RELIGION IN THE TE AROHA DISTRICT

Philip Hart

Te Aroha Mining District Working Papers

No. 124

Revised October 5, 2026

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

ISSN: 2463-6266

© 2016 Philip Hart

Contact: prhart1940@gmail.com

THE UNIVERSITY OF WAIKATO
Te Whare Wānanga o Waikato

RELIGION IN THE TE AROHA DISTRICT

Abstract: *The Christians of the Te Aroha district were split into a variety of denominations, though only a few of these had strong followings. Opinions varied about the religious zeal of the miners, and although the first services to be held after the initial rush to the new goldfield were well attended, this seems in part to have been out of curiosity.*

The Protestant denominations were notable for their ecumenical activities, notably in the temperance movement, in running societies for the young, and in evangelical crusades. They encouraged religious education, and the only Sunday School in the district, run by the Wesleyans, was attended by children from other denominations. Special meetings and entertainments held by Protestants to attract converts and to strengthen the faith of believers were regularly held and attended by many, even by some Catholics. In general, relations between Protestants and Catholics were friendly, and there were some 'mixed marriages', to use the contemporary term.

Details are given of the development of the Anglican, Presbyterian, Methodist, and Catholic churches, covering the erection and expansion of their buildings, their clergy, the growth of their congregations, and of their special activities, both social and religious – the former held because of the constant need to raise funds. It is impossible to prove the extent and depth of belief, but the immoral behaviour of some residents meant that continual efforts were seen as necessary to get them to change their ways for the better.

HOW MANY BELIEVERS?

According to James Belich, there was 'considerable evidence that organized religion was not enormously strong in colonial New Zealand'. Whilst virtually all Pakeha were nominally Christian, regular church attendance was lower than in Britain or Australia.[1] 'A vague, shared Protestantism, self-repressive yet "progressive," helped loosely bind most Pakeha'.[2] Despite this vagueness, census figures indicated that they chose to belong to a variety of denominations, the smaller of which probably displayed more fervour than the Anglicans, the largest but least-attended.[3] As recorded in the 1886 census, 2,320 Pakeha were then living in the Piako County, of whom 79 objected to stating their religion; the remainder belonged to the following denominations:

---

[1] James Belich, *Making Peoples: A history of the New Zealanders, from Polynesian settlement to the end of the nineteenth century* (Auckland, 1996), p. 438.

[2] Belich, p. 439.

[3] Belich, p. 439.

Church of England: 1,122
Undefined Protestant: 1
Presbyterian: 411
Wesleyans: 200
Methodist (no further definition): 21
Primitive Methodist: 3
Other Methodists: 2
Baptist: 60
Congregational Independents: 26
Lutheran: 5
Church of Christ: 2
Brethren: 5
Unitarian: 3
Quakers: 2
Salvation Army: 4
Other Protestants: 2
Roman Catholics: 355
Catholic (undefined): 1
Pagan: 1
Other denominations: 6
Freethinkers: 6
Of no denomination: 2
Unspecified: 1[4]

Five years later, the self-defined pagan had left, but there were now five Christadelphians, 13 'Hebrews', and one Mormon. One person stated they had no religion and three did not specify one; only 38 objected to disclosing their beliefs.[5]

MINERS AND RELIGION

According to the *Observer*, contradictorily writing in 1896, 'Miners are not as a rule very religious; certainly there are very sanctimonious ones amongst the diggers on

---

[4] *Result of a Census of the Colony of New Zealand, taken on the night of the 28th of March, 1886* (Wellington, 1887), p. 108.

[5] *Result of a Census of the Colony of New Zealand, taken on the night of the 5th of April, 1891* (Wellington, 1892), p. 149.

the Thames goldfields'.[6] In mid-1882, Te Aroha's *Observer* Man asked: 'Is it not strange that with so many bachelors up here, our young ladies have to go to church without an escort'.[7] One month later, the *Te Aroha Mail* noted that 'the attendance at religious services in Te Aroha is not what it should be, but Morrinsville and Waitoa residents are worse than we are'; one minister had a congregation of four at the former and none at the latter.[8] In 1895, the *Observer* Man noted that 'our clergymen are all popular',[9] but popularity did not necessarily result in large congregations. By 1898, despite increased mining in the last couple of years, Wesleyan and Presbyterian services had ceased at Waiorongomai, although occasional Anglican ones were still being held.[10]

THE FIRST SERVICES TO BE HELD AT TE AROHA

The Church of England was proud to have held the first service at the new goldfield, which was enthusiastically described by a local correspondent:

