the progress of the whole school'.⁸⁹

In May 1892, the outgoing school committee had expressed its 'unqualified satisfaction ... with the very zealous manner in which the teachers have performed their duties'.⁹⁰ After the inspector's annual examination in November it was reported 'that 90 per cent of those presented have passed, which speaks volumes for the persevering work of the teachers, 'especially when the irregular attendance during the wet spring is considered'.⁹¹

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

⁸⁶ School Committee, *Te Aroha News*, 5 June 1889, p. 2.

⁸⁷ Te Aroha School, Class Lists for 1892, YCAF 4135/30a, ANZ-A.

⁸⁸ *AJHR*, 1893, E-1, p. 18; 'Te Aroha', *Auckland Weekly News*, 26 March 1892, p. 23.

⁸⁹ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 22 October 1892, p. 23.

⁹⁰ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 7 May 1892, p. 27.

⁹¹ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 26 November 1892, p. 23.

“That this committee begs respectfully to protest against the 10 per cent reduction in the head teachers’ salaries, and also against the charging of rent for their houses, as the committee believe it will have a direct tendency to discourage the teachers, and to prevent men of ability from entering the service of the Board.” It was shown that the new regulations would seriously affect the income of the Te Aroha teacher, probably to the extent of from 15 to 20 per cent. It is particularly hard and unjust in his case, as the following will show: - The only promotion he has had during 12 or 13 years of service has been from Parawai, Thames, to Te Aroha, the only difference between the two places being the possession of a teacher’s residence at Te Aroha. Now, after 11 years of faithful and very successful work here, rent is to be charged for the house, which made the move promotion. The Board can hardly expect competent men to enter their service if they anticipate treatment like this.⁹²

In September 1895, the committee discussed ‘the necessity for increased school accommodation’, as the roll had risen to 200 (the highest number ever)⁹³ ‘with an upward tendency’. As the schoolrooms were ‘far too small for this number’, during part of the day lessons were being held ‘in one of the porches’. The education board was asked to provide greater space ‘and thus enable the teaching staff to do their work with greater ease and efficiency’.⁹⁴ Although the enlarged accommodation requested was not provided, a new bell was, which ‘should give forth a more certain sound than the old cracked one’.⁹⁵ The *Te Aroha News* complained that the refusal to provide more accommodation meant that as ‘in many cases children have to sit three in a desk’, teaching could not be satisfactory.⁹⁶ Despite this overcrowding, the inspector recorded that, in the Primers, ‘the highest division can read and spell with great ease and freedom from the Infant Readers’ and were making ‘good progress’ in arithmetic. The second division were coping, but ‘the third division consist mostly of beginners who have not as yet made an appreciable progress’.⁹⁷

In June 1897, when 237 pupils were enrolled, the inspector ‘reported favorably on quality of the instruction given, and the general efficiency of

⁹² Te Aroha Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 16 June 1894, p. 10.

⁹³ *Te Aroha News*, 14 September 1895, p. 2.

⁹⁴ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 21 September 1895, p. 23.

⁹⁵ *Te Aroha News*, 5 October 1895, p. 2.

⁹⁶ *Te Aroha News*, 27 November 1895, p. 2.

⁹⁷ Te Aroha Goldfields School, Class Lists for 1895, YCAF 4135/45a, ANZ-A.

the school'.⁹⁸ He gave a more detailed account of the achievements when revisiting in December, starting with Class 5:

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

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

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

Class 4 was not quite so satisfactory, with 'few good exercises' in composition. 'Many show little power of dealing with stories. Punctuation defective'. In geography, there were 'Some good papers About half inferior'. No comments were recorded about the Primers.⁹⁹

Of the 135 children who sat the end of year examinations, 79 per cent passed. 'This percentage would have been larger, but for the disarrangement of the teaching staff caused by the removal of one teacher 'in the middle of the year's work', according to the chairman of the committee. The latter 'complimented' the teaching staff 'on the efficient manner in which the work of teaching and conducting the school had been carried out, and quoted the Inspector's report on the subject, which was highly commendatory'.¹⁰⁰

In June 1897, the education board was asked to erect 'a new fence to enclose the school ground and the teacher's residence, the present fence being dilapidated and unsightly'.¹⁰¹ In that year, when a new school building was opened, it was reported that 'a large playground surrounds the school, which is well sheltered, and there are two covered sheds for wet weather. The classrooms are well fitted up and thoroughly ventilated and have accommodation for 250 children'.¹⁰² In 1936, the head teacher appointed in 1899 'observed that the new school had been looked forward to and hoped for for many many years. In his period of service he had considered the old school the most inconvenient in the Auckland district.

⁹⁸ 'Twinkler', 'Te Aroha Notes', *Thames Advertiser*, 17 June 1897, p. 3.

⁹⁹ Te Aroha Goldfields School, Class Lists for 1897, YCAF 4135/46a, ANZ-A.

¹⁰⁰ *Te Aroha News*, 28 April 1898, p. 3.

¹⁰¹ 'Twinkler', 'Te Aroha Notes', *Thames Advertiser*, 17 June 1897, p. 3.

¹⁰² *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 2, p. 826.

The layout and lighting arrangements were just about the worst possible'.¹⁰³

At the beginning of July 1899, the state of the school was 'only middling', according to the *Te Aroha News*, because the head teacher and a pupil teacher were away through sickness, 'and only 75 scholars were present out of a roll number of over 200' because of a measles and whooping cough epidemic. The two new teachers and the head teacher's wife, an ex-teacher who was filling in, were struggling to cope.¹⁰⁴ In November, the inspector gave a particularly detailed report. The Primers were doing well, but reading in the first Standards revealed 'considerable weakness', for a 'good many read with little or no confidence'. In geography at this level, 'Definitions very fairly known – Pupils have got a poor knowledge of position of places and know little or nothing of meaning of map i.e. way physical features are marked'. Geography for Standards 4 and 5 was 'very poor ... the pupils appear to know little or nothing of the subject. Great confusion too exists as to positions of places. Errors in spelling geographical names are frequent'. In Standard 4, drawing was 'very fair', for 'many are unfinished'. Composition was 'only moderate – very little power or skill shown in sentence formation'. In the grammar class, parsing was 'almost poor', and 'many of the simpler parts of speech' were 'not recognized. Inflections hardly fair'. Reading, however, was satisfactory. Composition in Standard 5 varied from very fair to very satisfactory; 'Use of apostrophe and of inverted commas not thoroughly understood'.¹⁰⁵

During 1900, there were 212 children on the roll, 'with an average attendance of 197'.¹⁰⁶ In August the name was changed from the Te Aroha Goldfields School to the Te Aroha School.¹⁰⁷ Seven years later, it would become a district high school.¹⁰⁸

THE WAIORONGOMAI SCHOOL

At its meeting of 1 December 1882, the education board received an application for a school from Waiorongomai residents. 'Postponed until first

¹⁰³ *Te Aroha News*, 9 September 1936, p. 5.

¹⁰⁴ *Te Aroha News*, n.d., reprinted in *Thames Star*, 7 July 1899, p. 1.

¹⁰⁵ Te Aroha School, Class Lists for 1899, YCAF 4135/52a, ANZ-A.

¹⁰⁶ *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 2, p. 826.

¹⁰⁷ Priest, p. 13.

¹⁰⁸ *Te Aroha News*, 10 February 1948, p. 5.

meeting in April. Committee to be asked for full information'.¹⁰⁹ In April, the request was deferred 'for Inspector's report'.¹¹⁰ At the beginning of June, Thomas Lawless, a Waiorongomai publican,¹¹¹ acting as spokesman for the residents, complained to the school committee about the 'apathetic action' of the board, for more families were settling in the village. A member commented that 'it was really too much that the children should be expected to walk to Te Aroha to attend school'. For the moment, temporary buildings would be acceptable.¹¹² One week later later, when the inspector's report was received, the board agreed to send a teacher and to rent a building from William Wilkinson.¹¹³ (Wilkinson, who had founded the *Thames Advertiser* and would establish the *Te Aroha Mail* in 1882,¹¹⁴ had attended the opening of the Te Aroha goldfield but did not invest in mining there until gold was discovered at Waiorongomai.¹¹⁵ He also acquired both residence and business sites in the Waiorongomai settlement and 128 acres of adjoining farmland.¹¹⁶ In 1883 he moved to Auckland to take charge of

¹⁰⁹ Auckland Education Board, Minutes of Meeting of 1 December 1882, Minute Book 1881-1883, p. 383, YCAF 5491/3a, ANZ-A.

¹¹⁰ Auckland Education Board, Minutes of Meeting of 20 April 1883, Minute Book 1881-1883, p. 465, YCAF 5491/3a, ANZ-A.

¹¹¹ See paper on his life.

¹¹² *Te Aroha News*, 9 June 1883, p. 2.

¹¹³ Auckland Education Board, Minutes of Meeting of 15 June 1883, Minute Book 1883-1884, p. 30, YCAF 5491/4a, ANZ-A.

¹¹⁴ *Auckland Provincial Government Gazette*, 26 July 1871, p. 198; *New Zealand Gazette*, 24 August 1876, p. 601: advertisement, *Waikato Times*, 13 May 1882, p. 3; *Thames Star*, 28 April 1882, p. 2; *Thames Advertiser*, 5 June 1882, p. 3; *New Zealand Herald*, 6 June 1882, p. 2; *Observer*, 4 March 1882, p. 390, 10 June 1882, pp. 198, 204, 26 May 1900, p. 6.

¹¹⁵ *Thames Star*, 25 November 1880, p. 2; Te Aroha Warden's Court, Register of Te Aroha Claims 1880-1888, folios 254, 330, BBAV 11567/1a; Register of Licensed Holdings 1881-1887, folios 64, 84, BBAV 11500/9a, ANZ-A; *Thames Advertiser*, 23 October 1882, p. 2; *New Zealand Gazette*, 31 May 1883, p. 722, 20 September 1883, p. 1345, 4 October 1883, p. 1437.

¹¹⁶ Te Aroha Warden's Court, Register of Applications 1880-1882, folios 191, 203, 261, BBAV 11505/3a; Plaintiff Book 1880-1898, 45/1883, 28/1884, BBAV 11547/1a; Rent Ledger 1881-1900, folios 270, 271, BBAV 11501/1a, ANZ-A; *Thames Advertiser*, 11 May 1882, p. 3.

the *Observer* and, later, to be a printer.¹¹⁷) Wilkinson agreed to rent his building for £25 for 12 months, during which time the school committee was required to make a 'definite recommendation as to site' of a permanent school.¹¹⁸ £10 was granted to provide 'closets', meaning toilets, and other alterations to the building.¹¹⁹ Late in July, the board received a telegram from the committee 'reporting School-room blown down, also letter from proprietor Mr Wm Wilkinson offering to re-erect it if Board will grant £10 towards the cost'; it agreed.¹²⁰ (The repairs would cost almost double this amount, £19 6s 6d.¹²¹) It also met the cost of carting furniture to the school.¹²² During 1883, £43 17s was spent on the site, buildings, furniture, and 'apparatus'.¹²³

This temporary schoolhouse was only 240 square feet, compared with Te Aroha's 1,575.¹²⁴ As this building 'was found inadequate to the requirements of the district ... on the urgent request of the committee the Board, seeing a proper school building was necessary, promptly took the necessary preparatory steps' to replace it.¹²⁵ In August, Samuel Cochrane Macky's offer of two acres was accepted.¹²⁶ (Macky, a prominent legal manager,¹²⁷ had invested in several Waiorongomai claims and

¹¹⁷ *Thames Star*, 9 March 1883, p. 2; *Thames Advertiser*, 26 April 1883, p. 2, 11 April 1895, p. 2; *Observer*, 8 September 1883, p. 15, 23 September 1905, p. 3, 28 May 1910, p. 5; *New Zealand Herald*, 23 September 1921, p. 6.

¹¹⁸ Auckland Education Board, Minutes of Meeting of 29 June 1883, Minute Book 1883-1884, p. 43, YCAF 5491/4a, ANZ-A.

¹¹⁹ Auckland Education Board, Minutes of Meeting of 13 July 1883, Minute Book 1883-1884, p. 56, YCAF 5491/4a, ANZ-A.

¹²⁰ Auckland Education Board, Minutes of Meeting of 27 July 1883, Minute Book 1883-1885, p. 67, YCAF 5491/4a, ANZ-A.

¹²¹ Auckland Education Board, Minutes of Meeting of 17 August 1883, Minute Book 1883-1884, p. 86, YCAF 5491/1a, ANZ-A.

¹²² Auckland Education Board, Minutes of Meeting of 12 October 1883, Minute Book 1883-1884, p. 135, YCAF 5491/4a, ANZ-A.

¹²³ *AJHR*, 1884, E-1, p. 15.

¹²⁴ *AJHR*, 1884, E-1, p. 47.

¹²⁵ *Te Aroha News*, 2 February 1884, p. 7.

¹²⁶ Auckland Education Board, Minutes of Meeting of 17 August 1883, Minute Book 1883-1884, p. 86, YCAF 5491/4a, ANZ-A.

¹²⁷ See *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 2, p. 465; letters from S.C. Macky, *Thames Advertiser*, 20 June 1898, p. 4, 12 July 1898, p. 4, 19 July 1898, p. 4; *New Zealand*

companies,¹²⁸ and had made a substantial profit from acquiring and selling land in and adjacent to the settlement.¹²⁹)

Once the temporary schoolhouse was ‘quickly restored to its proper position, from which it was shifted by the late storm’, it was formally opened on 1 August in the presence of almost 40 children. The committee’s chairman ‘congratulated the inhabitants on obtaining so suitable a building for the purpose’, and ‘impressed upon parents the necessity of sending their children regularly to school and other duties in connection with the training of the young’. Following more speeches, ‘a bountiful supply of good things’ was consumed. ‘After this Mrs [Margaret] Lawless¹³⁰ favoured the company with several choice selections on the pianoforte, kindly lent for the occasion. The meeting then adjourned till 8 o’clock, when about twenty couples and many onlookers were present and they kept up the dancing till midnight’. After congratulating the inhabitants on the success of the first such social gathering at Waiorongomai, the *Te Aroha News* hoped ‘to ere long see a proper schoolhouse erected, suited to the requirements of this rising district. The present number of scholars will at once fill the temporary school, which, with the early influx of population that is certain to take place shortly, will be utterly inadequate to afford sufficient accommodation’.¹³¹

In September 1883, the head teacher told the school committee that people using the schoolroom for dancing ‘had so abused the privilege by upsetting the desks, greasing the floor, and injuring the school property, besides leaving the place in a very dirty state, etc, that he had felt it his duty to refuse them the key’.¹³²

Herald, 3 November 1914, p. 7; N.L. Macky, *Macky Family in New Zealand 1945-1969*, vol. 1 (Auckland, 1969), pp. 40-41.

¹²⁸ For example, Te Aroha Warden’s Court, Register of Licensed Holdings 1881-1887, folios 1, 46, 53, 54, 56, 88, 107, BBAV 11500/9a, ANZ-A; *Thames Star*, 23 February 1882, p. 2; *New Zealand Gazette*, 23 Marcy 1882, p. 490, 5 August 1882, p. 1131, 14 September 1882, p. 1264, 2 November 1882, p. 1616, 14 December 1882, p. 1885.

¹²⁹ *Thames Star*, 27 June 1882, p. 2; *Thames Advertiser*, 4 September 1883, p. 3, 12 November 1883, p. 3, 4 March 1884, p. 2; *Waikato Times*, 16 October 1883, p. 2; *Observer*, 3 November 1883, p. 15; *Te Aroha News*, 17 November 1883, p. 2.

¹³⁰ Wife of Thomas.

¹³¹ *Te Aroha News*, 4 August 1883, p. 2.

¹³² *Te Aroha News*, 8 September 1883, p. 2.

During the school's first six months, 95 pupils were enrolled, with 75 remaining when the year ended.¹³³ The local newspaper considered that the second teacher was a good one: 'The attendance has largely increased, and the children made excellent progress'.¹³⁴ In November, the inspector noted that object lessons were 'fair', as were the laws of health, but there was no singing or needlework, and drawing consisted of 'Elementary Freehand on Slates'. Discipline and drill were 'Fair – No gymnastic apparatus'.¹³⁵

There were 64 pupils enrolled at the start of 1884; 60 joined later in the year, 43 left, and 81 were enrolled at the end of it.¹³⁶ The new schoolroom was opened at the beginning of May.¹³⁷ It was 840 square feet in size, and had cost £504 to erect.¹³⁸ According to one account, the building, 'a very commodious one', was 'in the stereotyped style of school architecture and stands in an excellent situation. It is much required, as the place in which the children are at present taught is miserably small and comfortless'.¹³⁹ For some reason, not until May 1885 was the committee authorized to purchase a bell.¹⁴⁰ In November, 21 of the 31 children examined passed.¹⁴¹ The inspector noted that, in the 'Infant Division', the work done was 'as yet very elementary indeed'. Although they knew their letters, they were 'not yet able to read more than very easy words. Writing needs more attention'. In the 'upper division' of the 'infants', the children were 'able to read words (easy) and have made some progress in Arithmetic'. Their writing was 'good'. There was no singing, drawing, needlework, or elementary science. Discipline and drill were 'Good – Appliances lately received, teacher states little proficiency as yet in Bar Drill'. He considered there had been 'a great improvement in this school

¹³³ *AJHR*, 1884, E-1, p. 47.

¹³⁴ *Te Aroha News*, 22 December 1883, p. 2.

¹³⁵ Waiorongomai School, Class Lists for 1883, YCAF 4135/10a, ANZ-A.

¹³⁶ *AJHR*, 1885, E-1, p. 53.

¹³⁷ *Waikato Times*, 8 May 1884, p. 2.