> Amidst all the hubbub and din in this now busy locality Church matters have not been forgotten or neglected, and a very fair start has already been made. On Sunday December 5 the Rev. W[illiam] Calder [vicar for the Hamilton district][11] paid us a visit, on his usual monthly trip to Waihou and Piako. He called round on the Friday evening previous and spoke to many members of the Church, the majority of whom promised to meet him on Sunday and bring their friends. Sunday was one of those days only to be found in New Zealand, beautifully cool and calm, with brilliant sunshine – just such a one as would be chosen for an open-air service. It had been intended to use for a church one of the numerous buildings in course of erection, but the number present utterly precluded any such arrangement; and from under the lee of the Warden's office went forth, for the first time at Te Aroha, the comforting words of the Gospel of Christ. A more attentive congregation could not be met with, although it consisted of men of all creeds and many nations; and, as I heard a man remark, although some came there *to see the fun*, they remained to listen with pleasurable feelings, and marked attention, to the Word of God preached to them in forcible words, but withal in a simple style, every thought being expressed in language easily understood by all present. The scene was one not to be forgotten by those who saw it, the surroundings being simply charming – for no view more picturesque can be seen in this island than Te Aroha mountain on a fine day. The singing added considerably to the success of

---

[6] *Observer*, 29 August 1896, p. 3.

[7] 'Te Aroha', *Observer*, 10 June 1882, p. 20.

[8] *Te Aroha Mail*, n.d., reprinted in *New Zealand Herald*, 11 July 1882, p. 4.

[9] 'Te Aroha', *Observer*, 21 September 1895, p. 22.

[10] *Te Aroha News*, 12 February 1898, p. 2.

[11] See *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 2, p. 217..

> the gathering, being led by Mr R[obert] B[ruce Baker] Willis [a Waitoa farmer][12] on his cornet in a manner surprising to everyone. Altogether the congregation were immensely gratified.[13]

In 1917, a prominent miner, John McCombie,[14] who had been in attendance, recalled Calder, who had ridden 'from Hamilton expressly for the purpose', taking this service:

> Previously Sunday was not observed as a day of rest, and the hotel was run on the same lines as upon ordinary weekdays. Upon this particular occasion the hotel had the words, "Closed Till After Church Service" posted on the door. The choir was led by Harry Whitaker,[15] and some of the hardest cases on the goldfields were to be seen singing the hymn "Galilee," at the top of their voices. Men belonging to all denominations were assembled around the parson, and the sermon was both appropriate and impressive. The hat was passed along by Manukau [Hugh Robert] Jones,[16] who succeeded in extracting coins from the pockets of men who were never known to attend a religious meeting before.[17]

Another participant praised Calder as being

> just the stamp of man to take in a rough community like ours, and many who went to scoff remained to pray. Mr Calder made a decided hit…. I'm told he is a bit of a bruiser too, and that perhaps helped to send him up in my estimation. Rumour has it that he once trounced a man at Hamilton for blaspheming in his presence. More honor to him say I.[18]

According to the *Te Aroha Miner*, about 150 attended this service, with Calder delivering 'a most telling address, particularly applicable to the moral condition of men on a new rush, and we never before heard such general delight expressed at the

---

[12] See *Selwyn Electoral Roll, 1881*, no. 726; *Waikato Electoral Roll, 1884*, p. 23; *Press*, 23 August 1933, p. 10.

[13] *Church Gazette*, January 1881, p. 2.

[14] See paper on Billy Nicholl.

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

[16] See *Observer*, 16 July 1881, p. 489, 27 February 1897, p. 18, 21 May 1904, p. 7; 'Aboriginal' [John McCombie], 'Reminiscences of Quartzopolis: Incidents of the Good Old Days', *Thames Star*, 24 December 1902, Supplement, p. 1; F.W. W[eston], 'Thames Reminiscences', *New Zealand Herald*, 27 January 1923, p. 11.

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

[18] 'Verdant', 'On the Rush', *Te Aroha Miner*, 7 December 1880, reprinted in *Waikato Times*, 9 December 1880, p. 2.

ministrations of a clergyman, by persons belonging to all denominations'.[19] In 1930, 'Old Timer', who estimated that over 1,000 had been present, recalled that 'after the service a number of miners and others stayed behind to thank the Rev. gentleman for his address'.[20]

On the Sunday preceding Christmas, James Thomas Pinfold,[21] newly appointed as Wesleyan minister for the district, preached 'in the morning, in front of the Warden's office, at 11 o'clock; and in the evening, in Wilson and Moore's buildings, at 6.30. Both services were well attended. The Rev Father O'Reilly held a service in Wilson's shop, at 11 a.m., and had quite a large congregation'.[22] All these services 'were well attended and respectfully listened to'.[23] The *Observer* reported one aftermath of the Wesleyan's evening service:

> The other Sunday evening, after the usual service, the miners wound up with "God save the Queen," which loyal hymn, however, did not meet with the approval of the Minister, Mr Pinfold. Returning to a tent about fifty miners with three cornet accompaniments spent the rest of the evening in singing selections from Sankey's popular hymn book.[24]