¹³⁸ *AJHR*, 1885, E-1, p. 53; C.T. Harris, 'The Upper Thames Valley', *Te Aroha News*, 16 September 1936, p. 8.

¹³⁹ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 15 March 1884, p. 2.

¹⁴⁰ Auckland Education Board, Minutes of Meeting of 1 May 1885, Minute Book 1885-1887, p. 94, YCAF 5491/5a, ANZ-A.

¹⁴¹ *Te Aroha News*, 17 January 1885, p. 2.

generally but the results in the higher standards are scarcely satisfactory'.¹⁴²

In response to a petition from residents of Waiorongomai and Quartzville for their own school committee, in December 1884 the education board authorized the division of the existing district between Te Aroha and Waiorongomai.¹⁴³

At the end of 1885, in a generally positive assessment the inspector noted, under 'Discipline and Drill', that the children were 'rather restless – should be stricter'. The results 'on the whole' were very satisfactory, but he repeated that discipline 'should be somewhat stricter'.¹⁴⁴ The pass rate was 89 per cent, up 22 per cent on the previous year.¹⁴⁵

In 1887 the school requested, unsuccessfully, the appointment of a drill instructor, but the committee did agree to floor 'the shed' so that children could eat their lunches in it during bad weather.¹⁴⁶ The roll in April was 85, with an average attendance of 61.¹⁴⁷ Four months later, the roll had fallen to 83, and the average attendance was down to 54.¹⁴⁸ A year later, with 19 new children enrolling during the year, there were 91 pupils.¹⁴⁹ By March 1889, when the roll had reached 99, although the average attendance was only 69, pressure on space was such that the infants were taught in the porch.¹⁵⁰ In July, the committee agreed to plant trees around the grounds. As the teacher had got the boys to cut up the firewood instead of employing someone, as the board had agreed, there was debate about whether they should be paid for this work. Some members considered that 'they ought to be well satisfied to do the work for their own comfort', but the chairman's casting vote ensured that they received 6s.¹⁵¹ The boys continued to cut

¹⁴² Waiorongomai School, Class Lists for 1884, YCAF 4135/13a, ANZ-A.

¹⁴³ Auckland Education Board, Minutes of Meeting of 19 December 1884, Minute Book 1883-1884, p. 484, YCAF 5491/4a, ANZ-A; *Te Aroha News*, 20 December 1884, p. 2.

¹⁴⁴ Waiorongomai School, Class Lists for 1885, YCAF 4135/16a, ANZ-A.

¹⁴⁵ *Te Aroha News*, 7 November 1885, p. 2.

¹⁴⁶ *Te Aroha News*, 6 February 1887, p. 2, 14 May 1887, p. 2.

¹⁴⁷ *Te Aroha News*, 30 April 1887, p. 2.

¹⁴⁸ *Te Aroha News*, 20 August 1887, p. 3.

¹⁴⁹ *Te Aroha News*, 1 August 1888, p. 2.

¹⁵⁰ *Te Aroha News*, 6 March 1889, p. 2.

¹⁵¹ Waiorongomai Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 20 July 1889, p. 22.

firewood each morning.¹⁵² Concern was expressed that children aged under five years might be attending.¹⁵³

In early 1895, the inspector 'singled out this school and grounds as among the neatest and best kept in the district'.¹⁵⁴ After examining the pupils, he noted irregular attendance and 'weakness' in arithmetic and reading, with 'inferior' work in Standard 1 in spelling and arithmetic. In the Primers, the children had 'made very little progress. Very few are able to do more than read and spell words of three letters. They can count and add from the ball frame, but they have very little knowledge of tables'.¹⁵⁵ In April 1898, the committee's chairman informed householders that the inspectors' reports for the 12 months to that date 'were considered satisfactory':

The school and all the outbuildings were painted by the Board of Education, and the Committee put a new boarded floor in the shelter shed, repaired woodshed, window blinds, doors, fences and footpaths. The Committee exerted themselves in obtaining a teacher's residence, with the result that the Board of Education has let a contract for the building of a very neat and substantial cottage. The site for this residence was made a present of to the Board by Mr Martin Murphy.¹⁵⁶

(Murphy, the Waiorongomai publican,¹⁵⁷ was a member of the committee.¹⁵⁸) The teacher's house cost £258.¹⁵⁹ 'A fine library' had been created, the board providing £10 to purchase books and another £12 4s for this purpose being obtained 'partly from the receipts of a school concert, and partly from school hire and from donations by some friends'. £1 5s had been spent buying books 'as prizes for a series of essay competitions'. The footpath to the school, which had been 'in a bad state of repair last winter', had been 'regravelled and otherwise fixed'. The report ended by

¹⁵² *Te Aroha News*, 13 July 1889, p. 2.

¹⁵³ Waiorongomai Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 20 July 1889, p. 22.

¹⁵⁴ Waiorongomai Correspondent, *Te Aroha News*, 16 February 1895, p. 2.

¹⁵⁵ Waiorongomai School, Class Lists for 1895, YCAF 4135/45a, ANZ-A.

¹⁵⁶ *Te Aroha News*, 28 April 1898, p. 3.

¹⁵⁷ See section on publicans in paper on the drink problem in the Te Aroha district.

¹⁵⁸ *Te Aroha News*, 28 April 1898, p. 3; *Auckland Weekly News*, 5 May 1899, p. 36.

¹⁵⁹ C.T. Harris, 'The Upper Thames Valley', *Te Aroha News*, 16 September 1936, p. 8.

acknowledging the ‘generous treatment’ the committee had ‘always received’ from the education board.¹⁶⁰

In November 1898, the inspector recorded that the Primers could ‘read well spell very fair’, had ‘a fair knowledge’ of addition, tables, ‘notation & numeration’, and wrote satisfactorily.¹⁶¹ He made a more detailed report of the pupils’ levels of achievement when he visited in November 1899. In Standard 3, reading was ‘fair’; ‘one or two read well – others hurry over words & read without either fluency or expression’. Writing was fair, but drawing was ‘untidy’, with ‘too much rubbing out’. Similar comments were made about drawing in Standards 4 and 5; in the former it was ‘at most fair’, although ‘some’ achieved a satisfactory level. In science, pupils ‘know names of organs and generally speaking the terminology of the subject – but have only a meagre knowledge of the reasons wh[ich] lie at the bottom of the facts they have learnt’.¹⁶²

Because of its steadily falling roll, the school would close in 1927.¹⁶³

RAISING MONEY FOR SCHOOL NEEDS

In 1936, Peter Gilchrist, a prominent local lawyer and an ex-chairman of the school committee,¹⁶⁴ addressed a ceremony celebrating the opening of new school buildings. He noted that, when he had served on the committee in 1894, ‘the annual allocation had been £20, and as £18 of this was necessary for the ordinary cleaning expenses and upkeep, there was a very small margin left to work on’.¹⁶⁵ Accordingly, it was necessary for both parents and residents to raise additional funds, usually by involving the pupils in an entertainment. For example, in December 1883 one of these was held in Te Aroha to raise funds for the annual school picnic.¹⁶⁶ In the following August, a concert and dance was held in the Waiorongomai schoolhouse ‘for purpose of Clearing School Ground and Erecting Swings,

¹⁶⁰ *Te Aroha News*, 28 April 1898, p. 3.

¹⁶¹ Waiorongomai School, Class Lists for 1898, YCAF 4135/49a, ANZ-A.

¹⁶² Waiorongomai School, Class Lists for 1899, YCAF 4135/42a, ANZ-A.

¹⁶³ *AJHR*, 1928, E-2, p. 26.

¹⁶⁴ See *Matamata Record*, 15 March 1937, p. 5; *Waikato Times*, 12 February 1948, p. 6; *Hauraki Plains Gazette*, 25 February 1948, p. 5.

¹⁶⁵ *Te Aroha News*, 9 September 1936, p. 5.

¹⁶⁶ *Te Aroha News*, 22 December 1883, p. 2.

etc'.¹⁶⁷ In subsequent years, concerts were held to meet both general needs and the annual treat.¹⁶⁸ As an example of an entertainment provided by Te Aroha pupils, aided by some adults, one held in July 1889 raised 'about £16' to purchase 'scientific apparatus'. Performances included a burlesque on Sleeping Beauty, recitations, tableaux, songs, piano solos and a duet, and a violin solo (encored). 'The whole affair passed off with eclat. The children fulfilled their several parts faultlessly, demonstrating that a vast amount of patient and careful training had been bestowed upon them' by their teachers. As was usual, the evening ended with a dance.¹⁶⁹

Later that year, an entertainment featuring mostly young adult performers, and including teachers, raised funds to repaint the Te Aroha school:

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

PART 1.

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

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

PART 2.

Song, Three Fair Maids of Lee – Misses Hould, V. Pavitt, and E. Wainwright
Tableaux (1), Guardian Angel and Children
Song, Little Buttercup – Miss H. Cocks
Song, Brown eyes or Blue eyes – Miss V. Pavitt
Recitation – Mr E. Mulgan (Katikati)
Tableau, Queen Philippa pleading for citizens of Calais (2 scenes)
Song, Turnham Toll – Miss E. Wainwright
Recitation, I remember – Master Leslie Winstone
Tableau, Janet's choice (6 scenes)

¹⁶⁷ Advertisement, *Te Aroha News*, 16 August 1884, p. 7.

¹⁶⁸ For example, *Te Aroha News*, 9 July 1887, p. 2, 17 December 1887, p. 3.

¹⁶⁹ *Te Aroha News*, 6 July 1889, p. 2.

Song, Sparrows are Calling – Miss E. Hirst
 Song (in character), Molly Malone – Miss Mary Lavery
 Burlesque – Decapitation Extraordinary (Characters: Miss Hould,
 Messrs Simmonds and Johnson).
 God Save the Queen

One performer was picked out for a special mention: ‘Master Winstone, for a lad of only eight or nine years of age, acquitted himself remarkably well’ in his recitation.

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

As usual, the evening concluded with a dance.¹⁷⁰

In the following year the *Observer* Man considered that Mrs Marsdon, a Te Aroha teacher, deserved ‘great credit for the way in which she taught those school children to go through the “Japanese Fan” at the concert; she must have a vast amount of patience’.¹⁷¹ In 1892 the teachers took ‘advantage of the large number of visitors’ at Te Aroha ‘by giving an entertainment in aid of the school funds’.¹⁷² This was ‘an immense success’, with the items ‘well given and warmly received. So many failed to get into the hall on Monday that the teachers and helpers decided to repeat the concert on Friday. Another crowded house was the result, and a good round sum has been added to the school committee’s exhausted coffers’.¹⁷³

In December 1893 there was a good attendance, including some people from Te Aroha, at the Waiorongomai concert ‘in aid of the prize fund’.¹⁷⁴ During 1897, two entertainment organized by Te Aroha’s head teacher raised ‘about £20’, which was ‘devoted to procuring additional school furniture and fittings’.¹⁷⁵ £3 15s 6d of the surplus money left over from the

¹⁷⁰ *Te Aroha News*, 2 October 1889, p. 2.

¹⁷¹ ‘Te Aroha’, *Observer*, 6 September 1890, p. 18.

¹⁷² Te Aroha Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 19 March 1892, p. 22.

¹⁷³ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 26 March 1892, p. 23.

¹⁷⁴ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 23 December 1893, p. 22.

¹⁷⁵ *Te Aroha News*, 28 April 1898, p. 3.

subsequent New Year's Day picnic was used to buy books for the Te Aroha school library.¹⁷⁶

There were other social events in which pupils participated. At Waiorongomai in 1887, 'parents and friends of the children' subscribed £23 8s for picnics to celebrate the Queen's Diamond Jubilee and 'breaking-up day' at the end of the year.¹⁷⁷ The cost of the annual treats at both schools were met by donations from parents and friends.¹⁷⁸

EXAMPLES OF WHAT WAS TAUGHT IN BOTH SCHOOLS

Ronald McIndoe was born in Auckland in 1891.¹⁷⁹ His father, Thomas, a saddler,¹⁸⁰ was a member of the Te Aroha school committee for many years, being elected its chairman in 1905.¹⁸¹ In his reminiscences, Ronald recalled his first day at school:

I started school at Te Aroha just before my 5th birthday. I was sent in a devil of a hurry after painting my girlfriend with red oxide paint. I can remember being given a "Longmans" Reader to look at the pictures. The one that appealed to me was a chain of monkeys crossing a river in Africa, and I never heard of that happening since. The other picture was of a sailor who went ashore in India with a pack of coloured caps. During a sleep under some trees the monkeys had looted his caps and took to the trees each wearing a cap. "All right," he said, here is one left and threw it into the tree whereupon the monkeys did likewise to him, so he could never sell his caps.¹⁸²

¹⁷⁶ *Te Aroha News*, 1 February 1898, p. 2.

¹⁷⁷ *Te Aroha News*, 28 April 1898, p. 3.

¹⁷⁸ For example, *Te Aroha News*, 2 January 1889, p. 2.

¹⁷⁹ Birth Certificate of Ronald McIndoe, 1891/3768; Marriage Certificate of Ronald McIndoe, 1 March 1916, 1916/3267, BDM.

¹⁸⁰ See Te Aroha Correspondent, *New Zealand Herald*, 24 October 1895, p. 3; *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 2, p. 831; advertisement, *Te Aroha News*, 6 August 1903, p. 1; *New Zealand Herald*, 12 October 1942, p. 2.

¹⁸¹ *Auckland Weekly News*, 7 May 1892, p. 27, 26 April 1901, p. 37, 8 May 1902, p. 41, 30 April 1903, p. 28, 4 May 1905, p. 20, 3 May 1906, p. 21; *Te Aroha News*, 21 September 1905, p. 2; Priest, p. 8.

¹⁸² Ronald McIndoe, Typescript Reminiscences, n.d., p. 4, MS-Papers 3896, Alexander Turnbull Library.

This was all he recorded about his schooling, apart from the comment that he was a good pupil, 'always head of my class. Not much competition',¹⁸³ implying a modest level of ability of the other children.

Little detail of what was taught has survived, but in 1895 the Horticultural Society's Spring Show for the first time included an exhibition of schoolwork, which illustrated what was taught and what children were encouraged to collect in their spare time. 'The hall looked exceedingly pretty, on the right a long table contained the schoolwork, maps, drawing, penmanship, etc. The centre table, which was a wide one, was made brilliant with an excellent display of ferns, flowers, etc, on the left was a table containing the fancy work [handcrafts], and collections'. Prizes were awarded for art, penmanship, and collections of 'New Zealand woods'. 'The works of art were especially good, several of the competitors showing great skill'. They were asked to sketch their school, and one boy's 'end elevation' of it was 'almost perfect, proving the exhibitor to have a taste for mechanical drawing'. The subjects for freehand drawing were an arum lily, a kettle, a landscape, and the school; the scale drawing was a plan of the school and the shaded drawing was a horse's head. Only a few exhibited their penmanship, but the entries were good. One girl's 'writing and accounts ... displayed great ability, being clean, neat, and regular', while another's was 'bold and businesslike'. The categories for these topics were a copy of the Ten Commandments, a map of New Zealand, 'Business account receipted', and 'Business accounts receipted by Deputy'. The essays 'were of great merit', particularly in the under-ten-year-old age group. The only category under 'mechanical work' was 'Flax Whips'. There were few needlework entries, 'the girls evidently preferring drawing and penmanship', but 'the few samples were very creditable indeed'. There were collections of flowers, ferns, wood, stamps, and coins, probably made with the teachers' encouragement.¹⁸⁴

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

Te Aroha is situated on the right bank of the Waihou, and at the foot of Bald Spur. The chief feature is the Domain, in which are the Thermal Springs. Te Aroha is well known by tourists, for the great healing effect it has on rheumatics, lumbago, and other

¹⁸³ McIndoe, p. 5.

¹⁸⁴ *Te Aroha News*, 13 November 1895, p. 2.

troublesome diseases. The Domain has an area of about fifty acres, most of which is upon the hill slope. There are eighteen springs in all, seven are baths, two drinking fountains, and nine are not used at present. The waters contain potash, lime, sulphur, soda, phosphorus, silica, more or less. The chief occupation of Te Aroha and surrounding districts is gold mining and farming. If Gold mining pays, it will be a flourishing town. Te Aroha is connected with Auckland and Paeroa with rail, and by steamer from the Thames. It is also connected with Tauranga, by Kati-Kati and Thompson's track. About fifteen miles from here is the Wairere Falls, the highest in the North Island. Tourists generally visit these falls to see the beautiful scenery round about them. Our mountain, the "Mount of Love," is 3120 feet. The scenery round about the trig is very picturesque, on a bright clear day you can see White Island, throwing out volumes of smoke, also the Estuary of River Thames. Te Aroha has not a very mild climate because of its nearness to the mountain, as it is subject to heavy gales and rain.¹⁸⁵

In 1912, a 14-year-old boy criticized the way Te Aroha children were taught to read poetry aloud: they 'read very badly'.¹⁸⁶

Schoolchildren were taught a variety of sports. By 1898, they were being given weekly swimming lessons at the domain's swimming pool.¹⁸⁷ They were also taught practical skills, such as, in the early twentieth century, gardening.¹⁸⁸ At Waiorongomai, for instance, 12 plots were cultivated in the school garden, seven of which were entered in a competition; girls were more interested in this activity than boys. The children had 'built a little bush-house upon the model of that to be seen in the Te Aroha Domain. This is well stocked with ferns brought from the neighbouring bush'.¹⁸⁹

Patriotism was extolled. When Queen Victoria's Jubilee Celebrations were held in June 1887, despite the rain the children along with their teachers marched from the schoolhouse to the domain. As part of the festivities, a maypole dance, held indoors because of the weather, 'was gone through several times by about forty little girls.... The children were all

¹⁸⁵ Bertha Wild, 'Composition on Te Aroha', *Te Aroha News*, 16 November 1895, p. 2.

¹⁸⁶ *Burrator Weekly News*, 24 August 1912, printed in Ted Axford, *A Childhood in Te Aroha, 1907-1913* (Wellington, 1992), p. 58.

¹⁸⁷ *Te Aroha News*, 20 March 1895, p. 2.

¹⁸⁸ For a Waihi example, see *Waihi Daily Telegraph*, 28 November 1906, p. 2.

¹⁸⁹ *Te Aroha News*, 14 December 1909, p. 2.

most gaily attired in costumes specially prepared for the occasion'. After eating 'an abundance of light refreshments', the pupils, accompanied by the local brass band, sang 'God Save the Queen'.¹⁹⁰

The Boer War prompted another outburst of patriotism. In early 1900, when the Premier, Richard Seddon, declared a school holiday to celebrate the surrender of a leading Boer commander, at an assembly the Te Aroha pupils listened to Seddon's cable. 'The children were evidently impressed – more especially with the part of the message that referred to the holiday. A verse of "God Save the Queen" was sung; cheers were given for the soldiers fighting in South Africa, and the British Empire; and the children patriotically went home'.¹⁹¹ At Waiorongomai, 'the teacher called for three hearty cheers for Lord Roberts and the British forces in South Africa. The National Anthem was then sung and the children dispersed for a holiday. A number of girls went home and made flags and then went around the township spreading the news'.¹⁹² Later that year, 'in the presence of a large gathering of parents and friends', a 'ceremony of unfurling the flag' was held at the Waiorongomai school:

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

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

¹⁹⁰ *Te Aroha News*, 25 June 1887, p. 2.

¹⁹¹ *Te Aroha News*, 1 March 1900, p. 2.

¹⁹² Waiorongomai Correspondent, *Te Aroha News*, 1 March 1900, p. 2.

schoolhouse, 'where a liberal supply of tea, coffee, and cake had been provided by the ladies'.¹⁹³

Some things were not taught. At a meeting of the Te Aroha committee in 1885, four of the five members present refused permission for the teacher to use a temperance lesson book.¹⁹⁴ Four years later, after Waiorongomai householders opposed the compulsory teaching of temperance, this topic was dropped.¹⁹⁵ And some things were taught only erratically: in 1895, for instance, a woman was filling 'a long-felt want' by providing singing lessons for both boys and girls.¹⁹⁶

IRREGULAR ATTENDANCE

Irregular attendance was of constant concern to teachers and the school committee. Not only did it inhibit learning, attendance, not enrolment, determined funding and the number of teachers employed. In 1892, when the average attendance at Te Aroha for the third quarter fell below 140, the minimum required for five teachers, a pupil teacher was removed.¹⁹⁷ Three years later, when complaining about low attendance, the local newspaper pointed out that this lowered the teachers' salaries and the financial allocation.¹⁹⁸

The first time attendance became an issue at Te Aroha was in November 1884, when it was 'most irregular'.¹⁹⁹ During that year, when the school was opened 421 times, 14 children attended rarely; five attended less than half that number of times, the two being lowest 120 and 131 times.²⁰⁰ At the school committee's first meeting in 1885, 'the irregularity of the attendance of many pupils and the culpability of some parents in keeping their children altogether away from school' prompted a discussion about enforcing the compulsory clauses of the Act.²⁰¹ A special meeting held shortly afterwards resolved to enforce these clauses. 'The attendance roll

¹⁹³ *New Zealand Herald*, 25 September 1900, p. 5.

¹⁹⁴ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 4 July 1885, p. 3.

¹⁹⁵ *Te Aroha News*, 14 August 1889, p. 2.

¹⁹⁶ *Te Aroha News*, 16 November 1895, p. 2.

¹⁹⁷ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 22 October 1892, p. 23.

¹⁹⁸ *Te Aroha News*, 24 April 1895, p. 2.

¹⁹⁹ *Te Aroha News*, 29 November 1884, p. 2.

²⁰⁰ *Te Aroha News*, 21 February 1885, p. 2.

²⁰¹ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 17 February 1885, p. 2.

showed that many of the children' were absent for much of the time 'and that there were others who do not attend at all'.²⁰² During February that year, out of 114 pupils the average attendance was 90.²⁰³ The newspaper approved enforcing compulsory attendance, 'as the non-attendance of children from some few families has been disgraceful'.²⁰⁴ In July, after another 'grave complaint' by the head teacher 'regarding unsatisfactory attendance of many of the pupils', the committee warned that the compulsory clauses would be 'strictly enforced'.²⁰⁵ The teacher reported that 'fully one-third of the children have been absent nearly half time' in the previous quarter, and named the worse cases.²⁰⁶ One month later, because of enforcement, 'the attendance of certain scholars who had previously constantly absented themselves from school, had improved considerably'.²⁰⁷ In the last six months of this year, although the roll was down by nine, the average attendance was up by ten.²⁰⁸

This problem continued. The Waiorongomai committee, in April 1886, noted that 'the general progress of the school was greatly hindered through the irregular attendance of many scholars', and regretted the 'carelessness' of some parents concerning their children's education.²⁰⁹ During that year, some Te Aroha children, 'whose parents have been repeatedly spoken to and warned to send them to school', still did not attend regularly. 'The number of absences for the past term amount to 4425, being almost twenty-five per cent of the whole'.²¹⁰

In April 1887, of the 85 children enrolled at Waiorongomai an average of 61 were attending.²¹¹ In the following month, the teacher provided a 'list of those who attended irregularly, and asked the assistance of the committee in regard to keeping up a good average'.²¹² In June, at Te Aroha, of 136 on the roll the average attendance was 96.5; however, by September

²⁰² Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 21 February 1885, p. 3.

²⁰³ *Waikato Times*, 12 March 1885, p. 3.

²⁰⁴ *Te Aroha News*, 14 February 1885, p. 2.

²⁰⁵ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 4 July 1885, p. 3.

²⁰⁶ School Committee, *Te Aroha News*, 4 July 1885, p. 2.

²⁰⁷ School Committee, *Te Aroha News*, 8 August 1885, p. 7.

²⁰⁸ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 9 January 1886, p. 3.

²⁰⁹ *Te Aroha News*, 1 May 1886, p. 2.

²¹⁰ *Te Aroha News*, 9 October 1886, p. 2.

²¹¹ *Te Aroha News*, 30 April 1887, p. 2.

²¹² *Te Aroha News*, 14 May 1887, p. 2.

attendance was being 'well kept up'.²¹³ In May the following year, when there were 144 on the roll, the average attendance was 111.7.²¹⁴ The following month, with 137 on the roll, attendance was 107.6. The committee noted that the compulsory clauses only required pupils to attend half the days in each quarter and that there was no inspector to enforce attendance. It resolved to obtain a list of children who were not attending for 30 days of each quarter.²¹⁵ In July, with 143 on the roll, attendance was only 101.7, largely attributable to winter colds. The committee would write to the parents of pupils who had not attended on 30 days and ask for a justification.²¹⁶ This action prompted an immediate improvement.²¹⁷ In November, with 161 on the roll, the average attendance was 134.7. The head teacher reported that, in the fourth week of that month, although the enrolment had increased by two, attendance had decreased by 16.7.

I wish to draw attention to this, as it is what usually happens about this time each year. The idea, with many, seems to be that once the annual examination in standards is over, there is no need for children to attend school, for an indefinite period. This fact appears to have been overlooked, viz, that the work for the next year begins immediately the examination is completed. Owing to the limited staff much of the work in some standards can only be gone over once in the year so that absence at the beginning, or indeed at any portion of the time, must cause some deficiency. On 23rd November, the day the examination concluded, a child made this request: "May I get my books, as I am not coming again till after Christmas?" The statement possesses the merit of candour at any rate. Others are not quite so straightforward but they stay away all the same.²¹⁸

At Waiorongomai, during 1888, out of an average enrolment of about 72 on one occasion only 41 were absent.²¹⁹ Just one pupil was 'entitled to the Board's certificate for good attendance', the head teacher reported.²²⁰ At

²¹³ School Committee, *Te Aroha News*, 11 June 1887, p. 2; *Waikato Times*, 13 September 1887, p. 3.

²¹⁴ *Te Aroha News*, 6 June 1888, p. 2.

²¹⁵ *Te Aroha News*, 4 July 1888, p. 2.

²¹⁶ School Committee, *Te Aroha News*, 8 August 1888, p. 2.

²¹⁷ School Committee, *Te Aroha News*, 8 September 1888, p. 7.

²¹⁸ School Committee, *Te Aroha News*, 8 December 1888, p. 2.

²¹⁹ *Waikato Times*, 10 January 1889, p. 2.

²²⁰ Waiorongomai School Committee, *Te Aroha News*, 9 January 1889, p. 2.

the last committee meeting of the year, 'much dissatisfaction was expressed in the apathy shown by parents' about attendance. 'We understand that a falling-off commenced immediately after the examination, and the number attending is still diminishing'. As on the previous Friday only 53 of the 94 pupils had attended, the committee decided to act.²²¹ Whatever action was taken had only a minimal effect, for the following February, when the roll was 99, the average attendance was only 69.1.²²² The following month, with a roll of 100, the average was 70.4.²²³ In June, with 98 enrolled, the average was 62.9.²²⁴ During July, when the roll had risen to 103, the head teacher reported an average attendance of 67.

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

Nevertheless, if attendance did not improve, 'something certainly would have to be done'.²²⁵

At Te Aroha, during February 1889 there were 182 enrolled but attendance was 143.7; the highest attendance, on just one day, was 164.²²⁶ With 163 enrolled in September, the average attendance was 121.6.²²⁷ At the last committee meeting of the year,

some conversation took place with respect to the irregular attendance of some of the children, and the best way to deal with some who had apparently determined to please themselves with respect to attending school, in spite of various admonitions and

²²¹ Waiorongomai School Committee, *Te Aroha News*, 4 December 1888, p. 2.

²²² *Te Aroha News*, 6 March 1889, p. 2.

²²³ *Te Aroha News*, 6 April 1889, p. 2.

²²⁴ *Te Aroha News*, 13 July 1889, p. 2.

²²⁵ *Te Aroha News*, 14 August 1889, p. 2.

²²⁶ *Te Aroha News*, 9 March 1889, p. 2.

²²⁷ *Te Aroha News*, 12 October 1889, p. 2.

warnings; but the holidays being so near at hand, it was decided to take no decided action until the new year.²²⁸

Despite incomplete records, clearly the same problem continued throughout the 1890s. In May 1892, after noting that, although there were 175 on the roll, the average attendance was 137.9, the Te Aroha committee 'regretted that the average was so low' and hoped parents would 'take every advantage of the educational advantages so liberally provided'.²²⁹ In October, a correspondent complained that, with attendance at Te Aroha for the third quarter falling below 140, the required number for a fifth teacher, one teacher had been removed from the school.

The number at present on the roll is over 180, which leaves a good margin over the required number. The absence of so many (an average of 40) has been caused partly by the very wet winter and early spring, but mainly because of the indifference of so many of the parents to the regular attendance of their children, an indifference which has now resulted in the reduction of the teaching staff and a consequent retarding of the progress of the whole school. It is sincerely hoped that the putting into operation of the compulsory clause of the Act, and the finer weather we are having, will soon increase the attendance, and enable the committee to apply for another teacher.²³⁰

At the committee's meeting held in that month it was decided to enforce compulsory attendance. A correspondent commented on the 'strange fact that so many of the parents are indifferent about the regular attendance of their children at the school, and the remarkable part of it is that some of these parents are in a better position to send their children than those are whose children²³¹ attend most regularly'.²³²

Yet again, in April 1895, at Te Aroha attendance was low.²³³ At the beginning of November, the local newspaper reminded parents and guardians of the 'urgent necessity of sending their children to school more

²²⁸ School Committee, *Te Aroha News*, 4 December 1889, p. 2.

²²⁹ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 7 May 1892, p. 27.

²³⁰ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 22 October 1892, p. 23.

²³¹ 'Parents' according to the *Thames Advertiser*.

²³² Te Aroha Correspondent, *Thames Advertiser*, 7 October 1892, p. 2, and *Auckland Weekly News*, 8 October 1892, p. 23.

²³³ *Te Aroha News*, 24 April 1895, p. 2.

regularly than they have been doing' because the annual examinations were nigh.²³⁴ By contrast, at Waiorongomai in mid-year attendance was the largest for a 'long time'.²³⁵ In August, attendance certificates, 'very tasteful in design and excellent in execution', were distributed on Arbor Day. 'The action of the Committee in providing these certificates was fully justified by results, the average attendance for the past month being 61.5 out of 89 on the roll or nearly 90 per cent'.²³⁶ At the end of 1897,

a fine lot of useful books, to the value of £8, was awarded to the pupils for regular attendance; those who had attended the full number of days getting first choice, and the others in rotation as to the number of attendances recorded. These awards were highly appreciated by the children, and by their parents also, and undoubtedly have a good effect as regards the children's attendance.²³⁷

Despite these efforts, as some Waiorongomai boys had failed to attend regularly their parents were to be contacted yet again.²³⁸

In March 1897, some *Te Aroha* parents continued to keep their children away from school without reasonable excuse. Although 239 were enrolled, the average attendance was only 155; the 75 pupils absent on most days were equivalent to the total enrolment at Waiorongomai.²³⁹ The local policeman was asked to investigate persistent absentees.²⁴⁰ In the following year, some regular truants continued to concern the committee: one-fifth of the pupils were absent every day.²⁴¹

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

²³⁴ *Te Aroha News*, 2 November 1895, p. 2.

²³⁵ *Te Aroha News*, 10 July 1895, p. 2.

²³⁶ *Te Aroha News*, 10 August 1895, p. 2.

²³⁷ *Te Aroha News*, 28 April 1898, p. 3.

²³⁸ Waiorongomai School Committee, *Te Aroha News*, 10 May 1898, p. 2.

²³⁹ *Waikato Argus*, 27 March 1897, p. 2.

²⁴⁰ *Waikato Argus*, 13 May 1897, p. 2.

²⁴¹ *Te Aroha News*, 22 March 1898, p. 2, 28 April 1898, p. 3.

average attendance was only 173, meaning 50 pupils were ‘continually absent’.

In a comparatively small and compact community like Te Aroha there ought not to be such a difference between the nominal strength and the actual attendance, indeed such a state of matters is a reflection both on some of the parents, and the committee. When we consider the trivial pretexts, and frivolous excuses made by parents for keeping their children away from school, we can hardly avoid arriving at the conclusion that the committee are seriously neglecting their duty in not instituting proceedings against the habitual offenders. Absenteeism to the extent we have indicated is objectionable all round. It is a grave injustice to the children themselves; it is a hindrance to the general progress of the school, it lowers the average and so prevents the Committee from handling that amount of capitation money necessary to the proper conservation of school property, and it is unfair to those parents who are endeavouring to do their duty in the matter of securing the regular attendance of their children. We hope the new committee will deal with this matter more vigorously than their predecessors have done, as we feel certain that a few (and only a few) prosecutions under the compulsory clauses of the Education Act would have the desired effect, and drive home to some heads of families the much-needed lesson that they cannot ignore the warnings they have received, with impunity.²⁴²

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

James Mills,²⁴³ in a brief speech, drew attention to that part of the report dealing with the attendance, and expressing the opinion that some action should be taken to compel parents to send their children to school more regularly. This absenteeism was injurious in many respects, it was an injustice to the children themselves; it hindered the progress of more advanced and regular attendants, and it deprived the school of a proper staff of teachers.... He thought the Committee were quite justified in taking proceedings against the more prominent offenders. He hoped the Committee would take their cue from this, and act accordingly.

²⁴² Editorial, *Te Aroha News*, 19 April 1898, p. 2.

²⁴³ See paper on his life.

These remarks met with the evident approval of most of those present, and there seems little doubt that some action will be taken.²⁴⁴

Despite all these fulminations, absenteeism continued to be a problem. Another editorial, in February 1900, disapproved of the low attendance, as those missing school would get behind in their work and never catch up.²⁴⁵ As the *Te Aroha* headmaster noted in February 1901, 'Give the children a day and their parents think they need two, give them six weeks and they take nine. Some children are weeks in arrears with their work; an unsatisfactory state of affairs'.²⁴⁶ Shortly afterwards, when the truant officer issued notices, some 'heads of families ... resented his interference, stating that as long as they comply with the Act their actions cannot be interfered with'.²⁴⁷ Presumably as a result of the truant officer's actions, in July 'the average attendance continued good'.²⁴⁸ In the following July, most of the five parents taken to court 'pleaded guilty, and were fined the minimum amount'.²⁴⁹ In 1905, the committee chairman noted that some parents 'only send their children often enough to come within the prescribed limit'.²⁵⁰ In the following year, several Waiorongomai parents were fined because of the irregular attendance of their children.²⁵¹ In 1907, the truant officer visited and charged parents who had not sent their children the minimum number of times; one of those fined was the chairman of the Waiorongomai committee.²⁵²

Some absences could be explained by ill health, but other absences indicated a lack of parental concern, even by some skilled workers and professionals, for their children's educational needs. For instance, Thomas Wright Hector, a doctor's son whose grandmother was an 'Honourable', was

²⁴⁴ *Te Aroha News*, 28 April 1898, p. 3.

²⁴⁵ Editorial, *Te Aroha News*, 24 February 1900, p. 2.

²⁴⁶ Priest, p. 14.

²⁴⁷ *Thames Star*, 15 April 1901, p. 4.

²⁴⁸ *Auckland Weekly News*, 19 July 1901, p. 31.

²⁴⁹ *Te Aroha Correspondent*, *Auckland Weekly News*, 24 July 1902, p. 32.

²⁵⁰ *Te Aroha News*, 21 September 1905, p. 2.

²⁵¹ *Thames Star*, 18 July 1906, p. 4.