ECUMENICALISM AMONGST PROTESTANTS

As indicating a general lack of religious fervour, Belich noted that 'traditional denominational antagonisms were allowed to lapse'.[25] In general, and in the Te Aroha district in particular, as the first man to deliver a sermon on the new goldfield recalled, 'relations between clergy and ministers of the various denominations were very harmonious'.[26] Whilst there was an unbridgeable divide between Protestants and Catholics, the former regularly shared facilities and even services, notably those held to extol the desirability of temperance.[27] For instance, at an 1885 meeting of the Band of Hope, a temperance body supported by all the main Protestant denominations, the Anglican clergyman presided and the Wesleyan one joined him on the platform.[28] This

---

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

[20] 'Old Timer', 'Early Waihou: How the First Hall was Erected', *Te Aroha News*, 28 July 1930, p. 5.

[21] Details of his life and work covered in section on Methodism.

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

[23] Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 23 December 1880, p. 2.

[24] 'Te Aroha', *Observer*, 1 January 1881, p. 150.

[25] Belich, p. 438.

[26] James T. Pinfold, *Fifty Years in Maoriland* (London, 1930), p. 68.

[27] See paper on the temperance movement in the Te Aroha district.

[28] *Waikato Times*, 25 July 1885, p. 2.

was typical; when a Presbyterian minister was appointed in 1889 he joined his colleagues at these meetings.[29] The Wesleyan minister at that time was the secretary.[30] In 1895, the Anglican minister was president, the other two Protestant ministers were the vice-presidents, the Presbyterian one also being the treasurer.[31]

Mokena Hou[32] and George Lipsey[33] offered free sections of land to all denominations as sites for churches.[34] The Wesleyans were the first to erect one, in 1881.[35] As at first there were no resident clergy, 'Ministers of one denomination or the other visit us once a week to attend to the wants of our souls'.[36] Not having their own church buildings, in 1883 Anglicans and Presbyterians held their services alternatively in the newly erected public hall at Te Aroha.[37] At Waiorongomai, when a hall was being erected it was described as 'a place for public worship by all denominations, pending the erection of buildings specially set apart for that purpose'.[38] As churches were never erected in this settlement, services continued to be held in it.[39] School buildings were also used for services and church gatherings.[40] In 1886, when a bazaar raised funds for the Anglicans' church building fund, the *Te Aroha News* found it 'most pleasing to find that members of the other religious bodies all combined most heartily to make the bazaar the great success it was'.[41] In 1900, at a ceremony to lay the foundation stone of the new Wesleyan church, the Anglican and Presbyterian ministers were on the platform, and 'in most cordial speeches, congratulated their Wesleyan friends on the progress they had made, and wished them all success in the future'.[42]

In April 1886, the Anglican vicar spoke at a welcome tea for the new Wesleyan minister.[43] Four months later, when the first Anglican church was dedicated, the Anglican paper applauded the other denominations:

---

[29] For example, *Te Aroha News*, 10 August 1889, p. 2.

[30] For example, *Te Aroha News*, 10 November 1889, p. 2.

[31] *Te Aroha News*, 10 April 1895, p. 2.

[32] See paper on his life.

[33] See paper on his life.

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

[35] *Waikato Times*, 11 August 1881, p. 2.

[36] Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 11 June 1881, p. 3.

[37] *Waikato Times*, 10 April 1883, p. 2.

[38] *Te Aroha News*, 15 November 1884, p. 2.

[39] For example, *Te Aroha News*, 22 May 1886, p. 2, 23 November 1889, p. 2.

[40] For example, *Te Aroha News*, 6 September 1884, p. 7.

[41] *Te Aroha News*, 13 November 1886, p. 3.

[42] *New Zealand Herald*, 6 October 1900, p. 4.

[43] *Te Aroha News*, 17 April 1886, p. 2.

> It should be mentioned, as a proof of the good feeling existing between the various congregations in Te Aroha, that the Presbyterians, who have not at present services of their own, have lent their organ and lamps to the *S. Mark's* congregation for the time being; and that the Wesleyan minister gave public notice that there would be no separate evening service for his people on the day of the dedication of *S. Mark's*. This is as it should be; and it is to be hoped that the good feeling thus exhibited may be maintained, and that instead of engaging in strife among themselves, the different congregations may enter into a generous rivalry as to which of them may do most to promote God's glory and the good of men.[44]

Two years later, the vicar chaired a lecture by a Wesleyan minister held in the Wesleyan church.[45] When a woman was farewelled two months later, it was noted that she had been organist for both the Anglican Church and the Wesleyan Sunday School.[46] In the following year, the Presbyterian minister conducted the funeral of the Wesleyan minister's son.[47] Six years later, at a memorial service for the wife of a former Wesleyan minister, he gave a tribute.[48] When a packed 'Evangelistic Service' was held in the public hall in 1889, in addition to the local Protestant clergymen 'Captain Arundel', a Sydney evangelist,[49] participated. 'The service was a very hearty one, members of all the denominations being present'.[50]