²⁵² *Te Aroha News*, 4 May 1907, p. 2, Magistrate's Court, 1 June 1907, p. 2.

the first chemist at Te Aroha.²⁵³ In 1884, their son attended 360 times out of 421, and in the following year attended only 18 times out of 80 in the first quarter and 90 out of 112 in the second.²⁵⁴ Perhaps both Hector and his wife being drunkards may be relevant.²⁵⁵ Joshua Cuff, a barrister and solicitor,²⁵⁶ in 1884 was chairman of the Te Aroha committee, although he failed to attend four consecutive meetings.²⁵⁷ His son attended only 203 times out of a possible 421 during that year, and a daughter only 131.²⁵⁸ Another example was Francis William Lipsey, nephew of George, who printed the *Te Aroha News* for nearly 20 years and was praised for his efficiency.²⁵⁹ For failing to send one child to school, he was fined 4s in 1902; for failing to send two in 1907 he was fined 15s; and in 1912 for failing to send one he was fined 30s.²⁶⁰

Several miners took a casual attitude to their children's attendance. Two children of one, Matthew Quinton,²⁶¹ when aged eight and ten, were recorded as being 'habitual truants' in 1893.²⁶² There was no evidence to indicate that he was a bad father, although in his old age he was charged with being drunk in a Waihi street.²⁶³ Another notable drunk was David Kerr Young,²⁶⁴ an Irish labourer and miner who spent many years at

²⁵³ See letter from T.W. Hector, *Waikato Times*, 21 June 1881, p. 3; *Auckland Weekly News*, 17 January 1907, p. 34.

²⁵⁴ *Te Aroha News*, 21 February 1885, p. 2, 18 April 1885, p. 7, 4 July 1885, p. 2.

²⁵⁵ Magistrate's Court, *Te Aroha News*, 23 July 1883, p. 2, 27 October 1883, p. 2.

²⁵⁶ See Joshua Cuff to Minister of Mines, 12 October 1885, Mines Department, MD 1, 85/1259, ANZ-W; advertisement, *Te Aroha News*, 9 June 1883, p. 1; *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 1 (Wellington, 1897), p. 1281.

²⁵⁷ *Te Aroha News*, 2 February 1884, p. 7, 29 November 1884, p. 2.

²⁵⁸ Te Aroha Goldfields School, Class Lists for 1884, YCAF 4135/13a, ANZ-A.

²⁵⁹ See *Te Aroha News*, 17 February 1898, p. 2, 8 August 1905, p. 2, 16 May 1917, p. 2, 5 April 1924, p. 1, 28 February 1980, p. 5.

²⁶⁰ Te Aroha Magistrate's Court, Criminal Record Book 1896-1907, 25/1902, 30, 31/1907, 53/1912, BCDG 11220/1b, ANZ-A.

²⁶¹ See paper on Billy Nicholl.

²⁶² Te Aroha Goldfields School, Class Lists for 1893, YCAF 4135/37a, ANZ-A.

²⁶³ Waihi Magistrate's Court, Criminal Record Book 1899-1903, 145/1902, BAFV 13710/1a, ANZ-A.

²⁶⁴ Armed Constabulary Force, Return of Charges taken at Te Aroha Lock-Up 1880-1903, 7/1890, 13/1892, in private possession; Te Aroha Magistrate's Court, Criminal Record

Waiorongomai.²⁶⁵ Despite being the son of a doctor and nephew of a physician and surgeon, implying a thoroughly respectable background,²⁶⁶ he seemed not to have considered that his children needed educating. In 1883, when his 12-year-old daughter Mary and his three sons, De Courcey James, aged 11, Daniel, aged ten, and Charles Thomas, aged eight, were enrolled at Waiorongomai, the inspector noted that none had ever been to school, that their subsequent attendance was irregular, and that none of the boys knew the alphabet.²⁶⁷ Possibly this educational deprivation was one reason why the youngest, who would be a prospector at Waiorongomai during the depression of the 1930s,²⁶⁸ surpassed his father as a drunkard.²⁶⁹ He would also be accused of fathering an illegitimate child,²⁷⁰ though this could hardly be blamed on his lack of education. However, one boy, De Courcey, named after his great-uncle,²⁷¹ was able to overcome his father's disinterest in education and to avoid repeating his drinking problem. After working as a battery foreman at the end of the nineteenth century, when he went to the Thames School of Mines and obtained a battery manager's certificate the general manager for whom he had last worked described him as an 'honest sober hard-working man'.²⁷² When he died eight years later, of miner's complaint, aged only 36, he was described as a 'greatly respected'

Book 1881-1896, 34/1890, 22/1892, BCDG 11220/1a; Criminal Record Book 1896-1907, 1/1900, BCDG 11220/1b, ANZ-A.

²⁶⁵ For his mining career in this district, see *Te Aroha News*, 8 August 1885, p. 7, 5 March 1887, p. 2, 12 May 1888, p. 2, 2 June 1888, p. 2, 30 January 1889, p. 2.

²⁶⁶ Death Certificate of David Kerr Young, 14 July 1908, 1908/4816, BDM; Mines Department, MD 1, 87/115, ANZ-W.

²⁶⁷ Waiorongomai School, Class Lists for 1883, YCAF 4135/10a, ANZ-A.

²⁶⁸ See paper on prospectors and investors in the Te Aroha Mining District in the 1930s.

²⁶⁹ Te Aroha Magistrate's Court, Criminal Record Book 1896-1907, 74/1906; Criminal Record Book 1907-1913, 31, 52/1908, entry for 12 March 1909, 16, 54/1909, 70/1910, BCDG 11220/2a; Criminal Record Book 1913-1919, 2, 13, 107/1916, entries for 13 July 1918, 15 November 1918, BCDG 11220/2b; Criminal Record Book 1919-1921, entry for 7 March 1919, BCDG 11220/3a, ANZ-A; *Te Aroha News*, 26 November 1908, p. 2, 16 October 1909, p. 2, 12 November 1910, p. 2, 15 July 1918, p. 2, 9 December 1918, p. 2.

²⁷⁰ Magistrate's Court, *Te Aroha News*, 8 March 1900, p. 2.

²⁷¹ Mines Department, MD 1, 87/115, ANZ-W.

²⁷² Declaration of General Manager, Waitekauri Extended Gold Mining Company, 13 December 1899, Mines Department, MD 1, 99/2019, ANZ-A.

metallurgist who had held 'many responsible positions as Battery Manager, etc'.²⁷³

DISCIPLINE

Corporal punishment was an accepted aspect of school life, and teachers whose use of it was questioned by parents were normally supported unquestioningly. For instance, in 1887 the Waiorongomai committee rejected a complaint by a publican that his son had been wrongly punished.²⁷⁴ Two years later, the Te Aroha committee considered a complaint 'against one of the lady teachers for having too severely caned a little girl'. After 'considerable' discussion, the committee, by five votes to two, reminded the teacher of the regulations. 'No imputation whatsoever against ... the head teacher was implied in this motion, it being the unanimous opinion that a better conducted school does not exist'.²⁷⁵ In 1903, when Barbara Ellen Cornes, wife of Clem,²⁷⁶ charged the head teacher of the Waihou School with assault for unduly punishing her ten-year-old son Harry,²⁷⁷ the *Thames Advertiser* headlined its report: 'Mr Northcroft [the magistrate] Gives Good Advice':

It appears that the boy was annoying some of the girls at the school by throwing dirt at them, and he was suitably caned by Mr [William] Hooper. A good deal of evidence was given, some of it being most laughable, it being difficult at times to preserve order in the Courthouse. The Resident Magistrate gave the verdict in favour of the defendant, and in doing so gave some excellent advice to the plaintiff. He said that it was imperative that discipline should be preserved in the schools, and that parents who acted as the plaintiff had done were making the larrikin of the future. He stated that there was too much maudlin sentiment nowadays about flogging school children. It was this that had brought about the deplorable condition in some of the large cities in Australia and was the cause of the larrikinism in our own colony. If one of his own lads had told him such a lie as Harry Cornes had told his mother, he would himself have given him

²⁷³ Waiorongomai Correspondent, *Te Aroha News*, 3 November 1908, p. 2.

²⁷⁴ Waiorongomai School Committee, *Te Aroha News*, 20 August 1887, p. 3.

²⁷⁵ *Waikato Times*, 10 August 1889, p. 2.

²⁷⁶ See paper on Clement Augustus Cornes.

²⁷⁷ Te Aroha Magistrate's Court, Criminal Record Book 1881-1896, 16/1893, BCDG 11220/1a, ANZ-A.

such a flogging that he would not have been able to sit down for a fortnight. He was of opinion that boys should be taught and made to respect girls, and any boy who was rude to a girl deserved to be flogged. Discipline must be maintained in our schools, or otherwise larrikinism would be the inevitable result.²⁷⁸

Not all parents were convinced by such arguments, and in 1904, for instance, a series of anonymous letters, now lost, were published in the local newspaper complaining of ‘pedagogic brutality’.²⁷⁹ For children, caning was an accepted, if disliked, part of school life. One former Te Aroha schoolboy recalled the older boys singing, about their head teacher,

Here we suffer grief and pain
Under old Cockey Marsdon’s cane.²⁸⁰

ARBOR DAY

Arbor Day had moral and social purposes in addition to planting trees. When the first day was held in 1892, the Te Aroha pupils ‘were marched from the schoolhouse and placed in order where the first tree was to be planted’. James Mills, chairman of the school committee, then addressed them:

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

After contrasting education when he was young with the present, he hoped that Arbor Day would maintain ‘our glorious climate’. After his speech, the ‘elder scholars’ planted the trees, under supervision.²⁸¹

As celebrated at Waiorongomai on a Wednesday in 1895, this day was more of a sports day. ‘The business of the day was first disposed of, the

²⁷⁸ *Thames Advertiser*, 28 July 1893, p. 2.

²⁷⁹ *Observer*, 23 April 1904, p. 16.

²⁸⁰ Recollections of J.E. Wild, *Te Aroha News*, 9 September 1936, p. 5.

²⁸¹ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 13 August 1892, p. 37.

children planting barberry plants for a hedge inside the fence on the school front. They then sat down to enjoy the cake, sandwiches, etc, which had been prepared', and oranges were distributed later.

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

The parents had subscribed £6 5s, sufficient both for 'the substantial refreshments' and the prize money. 'The races were followed by an interesting ceremony in the distribution by the Chairman, of the attendance certificates for the June quarter'. Afterwards, 'an enjoyable dance in the schoolhouse wound up a highly successful day'.²⁸²

SPECIAL TREATS

Annual 'treats' had become a tradition by the late 1880s. In December 1887, the Te Aroha pupils put on a concert 'to defray expense of Annual School Treat'.²⁸³ Two years later, another one was held on New Year's Day in George Lipsey's 'paddock'.²⁸⁴ The most elaborate details of the Te Aroha school's annual treat to have survived are those for the one held on New Year's Day of 1890 on a Te Aroha West farm:

The place itself, when reached, is very suitable, the ground being nicely level, well grassed, with plenty of shelter trees all round, etc, but being some miles out of Te Aroha, some of the parents and those in charge of little children, who were unable to get away by the punt in the morning, complained of having to walk and carry the little ones, pay for a conveyance, or remain at home, owing to the distance. All who left at the appointed time in the morning were conveyed free of charge, and all who liked to leave at the general time of re-embarking were also brought back free of charge; a most capacious punt, towed by steam launch ... having been charged for the occasion by the Committee of management. The assembly was at the schoolhouse at 9.30 a.m.

²⁸² *Te Aroha News*, 10 August 1895, p. 2.

²⁸³ *Te Aroha News*, 17 December 1887, p. 3.

²⁸⁴ *Te Aroha News*, 2 January 1889, p. 2.

From thence all marched down through the main street in procession with banners, flags flying, etc, as far as the Bank corner and back to Bridge-street Landing, headed by the Te Aroha Brass Band. All quickly embarked.... The trip upriver was a very enjoyable one, occupying about half-an-hour, the Band playing a number of selections, and throughout the day the Band added greatly to the enjoyment of the "outing" by most good naturedly remaining on the ground and playing at intervals, and also during the return trip. On arriving on the ground, the first concern of course was a hearty luncheon for everybody. Good things in great abundance had been provided, with tea, lemonade, etc, galore; and were available to all comers at all hours throughout the day. The sports commenced about 1 p.m., and continued throughout the afternoon, close on thirty events being decided. The prizes consisted principally of books specially purchased for the occasion; many of them being very attractive volumes.

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

A Shaftesbury farmer brought the pupils from that district along with him, 'together with a plentiful supply of gooseberries, etc. At one time between 300 and 400 persons must have been present. Tea was served round at 5 p.m.', after which the Methodist minister 'distributed the prizes to the successful contestants. Te Aroha was again reached shortly before seven o'clock, and all dispersed to their homes, after spending a most enjoyable day, which was however slightly marred by some heavy showers'. The newspaper published a full list of the winners of all the 28 events, as this would 'have special interest for our young friends'. There were 'flat' races for boys and girls in several age groups, the older children running longer distances, in addition to blindfold, three-legged, sack, skipping, obstacle, hurdle, hopping, all fours, and coupled races. There were also high and long jumps.²⁸⁵

In the following year, the Te Aroha treat was held indoors because of rain, races being held on the following day.²⁸⁶ In 1895, Waiorongomai had 'the most successful' school picnic 'for many years'. The public subscribed £13 0s 6d, out of which '£5 1s 6d was expended on prizes. Various games were indulged in, the programme of sports being a lengthy one, embracing

²⁸⁵ *Te Aroha News*, 4 January 1890, p. 2.

²⁸⁶ 'Te Aroha', *Observer*, 10 January 1891, p. 11.

as it did some 23 events'.²⁸⁷ The annual picnic remained an institution until the early 1930s,²⁸⁸ although in January 1900 a columnist wrote that 'Many would like to know why the children were deprived of their annual picnic'.²⁸⁹

In 1888, the break-up for the Easter holidays was celebrated by an entertainment arranged by several Te Aroha women, who arranged the sports and distributed fruit and sweets.²⁹⁰

Excursions were held, erratically. In April 1898, it was noted that for the past two summers the local schools had not had an excursion.²⁹¹ Two years later, 465 pupils and adults were taken on a very successful excursion to Rotorua.²⁹² A 'young lady' who had 'just entered her 14th year' had her letter enthusiastically describing the experience published in the newspaper.²⁹³

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

In July 1883 permission was granted to use the Waiorongomai schoolhouse for a Sunday School.²⁹⁴ The following month, the Wesleyan minister, George Thomas Marshall,²⁹⁵ asked for the use of the Te Aroha schoolhouse 'for one hour during the week after school hours to impart religious instruction to any children sent to him by parents. After a warm discussion the request was refused'.²⁹⁶ This decision, by four votes to two, prompted the *Te Aroha News* to 'very much' doubt whether it was in accordance with the spirit of the Education Act, for this was the first time such a request had been refused.²⁹⁷ Marshall's letter protesting at the

²⁸⁷ Waiorongomai Correspondent, *Te Aroha News*, 29 December 1895, p. 2.

²⁸⁸ Priest, p. 31.

²⁸⁹ 'Night Whisperings by the "Owl"', *Te Aroha News*, 9 January 1900, p. 2.

²⁹⁰ *Te Aroha News*, 31 March 1888, p. 2.

²⁹¹ *Te Aroha News*, 7 April 1898, p. 2.

²⁹² *Te Aroha News*, 24 February 1900, p. 2.

²⁹³ Alvina Crombie, 'School Excursion to Rotorua', *Te Aroha News*, 3 March 1900, p. 3.

²⁹⁴ *Te Aroha News*, 7 July 1883, p. 2.

²⁹⁵ Marriage Certificate of George Thomas Marshall, 1887/2371, BDM; *New Zealand Herald*, 17 February 1937, p. 1, 3 August 1938, p. 17.

²⁹⁶ *Waikato Times*, 14 August 1883, p. 2.

²⁹⁷ *Te Aroha News*, 11 August 1883, p. 2.

decision, which the newspaper was 'very glad' to insert,²⁹⁸ cited one member arguing that his request was 'the thin-edge of the wedge'. Marshall considered it 'extraordinary that the Committee should think' his request would 'interfere with secular education' and argued that it was acting 'contrary to the general opinion of the country'.²⁹⁹ He appealed to the education board, which resolved that the committee was free 'to grant or refuse any application'; a rider that the board disapproved of the decision was defeated.³⁰⁰

The board's decision created 'some little hubbub even in Auckland'.³⁰¹ A *New Zealand Herald* editorial suggested that there might 'be something in the demeanour of the clergyman, or in his relations with the committee, or in personal objections which they may have to himself, qualifying the nature of this refusal'. The board's support for the committee was unsurprising considering its 'present reign of foolishness, and whimsicalities', and stressed that the Act gave unqualified approval for religious education held after school hours.³⁰² The *Te Aroha News* approvingly quoted long extracts from this 'powerful and well written article'.³⁰³ The *Te Aroha Observer* Man more succinctly noted that 'the Heathens have had the best of it at the School Committee meeting, and the little olive branches are to remain in heathen darkness'.³⁰⁴

The committee's decision prompted considerable local concern. In early October, a 'reconstructed' committee, on which only three of the former members remained,³⁰⁵ voted, by three votes to two, to rescind the earlier decision, and resolved, by the same number of votes, that Bible study would be permitted at Waiorongomai. Those voting to rescind were two Wesleyans and a Presbyterian; those who voted to uphold the original resolution were a Catholic (Thomas Lawless) and a Wesleyan, both of whom considered a school was not the correct place for religious instruction.³⁰⁶ The previous

²⁹⁸ Editorial Note, *Te Aroha News*, 11 August 1883, p. 2.

²⁹⁹ Letter from G.T. Marshall, *Te Aroha News*, 11 August 1883, p. 2.

³⁰⁰ Board of Education, *New Zealand Herald*, 18 August 1883, p. 6; *Te Aroha News*, 25 August 1883, p. 2.

³⁰¹ *Te Aroha News*, 25 August 1883, p. 2.

³⁰² Editorial, *New Zealand Herald*, 20 August 1883, p. 4.

³⁰³ *Te Aroha News*, 25 August 1883, p. 2.

³⁰⁴ 'Te Aroha', *Observer*, 15 September 1883, p. 15.

³⁰⁵ *Te Aroha News*, 11 August 1883, p. 2, 6 October 1883, p. 2, 20 October 1883, p. 2.

³⁰⁶ *Te Aroha News*, 6 October 1883, p. 2.

committee had contained two Anglicans, two Wesleyans, a Presbyterian, and a Catholic, whose votes were not recorded.³⁰⁷ On 12 October the education board referred the committee 'to provisions of Act as to disqualification of members of Committee',³⁰⁸ and later that month it was 'reconstructed'.³⁰⁹

Once the decision was reversed and children whose parents so wished could now attend Bible study in Te Aroha every alternate Tuesday afternoon, the *Observer* tried to take the credit. 'This decision was severely condemned at the time by our Te Aroha correspondent, and we are glad to see that his remarks have been productive of good'. Before the second vote, Lawless 'took occasion to pass some strictures on the OBSERVER for its condemnation of the dog-in-the-manger policy', but as the second decision 'practically endorses every word we said, and justifies the views we expressed, there is no necessity to say more on the subject'.³¹⁰ (In the almost-complete copies of this journal to survive, neither the condemnation by the correspondent – apart from the brief quote cited above – nor any 'strictures' by the editor were published.) An Auckland columnist reproved the committee for its original decision:

The notorious case of the Te Aroha School Committee has satisfactorily ended, that body having voluntarily repaired the outrage it had done to the education system of the colony. In refusing to allow the use of the schoolroom after school hours for the purposes of religious instruction, the committee adopted a course in direct defiance of the law, and in reversing the former decision and sanctioning the use of the buildings for religious purposes, they have put themselves in sympathetic accord with the common sense of the community.... It is just because [the system] is favourable to the utmost possible facilities being afforded for the teaching of religion by those who are competent and willing to do it that it has won a position impregnable in the minds of the people.³¹¹

³⁰⁷ *Te Aroha News*, 11 August 1883, p. 2.

³⁰⁸ Auckland Education Board, Minutes of Meeting of 12 October 1883, Minute Book 1883-1884, YCAF 5491/4a, ANZ-A.

³⁰⁹ *Te Aroha News*, 20 October 1883, p. 2.

³¹⁰ *Observer*, 20 October 1883, p. 14.

³¹¹ 'Pollex', 'The Sketcher', *Auckland Weekly News*, 27 October 1883, p. 5.

The Anglican minister formed a Bible class in 1886, whose meetings were held at the Te Aroha school after school hours.³¹² In April 1889, because of denominational tensions there was a much larger vote than usual in the committee elections:

More than usual interest was evinced in the election, one section of the community showing a determination to break down a certain sectarian monopoly of power, which has hitherto ruled. This, to a certain degree, they have accomplished, notwithstanding the somewhat unaccountable number of plump votes granted to one of the candidates, (Mr [John] Ilott),³¹³ no fewer than seven of the description (representing 49 votes), being recorded for him. Although the hitherto dominant party is still represented on the committee by three members, the other four are expected to take a firm and independent stand and are not likely to be awed from the duties of their office through much veneration for the pulpit or any respect for the local press.³¹⁴

Of the 1888 committee, three had been Wesleyans, including a minister, plus two Anglicans (including a clergyman), one Presbyterian, and one Catholic. Four were re-elected, giving the new committee four Wesleyans (including the minister), two Anglicans, and one member whose religious affiliation has not been traced.³¹⁵ Ilott, the editor of the *Te Aroha News*, whose return had so offended the correspondent, was a leading Wesleyan.³¹⁶ The last time that religious instruction was an issue, in a very minor way, was in August 1889, when the Presbyterian minister sought permission to give Bible instruction and to read the Lord's Prayer from 9.00 to 9.20 one day a week, just before school commenced. As Anglicans and Wesleyans had provided this after school hours, he was advised to do likewise.³¹⁷

³¹² *Te Aroha News*, 30 April 1887, p. 2.

³¹³ For details of his life, see papers on Neighbourly and Unneighbourly Behaviour and Temperance in the Te Aroha District.

³¹⁴ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 30 April 1889, p. 2.

³¹⁵ *Te Aroha News*, 25 April 1888, p. 2, 9 April 1890, p. 2; *Waikato Times*, 30 April 1889, p. 2.

³¹⁶ For example, *Te Aroha News*, 23 July 1890, p. 2.

³¹⁷ School Committee, *Te Aroha News*, 10 August 1889, p. 2.

As a footnote, in 1933 an overwhelming number of parents voted to permit religious instruction to be provided during school hours.³¹⁸

EDUCATION FOR ADULTS

As the papers on the careers of such leading miners as Henry Hopper Adams, Thomas Gavin, and Billy Nicholl indicate, many adults, even those who were successful in their chosen careers, had a weak educational background, as illustrated by their difficulties with spelling. In 1878, one in six adults in the Piako County were partly or completely illiterate, whereas in Thames, because of the concentration of miners, this ratio was one in three.³¹⁹ That semi-literacy was not restricted to miners was illustrated by an 1890 letter from a farmer to the county council which caused 'roars of laughter'. That it was typical of his regular letters was indicated by the newspaper noting that his style was 'now pretty well known':

Gentlemen

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

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

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

And so on, reproduced by the newspaper for the amusement of its readers.³²⁰

The occasional proposals to provide adult education were not concerned with basic instruction in grammar and spelling. In July 1881 the

³¹⁸ Priest, p. 40.

³¹⁹ *Results of a Census of the Colony of New Zealand, taken for the night of the 3rd of March, 1878* (Wellington, 1880), p. 139.

³²⁰ G. Given to County Clerk, 27 January 1890, printed in *Te Aroha News*, 22 February 1890, p. 2.

education board sought information ‘regarding Night School’,³²¹ but nothing further was heard of this idea. Two years later, a man announced he would open a night school in a vacant store;³²² again, nothing further was heard of his venture. In March 1887, William Marsdon, the head teacher at Te Aroha, announced that, in response to many requests, he would open a night school, assisted by his brother, James,³²³ who was ‘highly qualified, and has had considerable experience as a teacher, and will be the chief instructor’. The *Te Aroha News* hoped that young people would take up this chance to improve their education, a night school being a ‘much felt want’.³²⁴ An advertisement stated that the classes would be ‘Ordinary and Civil Service Subjects, Book-keeping, Shorthand, etc’.³²⁵ At the end of the following month, as these classes had ‘not been taken advantage of so fully as was expected’, the newspaper hoped for a larger attendance soon,³²⁶ but no more was heard of them. As pupils who passed the Standard 6 examinations were eligible for free admission to the Thames High School,³²⁷ there may have been little need for them. (Was James the J.N. Marsdon who, because he was absent from a teacher’s examination at Taotaoroa in January 1886, had his appointment terminated?³²⁸ In later years James Marsdon was re-employed by the education board and passed further examinations.³²⁹)

Not till 1931 were evening classes established, for dressmaking, bookkeeping, shorthand, and typing.³³⁰

TE AROHA’S TEACHERS IN THE 1880s AND 1890s

³²¹ Auckland Education Board, Minutes of Meeting of 22 July 1881, Minute Book 1881-1883, p. 127, YCAF 5491/3a, ANZ-A.

³²² *Te Aroha News*, 14 July 1883, p. 3.

³²³ See *Tauranga Electoral Roll, 1887*, p. 15.

³²⁴ *Te Aroha News*, 12 March 1887, p. 2.

³²⁵ Advertisement, *Te Aroha News*, 12 March 1887, p. 3.

³²⁶ *Te Aroha News*, 30 April 1887, p. 2.

³²⁷ *Te Aroha News*, 20 February 1889, p. 2.

³²⁸ Auckland Education Board, Minutes of Meetings of 22 January 1886, 26 February 1886, Minute Book 1885-1887, pp. 270, 290, YCAF 5491/5a, ANZ-A.

³²⁹ For example, *AJHR*, 1891, E-1, p. 16; *Auckland Star*, 23 February 1899, p. 5.

³³⁰ Priest, p. 40.

In 1936 a local historian commented that ‘especially in the earlier stage’ the school was ‘one of the most inconvenienced’ ones because of ‘continual changes of teachers. Somewhere over 200 teachers have taught in the school since it was established’.³³¹ In 1882 Norman Matheson was selected to be the first teacher. Although not then a fully qualified teacher, he had commenced teaching at Waipu in 1870.³³² He had been appointed to the Kihikihi school in 1878 after the previous teacher was removed after clashing with members of the school committee.³³³ By 1881, factionalism resulted in his being in perpetual conflict with the committee and some of the parents, and in January 1882 the education board supported the committee’s view that he must be removed from Kihikihi.³³⁴ It made this decision only in mid-January, and when Matheson arrived without any warning in Te Aroha late in that month his large family had to live in a hotel until a house could be provided.³³⁵ Six of his children attended the school in that year.³³⁶

In October 1883, the school committee asked the board for a ‘higher class teacher’. It unanimously resolved that the inspector be asked ‘to formulate his opinions on the subject, and that same be submitted to School Committee to deliberate on’ at its next meeting. The committee also asked for details of Matheson’s ‘standard, qualifications, &c’, for it was ‘anxious to

³³¹ C.T. Harris, ‘The Upper Thames Valley’, *Te Aroha News*, 14 September 1936, p. 8.

³³² Andrew Matheson, *Matheson, McDonald and McKenzie: The story of three Highland Scots families and their migration to New Zealand* (Wellington, 2008), pp. 154-157; Secretary, Auckland Education Board, to Chairman, Te Aroha Goldfield District Committee, 8 November 1883, printed in *Te Aroha News*, 15 December 1883, p. 7.

³³³ *Waikato Times*, 9 March 1878, p. 2, 12 March 1878, p. 2, 19 November 1878, p. 2, 12 December 1878, p. 2.

³³⁴ *Waikato Times*, 1 June 1881, p. 2, 7 June 1881, p. 2, 21 June 1881, p. 2, 23 June 1881, p. 2, 28 June 1881, p. 3, 30 June 1881, p. 3, 12 July 1881, p. 2, 6 September 1881, p. 2, 20 September 1881, p. 2, 20 October 1881, p. 2, 29 October 1881, p. 2, 1 November 1881, p. 2, 3 November 1881, pp. 2, 3, 5 November 1881, p. 2, 8 November 1881, p. 3, 10 November 1881, p. 3, 10 January 1882, p. 2, 17 January 1882, p. 2, 21 January 1882, p. 3; Matheson, pp. 159-169.

³³⁵ *Waikato Times*, 17 January 1882, p. 2, Te Aroha Correspondent, 28 January 1882, p. 2.

³³⁶ Te Aroha Goldfields School, Attendance Roll 1882, pp. 55, 58, 60, YCAF 4135/7a, ANZ-A.

do justice to the requirements of this rising district'.³³⁷ At a special meeting of the committee, Clark was told by six of its seven members that, if the board decided to send 'a more highly qualified teacher', they, 'whilst they would regret Mr Matheson's removal, still they would not in any way object'.³³⁸ After receiving Clark's report, the board resolved that Matheson 'be removed to a smaller school'.³³⁹ In response to the committee's questions, the board's secretary described Matheson's career and why he been appointed to Te Aroha:

Mr Matheson was for many years teacher at the school at North River, Waipu, and at first conducted the school in a satisfactory manner. After a while the state of the school became from various reasons unsatisfactory. It was thought desirable to remove him from the district, and he was appointed to Kihikihi. During his employment at Kihikihi disputes arose between the Committee and teacher; and, as Mr Matheson could not give satisfaction there, it became necessary to remove him. He was then appointed on trial to the Te Aroha Goldfield School at the time when the numbers were small and the place comparatively unsettled. The Board did not then anticipate that the school would so soon grow to its present size and importance.... After full consideration the Board agrees with your Committee that the school has grown beyond his capabilities, and steps will be taken at a convenient opportunity to remove him to a smaller school.³⁴⁰

There was some local feeling that Matheson had been 'unfairly or unkindly',³⁴¹ but in November the inspector's report confirmed that he needed to be removed. 'Very little attempted' in elementary science, he noted, and in teaching history little effort was made to direct pupils to the objects of the syllabus. 'Results are not at all satisfactory. In Stands iii iv & v the Geography and History would appear to have received but little attention and the Writing although an attempt has been made to follow the

³³⁷ John Illott to Secretary, Board of Education, 2 October 1883, printed in *Te Aroha News*, 15 December 1883, p. 7.

³³⁸ Letter from John Illott, *Te Aroha News*, 15 December 1883, p. 7.

³³⁹ Auckland Education Board, Minutes of Meetings of 12 October 1883, 2 November 1883, Minute Book 1883-1884, pp. 135, 160, YCAF 5491/4a, ANZ-A.

³⁴⁰ Secretary, Auckland Education Board, to District School Committee, 8 November 1883, printed in *Te Aroha News*, 15 December 1883, p. 7; for details of his work at the school, see Matheson, pp. 170-177.

³⁴¹ Letter from James Lavery, *Te Aroha News*, 15 December 1883, p. 7.

system is by no means up to the required Standard'. Even all Matheson's children failed their examinations.³⁴² He was offered to the Mount Roskill school and allowed to remain in the schoolhouse until the end of January.³⁴³ He was then allowed to remain until the end of February and was granted first three months' salary 'in lieu of notice' and then six months' 'in consideration of his long service',³⁴⁴ for Mount Roskill had declined to accept him.³⁴⁵ In 1886 the board declined his 'request for a testimonial', but he was 'allowed to refer to Board'.³⁴⁶ For four years he taught in the backblocks of Whanganui, a demotion that forced him to live separate from his family, and in 1890 he retired from teaching, aged about 61.³⁴⁷

In May 1882, because the attendance had 'increased so much of late', Matheson had been provided with a 19-year-old assistant, Kate Truscott, an experienced pupil teacher formerly of the Tararu school.³⁴⁸ As she never married, despite the *Observer* reporting that her departure had left Fred 'disconsolate',³⁴⁹ she made teaching her career. After leaving Te Aroha in 1883 she would teach in several schools in Thames and Paeroa before becoming the second head teacher at Waihi for six years before 'failing health' forced her to retire in 1896. At her farewell, she was described as having 'endeared herself to everyone by her generous disposition and kindly manner'.³⁵⁰

In October 1883, Truscott was replaced by two pupil teachers, William Henry Newton and Emma Ashman.³⁵¹ Newton, who had been born in 1865,

³⁴² Te Aroha Goldfields School, Class Lists for 1883, YCAF 4135/10a, ANZ-A.

³⁴³ Auckland Education Board, Minutes of Meeting of 30 November 1883, Minute Book 1883-1884, pp. 185, 186, YCAF 5491/4a, ANZ-A.

³⁴⁴ Auckland Education Board, Minutes of Meetings of 11 January 1884, 25 January 1884, Minute Book 1883-1884, pp. 213, 229, YCAF 5491/4a, ANZ-A.

³⁴⁵ *AJHR*, 1885, E-1, p. 17.

³⁴⁶ Auckland Education Board, Minutes of Meeting of 12 February 1886, Minute Book 1885-1887, p. 282, YCAF 5491/5a, ANZ-A.

³⁴⁷ Matheson, pp. 180-183.

³⁴⁸ *Thames Advertiser*, 8 May 1882, p. 3, 11 May 1882, p. 2, 20 May 1882, p. 5; *AJHR*, 1882, E-1, p. 14; 1883, E-1, p. 14.

³⁴⁹ *Observer*, 22 July 1882, p. 291; Probate of Kate Truscott, Probates, BBAE 1570, 407/1950, ANZ-A.

³⁵⁰ *Thames Advertiser*, 2 October 1883, p. 2; *Thames Star*, 24 October 1888, p. 2, 13 July 1892, p. 2, 29 September 1896, p. 2; *Waihi Daily Telegraph*, 11 June 12932, p. 2.

³⁵¹ *AJHR*, 1884, E-1, p. 15.

went to the teachers' training college at the beginning of 1884; he would become headmaster of the Tararu school in 1890, and remained a teacher all of his life.³⁵² Ashman, who had taught at the Kauaeranga Boys' School, was presented with 'a handsome silver bracelet' when she left it, indicating that she had 'won the regard of her fellow-teachers and pupils'.³⁵³ She would marry in 1889,³⁵⁴ and leave the profession.

In January 1884, William Henry Pasco Marsdon was appointed head teacher.³⁵⁵ Born in England in 1859, he had arrived in New Zealand in 1880 to teach at Parawai, a suburb of Thames; a pupil teacher there was Annie Marie Cleveland, whom he married three years later.³⁵⁶ During 1884 he was assisted by two others: his wife and a pupil teacher, Kate P. Cleave, who had moved from the Kauaeranga Girls School to Te Aroha at her own request.³⁵⁷ In 1888 she would marry Theodore Lawlor, the clerk of the Te Aroha court.³⁵⁸

During 1885, a pupil teacher, Elizabeth Mary Lena Gibbons (known as Lena), assisted the Marsdons.³⁵⁹ She had been born in 1869, the younger daughter of John,³⁶⁰ a leading timber merchant and mining investor at

³⁵² Auckland Education Board, Minutes of Meeting of 2 November 1883, Minute Book 1883-1884, p. 160, YCAF 5491/4a; Probate of William Henry Newton, Probates, BBAE 1570, 1232/1952, ANZ-A; *Te Aroha News*, 2 February 1884, p. 7; *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 2, p. 871.

³⁵³ *AJHR*, 1883, E-1, p. 14; *Te Aroha News*, 6 October 1883, p. 2.

³⁵⁴ Marriage Certificate of Emma Ashman, 1889/761, BDM; see also Probate of Emma May, Probates, BBAE 1570, 506/1938, ANZ-A.

³⁵⁵ Auckland Education Board, Minutes of Meetings of 14 December 1883, 11 January 1884, Minute Book 1883-1884, pp. 199, 11 January 1884, YCAF 5491/4a, ANZ-A.

³⁵⁶ Marriage Certificate of William [recorded as Matthew] Henry Pasco Marsdon, 1883/1034, BDM; *AJHR*, 1882, E-1, p. 14; *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 2, p. 870.

³⁵⁷ Auckland Education Board, Minutes of Meeting of 11 January 1884, Minute Book 1883-1884, p. 210, YCAF 5491/4a, ANZ-A; *AJHR*, 1885, E-1, p. 19; *Thames Advertiser*, 14 February 1884, p. 2; *Te Aroha News*, 16 February 1884, p. 3.

³⁵⁸ *Auckland Star*, 3 July 1888, p. 2.

³⁵⁹ *AJHR*, 1886, E-1, p. 19.

³⁶⁰ Birth Certificate of Elizabeth Mary Lena Gibbons, 25 May 1869, 1869/16486, BDM.

Thames and Te Aroha.³⁶¹ Never marrying, in later years she taught in 'native' schools'.³⁶²

The same teachers taught in 1886.³⁶³ For a few weeks, during the absence of Mrs Marsdon, who was having a baby, Agnes Jeffrey, wife of a Waiorongomai miner,³⁶⁴ was an assistant teacher.³⁶⁵ In 1887, as Marsdon's wife had ceased teaching after her daughter was born,³⁶⁶ he was assisted by two pupil teachers: Eliza Reid and Edith Mary Baskett.³⁶⁷ The former was still teaching in the former Auckland province in 1892.³⁶⁸ The latter, who lived at Waiorongomai, was appointed in March.³⁶⁹ She had been born in England in 1871,³⁷⁰ and her father, Nathaniel, became a farmer in the district in 1883.³⁷¹ He was a member of the Waiorongomai school committee for many years, for several as chairman.³⁷²

During 1888 two assistant teachers were appointed: Mary Elizabeth Hould and Selina Imogen Frances Mulgan.³⁷³ The former would marry in 1896.³⁷⁴ Mulgan would marry in 1891.³⁷⁵ In 1889, in addition to these three

³⁶¹ See *Thames Advertiser*, 30 December 1875, p. 3, 7 April 1884, p. 2, 20 February 1886, p. 3; *Thames Star*, 5 September 1889, p. 2, 29 January 1900, p. 3; *Observer*, 13 December 1902, p. 4, 7 July 1906, p. 4.

³⁶² Death Certificate of Elizabeth Mary Lena Gibbons, 19 September 1949, 1949/29272, BDM; *AJHR*, 1914, E-3, p. 14; *New Zealand Gazette*, 29 May 1924, p. 37.

³⁶³ *AJHR*, 1887, E-1, p. 18.

³⁶⁴ See *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 2, p. 835; recollections of Agnes Jeffrey, *Te Aroha News*, 10 February 1948, p. 5.

³⁶⁵ Auckland Education Board, Minutes of Meeting of 14 May 1886, Minute Book 1885-1887, p. 345, YCAF 5491/5a, ANZ-A; *Te Aroha News*, 15 May 1886, p. 2; Birth Certificate of Aileen Florence Cleveland Marsdon, 1886/5912, BDM.

³⁶⁶ Birth Certificate of Aileen Florence Cleveland Marsdon, 1886/5912, BDM.

³⁶⁷ *AJHR*, 1888, E-1, p. 19.

³⁶⁸ *Auckland Star*, 12 July 1892, p. 8.

³⁶⁹ *Te Aroha News*, 12 March 1887, p. 2.

³⁷⁰ England and Wales, BDM Birth Index 1837-1983, 1881 Census, Brames Hall, Wetheringsett cum Brockford, Suffolk, RG11/1852, Ancestry.co.uk.

³⁷¹ *Te Aroha News*, 1 September 1883, p. 2.

³⁷² *Te Aroha News*, 1 May 1886, p. 2, 30 April 1887, p. 2, 25 April 1888, p. 2, 27 April 1889, p. 2, 27 April 1895, p. 2.

³⁷³ *AJHR*, 1889, E-1, p. 19.

³⁷⁴ Marriage Certificate of Mary Elizabeth Hould, 1896/4735, BDM.

³⁷⁵ Marriage Certificate of Selina Imogen Frances Mulgan, 1891/29, BDM.

teachers, there was also a pupil teacher, William Simmonds.³⁷⁶ Born at Thames in 1870, in mid-1890 he would be moved from Te Aroha to Kaheke, and then appointed headmaster of the Waitekauri school in 1893.³⁷⁷ In 1890, Marsdon was assisted by Susan Jane Ormiston, presumably the sister of the Waiorongomai teacher;³⁷⁸ she was moved to an Auckland school at the end of 1890 and would marry in 1894.³⁷⁹ Two pupil teachers were appointed in 1890: Mary Ann Coad and Clara Garrick Goldsworthy.³⁸⁰ As Coad remained single,³⁸¹ it seems likely that she continued to teach. Goldsworthy, born in December 1875, was a daughter of John,³⁸² a leading mine manager at Te Aroha and elsewhere.³⁸³ As she never married,³⁸⁴ she also had to earn her living as a teacher.

Alfred Oldham, a popular teacher, taught in two Thames schools in 1888 and 1889 before being moved to Te Aroha in June 1890 as assistant teacher.³⁸⁵ Within a month, he had applied for 'a change inland for the benefit of his health'.³⁸⁶ That not being granted, in September he applied for three week's leave of absence, 'owing to failing health'.³⁸⁷ Late the following month, the education board asked for the committee's consent for him to be moved to a school north of Auckland. The chairman 'telegraphed to the Board that the committee were not willing that Mr Oldham should be removed, as the school had already been greatly disorganized by the numerous changes which have taken place in the teaching staff during the

³⁷⁶ *AJHR*, 1890, E-1, p. 17 [recorded as Simmons].

³⁷⁷ Birth Certificate of William Simmonds, 1870/18030, BDM; *Thames Star*, 14 June 1890, p. 2; *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 2, p. 912.

³⁷⁸ Marriage Certificate of Edward Nicolls Ormiston, 1902/4800, BDM.

³⁷⁹ *AJHR*, 1892, E-1, p. 12; Marriage Certificate of Susan Jane Ormiston, 1894/3988, BDM; Probate of Susan Jane Wayte, Probates, BBAE 1570, 2750/1965, ANZ-A.

³⁸⁰ *AJHR*, 1891, E-1, p. 17.

³⁸¹ Probate of Mary Ann Coad, Probates, BBAE 1570, 757/1958, ANZ-A.

³⁸² Birth Certificate of Clara Garrick Goldsworthy, 1 December 1875, 1875/650, BDM.

³⁸³ See paper on the Goldsworthy brothers.

³⁸⁴ Probate of Marion Goldsworthy, Probates, BBAE 1569/12528; probate of Clara Garrick Goldsworthy, Probates, BBAE 1570, 2720/1958, ANZ-A.

³⁸⁵ Marriage Certificate of Alfred Oldham, 1890/2242, BDM; *Thames Star*, 23 July 1888, p. 2, 14 June 1890, p. 2, 1 July 1890, p. 2; *Thames Advertiser*, 29 June 1889, p. 2; *Te Aroha News*, 5 July 1890, p. 2.

³⁸⁶ *Te Aroha News*, 9 July 1890, p. 2.

³⁸⁷ 'Te Aroha', *Observer*, 27 September 1890, p. 18.

past nine months', and that when he was appointed it was agreed he should remain until Christmas.³⁸⁸ Despite this protest, Oldham was removed, in time becoming headmaster of four schools before leaving teaching for commerce.³⁸⁹

In 1891, Mary Roberts was the assistant teacher, having previously been at the Newton school in Auckland.³⁹⁰ In August the following year, the *Observer* Man reported that 'Miss Roberts, our much-esteemed schoolteacher, has obtained a month's leave of absence owing to ill health. Her smiling face will be missed by her many friends'.³⁹¹ Two months later, a correspondent noted that 'much satisfaction' was being 'felt at the probable return of Miss Roberts to the school after an absence through ill health of three months. She has endeared herself to the children and is greatly respected by all the parents. Mrs Marsdon has ably fulfilled Miss Roberts' duties during her enforced absence'.³⁹²

In 1891, Goldsworthy along with Louisa May Stevens were the pupil teachers before the latter was removed to Waiorongomai because of a decline in enrolments at Te Aroha.³⁹³ Stevens, born at Thames, would teach at Waitekauri after she taught at these two schools before retiring on her marriage.³⁹⁴ She would become mayoress of Paeroa and involved in a wide range of community groups; and one son would become a teacher.³⁹⁵ In 1892, the same teachers were employed, and early in that year Francis D. Woods was appointed as a pupil teacher because attendance had 'increased

³⁸⁸ *Te Aroha News*, n.d., reprinted in *Auckland Weekly News*, 8 November 1890, p. 18.

³⁸⁹ *Wanganui Chronicle*, 7 January 1946, p. 2.

³⁹⁰ *New Zealand Herald*, 27 April 1889, p. 6.

³⁹¹ 'Te Aroha', *Observer*, 20 August 1892, p. 19.

³⁹² Te Aroha Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 22 October 1892, p. 23.

³⁹³ *AJHR*, 1892, E-1, p. 17; Te Aroha Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 22 October 1892, p. 23.

³⁹⁴ Marriage Certificate of Louisa May Stevens, 1898/1233, BDM; *Thames Star*, 3 May 1898, p. 2, 13 June 1898, p. 3; *Observer*, 16 May 1896, p. 8, 25 June 1898, p. 8; *Te Aroha News*, 14 June 1898, p. 3.

³⁹⁵ Probate of Louisa May Towers, Probates, BBAE 1570, 38/1944, ANZ-A; *Hauraki Plains Gazette*, 10 January 1944, p. 5.

so much of late'.³⁹⁶ In his later teaching career he would become a head teacher.³⁹⁷

There was no change of teachers in 1893.³⁹⁸ In the following year, Marsdon was assisted by four others: Woods, Goldsworthy, Annie Langford Parker Gibbons (an assistant teacher), and Mary Sophia Lavery (a pupil teacher).³⁹⁹ Gibbons, formally Anne, had commenced teaching as a pupil teacher at Onehunga, and would continue her career until marrying in 1899 (her husband would die when aged only 38, but she would live until 79).⁴⁰⁰ Lavery, born in March 1877, was appointed as a probationary pupil teacher in July 1894.⁴⁰¹ Her father, James, a timber merchant, builder, and agent,⁴⁰² was a leading figure in the Te Aroha district and a leading investor in local mining.⁴⁰³ He was also the superintendent of the Wesleyan Sunday School.⁴⁰⁴ The first chairman of the school committee, on which he served for most of the 1880s.⁴⁰⁵ In 1888, when he resigned because he intended to settle in Queensland (he soon returned because the climate did not suit his wife),⁴⁰⁶ the chairman

³⁹⁶ *AJHR*, 1893, E-1, p. 18; 'Te Aroha', *Auckland Weekly News*, 26 March 1892, p. 23.

³⁹⁷ For example, *Thames Star*, 26 July 1905, p. 2; *New Zealand Gazette*, 1928, no. 25, p. 785.

³⁹⁸ *AJHR*, 1894, E-1, p. 18.

³⁹⁹ *AJHR*, 1895, E-1, p. 19.

⁴⁰⁰ *Auckland Star*, 21 July 1888, p. 5; *New Zealand Herald*, 2 October 1889, p. 6; Birth Certificate of Anne Langford Parker Phillips, 1872/13376; Marriage Certificate of Anne Langford Gibbons, 1899/780; Death Certificates of Edward Gorse Phillips, 1912/5731, Anne Langford Parker Phillips, 1951/19882, BDM.

⁴⁰¹ Birth Certificate of Mary Sophia Lavery, 24 March 1877, 1877/10219, BDM; *New Zealand Herald*, 5 July 1894, p. 6.

⁴⁰² For example, *Descriptive Handbook to the Waikato* (Hamilton, 1880), p. 66; *Thames Advertiser*, 18 November 1880, p. 3, 15 January 1881, p. 3, 31 January 1881, p. 3, 17 May 1881, p. 2, 28 September 1881, p. 2; *Te Aroha News*, 17 October 1885, p. 2, 28 January 1888, p. 2, advertisement, 7 May 1898, p. 1; *Thames Star*, 15 July 1913, p. 5.

⁴⁰³ For example, *Te Aroha News*, editorial, 8 April 1884, p. 2, 10 November 1888, p. 2.

⁴⁰⁴ *Te Aroha News*, 2 May 1885, p. 2.

⁴⁰⁵ *Thames Advertiser*, 19 December 1881, p. 3; *Te Aroha News*, 26 January 1884, p. 2, 1 May 1886, p. 2, 30 April 1887, p. 2, 27 April 1889, p. 2, 30 April 1890, p. 2.

⁴⁰⁶ *Te Aroha News*, 10 November 1888, p. 2.

referred in eulogistic terms to the great interest displayed by Mr Lavery in all matters touching the education and improvement of the young ever since the school was established, in the starting of which at the first opening of the goldfield, he (Mr Lavery) had been an active promoter. The valuable aid he had on all occasions rendered was fully appreciated by the committee, the members of which were united in wishing him future prosperity.⁴⁰⁷

After teaching for six months at Te Aroha, Mary Lavery was appointed to the Tararu school.⁴⁰⁸ As she never married,⁴⁰⁹ she probably taught for the rest of her life.

In 1895, Marsdon was assisted by four others: his wife, Gibbons, and Mary Stapleton Slater, all assistant teachers, and Goldsworthy.⁴¹⁰ Slater would teach until her marriage in 1900.⁴¹¹ She was the second wife of a barrister, who left £3180 9s 10d on his death in 1933 whereas she left only £561 15s 9d when she died in 1946.⁴¹² In 1896, Marsdon's wife no longer taught, Slater remained, and Goldsworthy was now an assistant teacher. Lavery was once more a pupil teacher, as was Maurice Priestley.⁴¹³ The latter, correctly Job Maurice Priestley, then aged 18, would eventually become a school inspector.⁴¹⁴ In the middle of 1897, he became headmaster of the Waikato coal mining settlement of Kimihia.⁴¹⁵ In that year, Marsdon retained Slater, Goldsworthy and Lavery, and two more pupil teachers were appointed, Griffith Rogers Jones and Hilda Armstrong.⁴¹⁶ The former was a

⁴⁰⁷ *Waikato Times*, 9 February 1888, p. 2.

⁴⁰⁸ *Thames Advertiser*, 30 January 1895, p. 2

⁴⁰⁹ Death Certificate of Mary Sophia Lavery, 20 May 1965, 1965/27563, BDM; probate of Mary Sophia Lavery, Probates, BBAE 1570, 1364/1965, ANZ-A.

⁴¹⁰ *AJHR*, 1896, E-1, p. 19.

⁴¹¹ See Marriage Certificate of Mary Stapleton Slater [recorded as Slator], 1900/4462, BDM; Probate of Mary Stapleton Beale, Wellington Probates, AAOM 6030, box 224, no. 21265, ANZ-W.

⁴¹² *New Zealand Herald*, 31 May 1933, p. 1; Auckland Probates, BBAE 1570, R9386301, ANZ-A [online]; Wellington Probates, 6030, R23144420, ANZ-W [online].

⁴¹³ *AJHR*, 1897, E-1, p. 19.

⁴¹⁴ Auckland Hospital, Register of Patients 1904-1908, folio 190, YCAB 15288/4a; Probate of Job Maurice Priestley, Probates, BBAE 1570, 2725/1957, ANZ-A; *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 2, p. 710.

⁴¹⁵ *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 2, p. 710.

⁴¹⁶ *AJHR*, 1898, E-1, p. 19.

schoolteacher for the rest of his working life.⁴¹⁷ Armstrong, who had given ‘a recitation in a pleasing manner’ at a meeting of the Te Aroha United Christian Endeavour Society in March 1897, had been appointed for just one month in August while Lavery took sick leave.⁴¹⁸ In August, the school committee asked the Education Board to appoint a male teacher ‘of equal standing’ to Priestly.⁴¹⁹ The only change amongst the teachers in 1898 was that Mabel Elizabeth Conway had been appointed.⁴²⁰

In early 1899, Marsdon was selected from 19 candidates to take charge of the Kauaeranga Boys’ School. The *Te Aroha News* could not ‘but deplore the departure from our midst of such a painstaking and worthy a teacher’.⁴²¹ He was replaced by Alfred Fordyce Burton, who had been born in New Zealand in 1866 and would teach from 1886 until retiring in 1927, when he was still the head teacher at Te Aroha.⁴²² Elizabeth Masfield joined Goldsworthy as an assistant teacher,⁴²³ and there were two pupil teachers, Lavery once more, and Frank William Garland,⁴²⁴ who would be a teacher for the rest of his life.⁴²⁵ Masfield would marry an Anglican clergyman in the following year,⁴²⁶ and leave the profession.

During July 1899, the teachers struggled:

The head teacher is confined to his house through sickness, Miss Lavery, pupil teacher, is in a similar predicament.... And to add

⁴¹⁷ Probate of Griffith Rogers Jones, Probates, BBAE 1570, 3396/1962, ANZ-A.

⁴¹⁸ *Waikato Argus*, 1 April 1897, p. 3; *Thames Advertiser*, 12 August 1897, p. 2.

⁴¹⁹ *Thames Advertiser*, 12 August 1897, p. 2.

⁴²⁰ *AJHR*, 1899, E-1, pp. 19-20; Marriage Certificate of Mabel Elizabeth Conway, 1922/9795, BDM; Probate of Mabel Elizabeth Haughton, BBAE 1570, R14759101, ANZ-A [online].

⁴²¹ *Te Aroha News*, n.d., reprinted in *Thames Advertiser*, 24 March 1899, p. 2.

⁴²² Birth Certificate of Alfred Fordyce Burton, 1866/10974, BDM; Auckland Education Board, Minutes of Meeting of 30 April 1886, Minute Book 1885-1887, p. 333, YCAF 5491/5a, ANZ-A; *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 2, pp. 826-827; Probate of Alfred Fordyce Burton, Probates, BBAE 1570, 2381/1956, ANZ-A; Priest, p. 7.

⁴²³ See *Auckland Star*, 13 August 1891, p. 6, 23 February 1892, p. 5, 21 February 1895, p. 3.

⁴²⁴ *AJHR*, 1900, E-1, p. 20.

⁴²⁵ Probate of Frank William Garland, CAHZ 2989, CH 944/1955, ANZ-C.

⁴²⁶ Marriage Certificate of Elizabeth Masfield, 1900/4301, BDM; probate of Elizabeth Wingfield, BBAE 1570, P525/1951, ANZ-A; *New Zealand Herald*, 7 August 1905, p. 6.

to the general happiness two new teachers started yesterday morning and were consequently at a disadvantage in having only one pupil teacher with any local experience to show them “the run of the ropes.” Mrs Burton, who is an ex-teacher, has had to step into the breach, and render what assistance she can, but she also labors under the disadvantage already referred to, as being a new arrival, she is unknown to the bulk of the scholars.... And on top of all this, the Board of Education has notified the Committee that as the attendance has fallen away so considerably, they may have to reduce the staff of teachers.⁴²⁷

WAIORONGOMAI'S TEACHERS

Alfred O'Connor, who moved from the Mackaytown school in February 1881 to be, briefly, a probationary teacher in Auckland and in the following year was appointed as the first teacher at Te Aroha West, at the end of June 1883 became Waiorongomai's first teacher.⁴²⁸ He acquired shares in one mining claim and one company.⁴²⁹ Within four months, the school committee decided that he was ‘not suitable as a teacher’, and on their request he was removed.⁴³⁰ At the same meeting, the board resolved that O'Connor should answer the accusation by William Henry Hawkins,⁴³¹ his replacement at Te Aroha West,⁴³² that he had falsified the roll at that school.⁴³³ After O'Connor went to Auckland to answer this charge he was informed that he was not dismissed because of any alleged misconduct but simply in accordance with the provisions of the Act. The board refused to re-

⁴²⁷ *Te Aroha News*, n.d., reprinted in *Thames Star*, 7 July 1899, p. 1.

⁴²⁸ Auckland Education Board, Minutes of Meetings of 18 February 1881, 6 May 1881, Minute Book 1881-1893, pp. 33, 88, YCAF 5491/3a, ANZ-A; *AJHR*, 1883, E-1, p. 14; *Te Aroha News*, 30 June 1883, p. 2; *Te Aroha West School: 85th Jubilee 1882-1967* (Te Aroha, 1968), no pagination [p. 10].

⁴²⁹ Te Aroha Warden's Court, Register of Licensed Holdings 1881-1887, folio 157, BBAV 11500/9a, ANZ-A; *Waikato Times*, 6 September 1883, p. 3; *Te Aroha News*, 29 March 1884, p. 7.

⁴³⁰ Auckland Education Board, Minutes of Meeting of 12 October 1883, Minute Book 1883-1884, p. 145, YCAF 5491/4a, ANZ-A; *Te Aroha News*, 2 February 1884, p. 7.

⁴³¹ See paper on the temperance movement in the Te Aroha district.

⁴³² *AJHR*, 1884, E-1, p. 15.

⁴³³ Auckland Education Board, Minutes of Meeting of 12 October 1883, Minute Book 1883-1884, p. 146, YCAF 5491/4a, ANZ-A.

employ him.⁴³⁴ It also declined his request to meet his travelling expenses to Auckland.⁴³⁵

William Tullibardine Murray replaced O'Connor in mid-November on a temporary basis. Formerly a probationary teacher in Newton East school in Auckland, he remained in charge for the rest of the year, later going on to teach elsewhere in the Auckland district.⁴³⁶ In 1886 he taught at Remuera, but later left the profession, although he stood for election to the education board twice in the early 1890s.⁴³⁷ In 1895, when he and his wife became bankrupt, his occupation was recorded as 'settler', of Auckland.⁴³⁸ When he died in 1923, he was a Presbyterian Home Missionary working in Taranaki.⁴³⁹

The head teacher in 1884 was Edmund Campbell Purdie, who was assisted by Peter Gillies Steel.⁴⁴⁰ Purdie was 'highly qualified' and had the reputation of being an excellent teacher.⁴⁴¹ He formed a debating society for adults.⁴⁴² Steel, who had achieved the highest marks in the Thames scholarship exams in 1882, when he was 15, in 1897 taught in two 'native' schools before his death in that year, aged only 30.⁴⁴³ At the beginning of March, it was reported that both were 'much liked', everyone being satisfied

⁴³⁴ Auckland Education Board, Minutes of Meetings of 2 November 1883, 18 January 1884, Minute Book 1883-1884, pp. 160, 220, YCAF 5491/4a, ANZ-A.

⁴³⁵ Auckland Education Board, Minutes of Meeting of 28 March 1884, Minute Book 1883-1884, p. 300, YCAF 5491/4a, ANZ-A.

⁴³⁶ *AJHR*, 1884, E-1, p. 15; 1886, E-1, p. 16; *Te Aroha News*, 17 November 1883, p. 2, 2 February 1884, p. 7.; Marriage Certificate of William Tullibardine Murray, 1886/294, BDM.

⁴³⁷ *New Zealand Herald*, 4 December 1886, p. 4, 12 October 1892, p. 1, 17 May 1893, p. 1.

⁴³⁸ Advertisement, *Auckland Star*, 11 December 1895, p. 1.

⁴³⁹ New Plymouth Probates, ABAJ 21954, R14562513, ANZ-W [online].

⁴⁴⁰ *AJHR*, 1885, E-1, p. 20.

⁴⁴¹ Auckland Education Board, Minutes of Meeting of 11 January 1884, Minute Book 1883-1884, p. 210, YCAF 5491/4a, ANZ-A; *Te Aroha News*, 22 December 1883, p. 2, 2 February 1884, p. 7.

⁴⁴² *Te Aroha News*, 19 April 1884, p. 2, 26 April 1884, p. 2, 24 May 1884, p. 7, 21 June 1884, p. 2.

⁴⁴³ Death Certificate of Peter Gillies Steel, 1897/1789, BDM; Probate of Peter Gillies Steel, Probates, BBAE 1569/2612, ANZ-A; *Thames Advertiser*, 24 January 1882, p. 3, 6 February 1882, p. 3.

with their performance.⁴⁴⁴ Lucy Jane Harling, a pupil teacher, taught for part of the year. In July she charged Hawkins, who taught at both Waihou and Te Aroha West, with sexual harassment, as outlined in his mini biography in the paper on temperance. Hawkins was dismissed, while Harling was transferred despite the school committee and some residents asking that she not be removed.⁴⁴⁵ She would marry in 1890.⁴⁴⁶

At the beginning of 1885 Purdie was removed, but the local newspaper was told that he was leaving at his own request.⁴⁴⁷ In its annual report the committee stated that Purdie had run his school in an 'excellent manner'.⁴⁴⁸ The local *Observer* Man, presumably referring to Purdie, mysteriously asked: 'Was the reason given by our schoolmaster ... for leaving his lodgings correct?'⁴⁴⁹ He would eventually become a school inspector.⁴⁵⁰ For the following two years, John Henry Gillies was head teacher, assisted by Ellen Mary Mason.⁴⁵¹ Gillies was aged 23 when he took up this appointment.⁴⁵² Mary E. Scott replaced Mason in 1887.⁴⁵³ In 1888, Elizabeth Ada Nixon replaced Scott as the assistant teacher; there was no change of teachers in 1889.⁴⁵⁴ It is not possible to determine whether she married Richard Arthur Barnes of Kumeu in 1903 or was the spinster who died in 1942, aged 72, leaving money to the Methodist church.⁴⁵⁵

⁴⁴⁴ *Te Aroha News*, 1 March 1884, p. 2.

⁴⁴⁵ Auckland Education Board, Minutes of Meetings of 3 July 1885, 7 July 1885, 24 July 1885, 31 July 1885, 7 August 1885, 21 August 1885, Minute Book 1885-1887, pp. 140, 150, 155, 162, 164, 171, YCAF 5491/5a, ANZ-A.

⁴⁴⁶ Marriage Certificate of Lucy Jane Harling, 1890/812, BDM.

⁴⁴⁷ Auckland Education Board, Minutes of Meeting of 13 February 1885, Minute Book 1885-1887, p. 32, YCAF 5491/5a; *Te Aroha News*, 20 December 1884, p. 2.

⁴⁴⁸ *Waikato Times*, 29 January 1885, p. 2.

⁴⁴⁹ 'Waiorongomai', *Observer*, 21 March 1885, p. 10.

⁴⁵⁰ Probate of Edmund Campbell Purdie, Probates, BBAE 1570, 859/1936, ANZ-A.

⁴⁵¹ *AJHR*, 1886, E-1, p. 19; 1887, p. 18; Marriage Certificate of Ellen Mary Mason, 1889/1867, BDM.

⁴⁵² *Te Aroha News*, 20 December 1884, p. 2.

⁴⁵³ *AJHR*, 1888, E-1, p. 19.

⁴⁵⁴ *AJHR*, 1889, E-1, p. 19; 1890, E-1, p. 17.

⁴⁵⁵ Marriage Certificate of Elizabeth Ada Nixon, 1903/2070; Death Certificate of Elizabeth Ada Nixon, 1942/16907; Death Certificate of Elizabeth Ada Barnes, 1959/38591, BDM; Probate of Elizabeth Ada Nixon, BBAE 1570, 170/1942, ANZ-A; *New Zealand Herald*, 14 March 1942, p. 6.

In mid-1890, when Gillies left, he received a testimonial signed by 43 residents.⁴⁵⁶ Gillies was replaced by Edward Nicolls Ormiston,⁴⁵⁷ who would teach for the rest of his life.⁴⁵⁸ Ormiston remained until the end of 1893. In 1891, he was relieved for part of the year by James B. Murray, and Elizabeth Kelly was the pupil teacher.⁴⁵⁹ Murray would go on to be a head teacher in several schools before being dismissed by the education board in 1901 for refusing to salute the flag.⁴⁶⁰ Before the turn of the century Kelly would teach in Auckland and then be a relieving teacher in country schools.⁴⁶¹ In 1892 two pupil teachers were appointed: Louisa Stevens, who was transferred from Te Aroha in October, and Norman Hayworth Sanger Law.⁴⁶² Law, then aged 15, had been a pupil at Te Aroha; he would become a school inspector.⁴⁶³ Stevens was the only teacher to assist Ormiston in 1893.⁴⁶⁴

James William Rennick, whose career is covered at the end of this paper, was appointed head teacher in 1894, when he was assisted by Stevens and another pupil teacher, Emily Mabel Maingay.⁴⁶⁵ A former pupil at Te Aroha, and then aged 17,⁴⁶⁶ she was the daughter of James Tenison Maingay, manager and editor of the *Te Aroha News*, and for a time a member of the Te Aroha committee.⁴⁶⁷ As she never married, she taught all her life; she returned to live in Te Aroha before her death in 1958.⁴⁶⁸ Rennick remained in charge until March 1902,⁴⁶⁹ assisted by a series of pupil teachers: Stevens in 1895, Ethel Annie McAndrew, and Maingay in

⁴⁵⁶ *Te Aroha News*, 2 July 1890, p. 2.

⁴⁵⁷ *AJHR*, 1891, E-1, p. 17.

⁴⁵⁸ Probate of Edward Nicolls Ormiston, Probates, BBAE 1570, 1372/1948, ANZ-A.

⁴⁵⁹ *AJHR*, 1892, E-1, p. 17.

⁴⁶⁰ *Auckland Star*, 17 April 1895, p. 5; *Gisborne Times*, 4 December 1901, p. 1.

⁴⁶¹ *Auckland Star*, 14 November 1894, p. 2; *New Zealand Herald*, 19 October 1899, p. 3.

⁴⁶² *AJHR*, 1893, E-1, p. 18; Te Aroha Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 22 October 1892, p. 23.

⁴⁶³ Te Aroha Goldfields School, Attendance Rolls, November 1890, YCAF 4135/27a; Probate of Norman Hayworth Sanger Law, BBAE 1570, 375/1937, ANZ-A.

⁴⁶⁴ *AJHR*, 1894, E-1, p. 18.

⁴⁶⁵ *AJHR*, 1895, E-1, p. 19.

⁴⁶⁶ Te Aroha Goldfields School, Attendance Roll 1884, p. 88, YCAF 5135/13a, ANZ-A.

⁴⁶⁷ *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 2, p. 828.

⁴⁶⁸ Probate of Emily Mabel Maingay, Hamilton Probates, BCDG 4421, 548/1958, ANZ-A.

⁴⁶⁹ *Thames Star*, 29 January 1902, p. 2.

1896, the latter being replaced by Mary Eliza Jennings in August 1897, just Maingay in 1898, and only Jennings in 1899.⁴⁷⁰ McAndrew would marry in 1917, but die only five years later, aged 45.⁴⁷¹ Jennings, born in 1882, had been a pupil at this school, and remained a teacher at least until she married at farmer at Otorohanga in 1910.⁴⁷² Her father, Edward, a carpenter and occasional miner,⁴⁷³ was a member of the Waiorongomai school committee for many years and its secretary for at least two years.⁴⁷⁴

AN ESPECIALLY POPULAR TEACHER

James William Rennick was born in Russell, Bay of Islands, in June 1868, to James, then a hotelkeeper, and Rachael Pickens.⁴⁷⁵ His father later moved to Thames, where he was licensee of the Imperial Hotel.⁴⁷⁶ Rennick was educated at the Waiotahi Creek school for nine-and-a-half years before receiving a certificate of proficiency in the scholarship examination for Thames High School, where he was a pupil for one-and-a-half years.⁴⁷⁷ In

⁴⁷⁰ *AJHR*, 1896, E-1, p. 19; 1897, E-1, p. 19; 1898, E-1, p. 19; 1899, E-1, p. 20; 1900, E-1, p. 20 [Jennings recorded as Elizabeth Mary]; *Te Aroha News*, 28 April 1898, p. 3.

⁴⁷¹ See Marriage Certificate of Ethel Annie McAndrew, 1917/3324; Death Certificate of Ethel Annie Kenny, 18 July 1922, 1922/5637, BDM; Probate of Ethel Annie Kenney, Probates, BBAE 1569/15884, ANZ-A.

⁴⁷² Birth Certificate of Mary Eliza Jennings, 15 August 1882, 1882/10087, BDM; Waiorongomai School, Attendance Roll 1888, p. 440, YCAF 4135/24a, ANZ-A; Marriage Certificate of Mary Eliza Jennings, 26 April 1910, 1910/3520, BDM.

⁴⁷³ See *Thames Star*, 24 July 1890, p. 2; *Thames Advertiser*, 25 January 1893, p. 2, 21 May 1894, p. 2; *New Zealand Herald*, 25 October 1926, p. 10; *Te Aroha News*, 27 October 1926, p. 8.

⁴⁷⁴ *Te Aroha News*, 1 May 1886, p. 2, 25 April 1888, p. 2, 24 April 1895, p. 2, 28 April 1898, p. 3; *Auckland Weekly News*, 8 May 1902, p. 41.

⁴⁷⁵ Birth Certificate of James William Rennick, 1868/10915; Death Certificate of James William Rennick, 20 May 1942, 1942/19801, BDM; Waiotahi Creek School, Admissions Book 1874-1912, no. 5, Public Library Archives, Thames.

⁴⁷⁶ For example, Thames Magistrate's Court, Criminal Record Book 1881-1883, entry for 22 June 1883, BACL 13736/35a, ANZ-A.

⁴⁷⁷ Waiotahi Creek School, Admissions Book 1874-1912, no. 5; Thames High School, Register 1880-1942, no. 102, Public Library Archives, Thames; Thames High School Board of Governors, Minute Books, Memoranda of 31 March 1880, 7 February 1883, High School Archives, Thames; *New Zealand Gazette*, 29 May 1884, p. 890.

April 1884, out of 80 candidates examined for the civil service junior examination he was ranked twenty-fourth.⁴⁷⁸ Two months after turning 16 he became a pupil teacher at Kauaeranga Boys' School.⁴⁷⁹ The following April, a Thames newspaper reported that 'Master J. Rennick, pupil teacher at Kauaeranga Boy's School, is about to be transferred to Tararu', at the northern edge of Thames, 'where a male teacher is required'.⁴⁸⁰ In 1888, he became sole teacher and subsequently head teacher at Awitu, on the Awhitu Peninsula.⁴⁸¹ In 1894, he was appointed head teacher at Waiorongomai.⁴⁸²

His popularity with parents and pupils was indicated when, in January 1898, at the age of 29 he married Annie McLean, aged 20, daughter of William,⁴⁸³ a miner who also had managed the tramway.⁴⁸⁴ The *Te Aroha News* waxed exceedingly lyrical:

"Happy is the bride the sun shines on," and a happier bride than Miss McLean it has seldom been our lot to look upon. Yesterday was one of those days in which the average man is tempted, in the fullness of his heart, to exclaim, "Life is worth living." At any rate we feel sure the Schoolmaster of Waiorongomai, Mr James Rennick, thought so as he passed down the aisle of the Te Aroha Anglican Church, through rows of smiling friendly faces, with his handsome young bride on his arm. Without being an expert in such matters, we had not been long on the scene before we involuntarily re-echoed the sentiment of an old man in the crowd, who observed, with that ring of conviction in his voice, which we very properly associate with the oldest inhabitant, who has generally witnessed every wedding since the first chimney was built in a township, that this was one of the most popular he "recommended." Long before 11 o'clock a well-dressed crowd besieged the doors of St Mark's Church, and the appearance of the vicar (Rev E.J. McFarland), wreathed in smiles, was hailed by the struggling mass of humanity with a sigh of relief. On the opening of the doors the little church was filled to overflowing.

⁴⁷⁸ *New Zealand Gazette*, 29 May 1884, p. 890.

⁴⁷⁹ Thames High School, Register 1880-1942, no. 102, Public Library Archives, Thames; *AJHR*, 1885, E-1, p. 19.

⁴⁸⁰ *Thames Advertiser*, 13 April 1885, p. 3.

⁴⁸¹ *AJHR*, 1889, E-1, p. 16; 1890, E-1, p. 14; 1891, E-1, p. 14; 1892, E-1, p. 15; 1893, E-1, p. 14; 1894, E-1, p. 15.

⁴⁸² *AJHR*, 1895, E-1, p. 19.

⁴⁸³ Marriage Certificate of James William Rennick, 19 January 1898, 1898/217, BDM.

⁴⁸⁴ See paper on the Piako County tramway at Waiorongomai.

Before many minutes had elapsed, a carriage and pair was driven rapidly up the hill to the door of the church. From it stepped the bridegroom and his friends doing their best to look as much at ease as they possibly could under the circumstances. Then followed more carriages, and Mr William McLean assisted his daughter, pale as a lily but looking the charming bride all over, from the crown of her bridal veil to the tips of her dainty shoes, to alight.

After providing details of the bridesmaids and of the ceremony, wedding presents provided by 68 family and friends were listed, 'besides a number of other useful and handsome presents'.⁴⁸⁵ After returning from his honeymoon, on the first day of school 'a pleasing ceremony' was held and Rennick received 'a very handsome testimonial of the esteem in which he is held by his scholars, in the shape of an address and clock'. The presentation, by Mary Cronin and John Jennings 'on behalf of their fellow pupils', was made at the end of the morning's lessons. (Mary Kathleen Cronin, then aged almost nine,⁴⁸⁶ was the daughter of Michael,⁴⁸⁷ who had been a member of the school committee for a decade and was re-elected its chairman in that year.⁴⁸⁸ John Werahiko Jennings, then aged ten,⁴⁸⁹ was the son of Edward, variously a carpenter and amalgamator at the battery.⁴⁹⁰ Edward Jennings was a member of the school committee for at least 16 years, including being secretary for several years in the 1890s.⁴⁹¹) Mary Cronin read the address, which bore some hallmarks of being at least in part written by an adult:

Dear Mr Rennick, - Being aware and pleased that since our school broke up for the Christmas holidays, you have been married, to a young lady of this district, who is well known and respected, we, the girls and boys of your school, do therefore humbly request

⁴⁸⁵ *Te Aroha News*, 20 January 1898, p. 2.

⁴⁸⁶ Birth Certificate of Mary Kathleen Cronin, 18 March 1889, 1889/18873, BDM.

⁴⁸⁷ See paper on Edward Gallagher.

⁴⁸⁸ *Te Aroha News*, 30 April 1887, p. 2, 30 April 1890, p. 2, 28 April 1898, p. 3.

⁴⁸⁹ Birth Certificate of John Werahiko [recorded as Werhaku] Jennings, 14 November 1887, 1887/1552, BDM.

⁴⁹⁰ See *Thames Star*, 24 July 1890, p. 2; *Te Aroha News*, advertisement, 6 August 1903, p. 1, 27 October 1926, p. 8.

⁴⁹¹ *Te Aroha News*, 1 May 1886, p. 2, 25 April 1888, p. 2, 27 April 1895, p. 2, 28 April 1898, p. 3; *Auckland Weekly News*, 8 May 1902, p. 41.

that we be allowed to offer you our hearty congratulations, and that you may be pleased to accept this small gift: This clock to commemorate that happy event. And also, to show our gratitude to you for your never-failing zeal for our welfare. We offer you this small gift with right hearty good will and ask you to accept it in the same spirit. Then, take this clock into your home, and let it ever be a token of the high esteem we hold for you, which ever will remain unbroken. That the choicest blessings of God may always rest on you and Mrs Rennick, is the prayer of us all. – Signed on behalf of the girls and boys of your school this 7th day of February 1898, MARY CRONIN, JOHN JENNINGS.

Mr Rennick, who expressed his surprise and gratification at receiving such a handsome gift, replied thanking the children in feeling terms. A half-holiday was granted in honour of the occasion.⁴⁹²

Noted as being a ‘popular headmaster’, when he left early in 1902 to take charge of the Kirikiri school a ‘farewell social’ was held. ‘There was a large attendance testifying to the esteem’ in which he was held. ‘During the evening a presentation of a handsome Gladstone bag, and set of gold sleeve-links’, was made by the committee’s chairman, who described Rennick’s eight years at the school ‘as having been marked by careful work and good results; the relations between teacher, committee, and parents, had always been cordial; they were all sorry to lose such a good teacher, but they rejoiced at his promotion’. In response, Rennick ‘testified to the many kindnesses he had received’.⁴⁹³

Rennick’s active involvement in the community was another reason for his popularity. In 1894, for instance, he helped organize a concert for the Anglican Church.⁴⁹⁴ The following year, he acted as master of ceremonies at a Te Aroha social ‘in his usual good style’.⁴⁹⁵ Two years later, he was elected as a vestryman of the Anglican Church and to the committee of the medical association that hoped to entice a doctor to settle in Te Aroha.⁴⁹⁶ He was active in the Jockey Club, being a steward in 1897 and its secretary in 1900

⁴⁹² *Te Aroha News*, 8 February 1898, p. 2.

⁴⁹³ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 6 March 1902, p. 33.

⁴⁹⁴ *Auckland Weekly News*, 17 November 1894, p. 23.

⁴⁹⁵ ‘Te Aroha’, *Observer*, 25 May 1895, p. 21.

⁴⁹⁶ *Thames Advertiser*, 17 May 1897, p. 3, 24 July 1897, p. 2.

and 1901.⁴⁹⁷ As secretary he was regarded as being very efficient.⁴⁹⁸ In 1899 he was a steward for the Te Aroha West Hack Club races.⁴⁹⁹

In 1895, the *Te Aroha News* described him as ‘the popular captain of the Te Aroha football team’.⁵⁰⁰ Secretary and treasurer of this club during 1896, in early 1897 he convened a meeting to re-form it.⁵⁰¹ Shortly afterwards he was secretary of a successful club social;⁵⁰² he was also the club’s treasurer, secretary, and occasional referee.⁵⁰³ In the latter role, on at least one occasion he was not so popular. In mid-1898, when refereeing the match between Volunteers and Civilians, his decisions were frequently challenged, ‘one player going so far as to serenade off the field because he could not get his own way’.⁵⁰⁴ In the following month, he was one of the ‘most conspicuous’ players for the Civilians against the Volunteers.⁵⁰⁵ When he was married, the club gave him a silver egg stand and a silver butter cooler.⁵⁰⁶

Rennick invested in some Waiorongomai mines during the 1890s boom. In September 1895, he applied for the Trident, on Fern Spur, but when surveyed it was discovered to include part of the township; perhaps for this reason he withdrew his application in the following March.⁵⁰⁷ In October 1897, he was granted the Night and Morning, but did not uplift the license, which accordingly lapsed.⁵⁰⁸ From at 1895 until at least 1900, he was

⁴⁹⁷ *Ohinemuri Gazette*, 4 December 1897, p. 2, 19 December 1900, p. 2; *Te Aroha News*, 18 January 1900, p. 2; *Auckland Weekly News*, 10 May 1901, p. 26.

⁴⁹⁸ *Te Aroha News*, 13 February 1900, p. 3.

⁴⁹⁹ *Waikato Argus*, 14 October 1899, p. 3.

⁵⁰⁰ *Te Aroha News*, 22 June 1895, p. 2.

⁵⁰¹ *Thames Advertiser*, 1 April 1896, p. 2; *Waikato Argus*, 6 April 1897, p. 2.

⁵⁰² *Thames Advertiser*, 26 July 1897, p. 2.

⁵⁰³ *Thames Advertiser*, 22 January 1898, p. 2, 28 April 1898, p. 2.

⁵⁰⁴ *Te Aroha News*, 7 June 1898, p. 2.

⁵⁰⁵ *Te Aroha News*, 12 July 1898, p. 2.

⁵⁰⁶ *Te Aroha News*, 20 January 1898, p. 2.

⁵⁰⁷ Te Aroha Warden’s Court, Mining Applications 1895, 37/1895, BBAV 11289/15a, ANZ-A.

⁵⁰⁸ Te Aroha Warden’s Court, Letterbook 1883-1900, pp. 451, 435, 480, BBAV 11534/1a; Register of Licensed Holdings 1887-01909, folio 119, BBAV 11500/8b, ANZ-A.

secretary of the Cadman Syndicate.⁵⁰⁹ In July 1898 he unsuccessfully asked the government to purchase the battery and convert it into a public crushing one, for if was sold and removed ‘mining operations will probably cease’. He stated that he had been told that local ore could ‘be successfully treated with very little alteration to the plant’.⁵¹⁰

After leaving Waiorongomai, Rennick was headmaster at Kirikiri, to the south of Thames, for several years.⁵¹¹ His next, and last, teaching position was at Kopu, to the north of Thames.⁵¹² As at Waiorongomai, he was active in the community: for instance, for several years he was secretary of the Thames Jockey Club.⁵¹³ He continued to invest in mining, in July 1904 sending a sample of Kirikiri quartz to the Thames School of Mines (it contained a trace of bullion of no value).⁵¹⁴ In September 1926 he was granted the Eclipse, at Thames, and within two weeks informed the warden that he intended to form a company. As it would cost ‘a considerable sum of money’ to prospect and develop this ground, ‘and as it is doubtful if there will even then be any return’, he sought, and was granted, both protection and a reduction in rent.⁵¹⁵ Almost two years later, he established a ‘small syndicate’ to test his mine, employing two men.⁵¹⁶ He still owned this claim in late 1929.⁵¹⁷ Four years later, on behalf of a syndicate he asked

⁵⁰⁹ Piako County Council, Letterbook 1897-1899, p. 252; Letterbook 1899-1901, pp. 99, 275, Matamata-Piako District Council Archives, Te Aroha; *Te Aroha News*, 9 October 1895, p. 2.

⁵¹⁰ J.W. Rennick to Minister of Mines, 27 July 1898, Mines Department, MD 1, 8/50 Part 1, ANZ-W; *New Zealand Mines Record*, 16 September 1898, p. 73; *Ohinemuri Gazette*, 1 October 1898, p. 2.

⁵¹¹ *Thames Star*, 29 January 1902, p. 2, 27 November 1906, p. 2.

⁵¹² Probate of James William Rennick, Probates, BBAE 1570, 778/42, ANZ-A.

⁵¹³ *Thames Borough Centenary Souvenir*, 5 November 1973, ed. P. O'Neill (Thames, 1973), p. 165; Johnny Williams, *Racing for Gold: Thames and the goldfields with the history of the Thames Jockey Club* (Thames, 1987), p. 122.

⁵¹⁴ Thames School of Mines, Assay Book 1898-1907, entry for 8 July 1904, School of Mines Archives, Thames.

⁵¹⁵ Thames Warden's Court, Mining Applications 1925-1927, 63/1926, BACL 14350/8a, ANZ-A.

⁵¹⁶ Thames Warden's Court, Mining Applications 1927-1928, 27/1928, BACL 14350/9a, ANZ-A.

⁵¹⁷ ‘Complete List of Gold-Mining Licenses on Thames Register on 31 August 1929’, Mines Department, MD 1, 5/3/33, Part 1, ANZ-W.

the Thames Unemployment Committee to provide workers to form a track to the Sovereign, at Shellback Creek, Thames.⁵¹⁸

Two of Rennick's children were born at Waiorongomai: Thelma Rachel, born in March 1899, and Annie Gwendoline, born in September 1900.⁵¹⁹ Another daughter was born after he left the district.⁵²⁰ When his father died in 1912, his estate was valued at £2,570,⁵²¹ but little of this went to Rennick: his mother inherited all the property, £100 was distributed amongst the four grandchildren, and any residue was shared amongst his four children.⁵²² After suffering from heart disease for six years, Rennick died in 1942, aged 74, when living at Remuera.⁵²³ He left his widow a mere £98 5s 3d.⁵²⁴

CONCLUSION

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

Appendix

Figure 1: The first children to be educated at Te Aroha, in 1881, photographed outside the Wesleyan Church, then being used as the

⁵¹⁸ Inspector of Mines, Minutes of Thames Unemployment Committee 1932-1935, Meeting of 15 February 1933, YCAB 1248/1, ANZ-A.

⁵¹⁹ Birth Certificates of Thelma Rachel Rennick, 13 March 1899, 1899/628; Annie Gwendoline Rennick, 10 September 1900, 1900/16271, BDM.

⁵²⁰ Death Certificate of James William Rennick, 20 May 1942, 1942/19801, BDM.

⁵²¹ *Auckland Weekly News*, 7 November 1912, p. 24.

⁵²² Probate of James Rennick, Probates, BBAE 1569/8614, ANZ-A.

⁵²³ Death Certificate of James William Rennick, 20 May 1942, 1942/19801, BDM.

⁵²⁴ Probate of J.W. Rennick, Probates, BBAE 1570, 778/42, ANZ-A.

schoolhouse. The teachers were Norman Matheson and Kate Truscott; Te Aroha Museum; used with permission.

Figure 2: John Samuel Hill, pupils of Waiorongomai School, December 1908, Eric Hill Collection.

Figure 3: John Samuel Hill, Waiorongomai School, c. 1914, Eric Hill Collection.



Figure 1: The first children to be educated at Te Aroha, in 1881, photographed outside the Wesleyan Church, then being used as a schoolhouse. The teachers were Norman Matheson and Kate Truscott: Te Aroha Museum; used with permission.

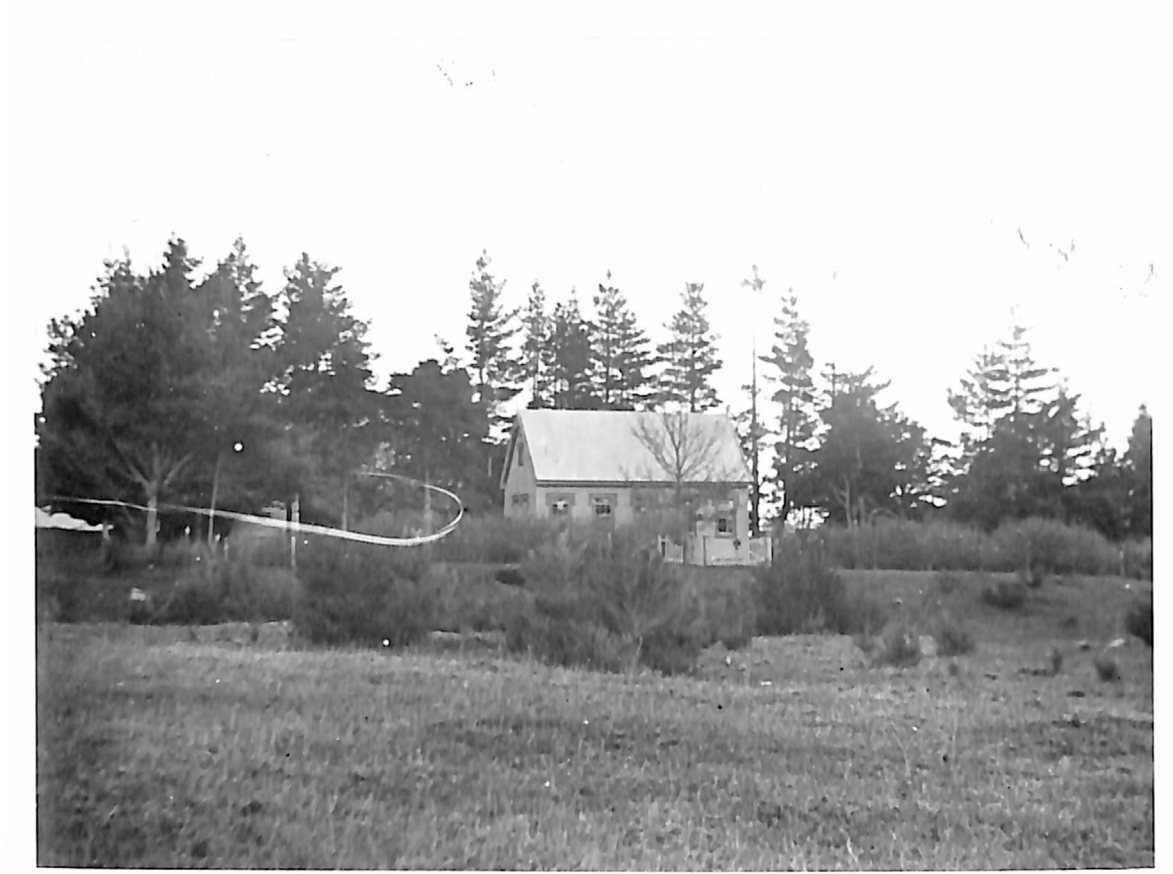


Figure 2: John Samuel Hill, pupils of Waiorongomai School, December 1908, Eric Hill Collection.



Figure 3: John Samuel Hill, Waiorongomai School, c. 1914, Eric Hill Collection.