At a concert held in 1889 both to welcome the new Presbyterian minister and to raise funds for his church, the chairman was pleased that 'representatives of every existing denomination' were present, implying that some Catholics attended. The minister expressed pleasure at seeing 'so many representatives of other denominations present, and willing to assist the Presbyterian cause'.[51] When the Wesleyan minister left in 1890, the *Te Aroha News* wrote that he had 'won the respect and esteem of all classes and all denominations'.[52] At his last lecture, given in aid of the library, the Anglican minister was voted to the chair.[53] At a meeting held in 1893, the Presbyterian minister

---

[44] *Church Gazette*, September 1886, p. 83.

[45] *Te Aroha News*, 25 February 1888, p. 2.

[46] *Te Aroha News*, 14 April 1888, p. 2.

[47] *Te Aroha News*, 22 June 1889, p. 2.

[48] *Te Aroha News*, 7 December 1895, p. 2.

[49] See *New Zealand Herald*, 30 July 1883, p. 4, 4 February 1884, p. 5, 5 May 1884, p. 5.

[50] *Te Aroha News*, 23 November 1889, p. 2, 27 November 1889, p. 2.

[51] *Te Aroha News*, 17 August 1889, p. 2.

[52] *Te Aroha News*, 9 April 1890, p. 2.

[53] *Te Aroha News*, 9 April 1890, p. 2.

presided, the Anglican one gave an address, and the Wesleyan one gave a reading.[54] When another Wesleyan minister departed three years later,

> a combined service was held in the Public Hall on Sunday. The Anglicans and Presbyterians generously agreed to forego their regular forenoon service, and as a consequence a large congregation of all denominations assembled to hear the farewell sermon. The volunteers called a church parade for the occasion and were in attendance with their band.[55]

During the 1890s, Protestants of all hues supported the British and Foreign Bible Society, with all the clergy holding leadership positions and speaking at its meetings. [56] Protestants, mostly Anglicans, also organized a Young Men's Club, which had its own rooms. 'Between twenty and thirty young men' attended its 1892 annual meeting and elected the Anglican clergyman as its president; no other ministers were elected to its committee. 'This club provides reading, recreation, and pleasant evenings for its members, and has done much good work among the young men. It is entirely self-supporting, and at present has a credit balance of more than £9'.[57] In the following month it moved its meetings to the larger Park House. 'There are more than forty members this winter and a strong committee, and the club shows signs of becoming a great power for good in the place'.[58] Six weeks later, it held a 'free-and-easy', attracting 'about 50' to a 'most enjoyable evening' of songs performed by 15 of its members. 'It is intended to hold these meetings every three or four weeks'.[59]

After lapsing for a time, at the end of May 1894 this club 're-opened' with a dinner in its rooms, with about 40 enjoying 'one of the best spreads ever seen in Te Aroha'. After this meal, 'the young men withdrew to the reading-room, where a concert was held and addresses given by the president, vice-presidents, and secretary upon the future conduct of the club'. It was decided to form 'a Union Parliament on the lines of the one in Auckland', and two men 'were requested to become instructors in the gymnasium. The club has now had an enthusiastic start' and was expected to 'go on splendidly and be a credit to the district'.[60]

---

[54] Te Aroha Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 8 July 1893, p. 23.

[55] Te Aroha Correspondent, *New Zealand Herald*, 31 March 1896, p. 6.

[56] Te Aroha Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 4 June 1892, p. 29, 2 June 1894, p. 22; *Te Aroha News*, 22 June 1895, p. 2, 17 March 1898, p. 2.

[57] Te Aroha Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 28 May 1892, p. 23.

[58] Te Aroha Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 18 June 1892, p. 23.

[59] Te Aroha Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 6 August 1892, p. 23.

[60] Te Aroha Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 9 June 1894, p. 22.

At the beginning of 1895, it was announced that a branch of the United Christian Endeavour Society, otherwise known as the Young People's Society of Christian Endeavour, would be formed.[61] Its foundation meeting, guided by members of the Paeroa branch, was held in the Anglican church, and elected its vicar as president and the Wesleyan and Presbyterian ministers as vice-presidents. 'A number of young people were enrolled as active members, and the meeting then closed with repetition of verses and short exhortations and prayer'.[62] By March, weekly meetings of from 20 to 30 people were being held in the Anglican church.[63] Two months later, delegates attended the first anniversary celebration of the Paeroa branch.[64] In June, a correspondent reported that 'the Christian Endeavour movement is very successful here, and is expected to have a powerful effect upon the religious life of a great many in and near Te Aroha'. The three Protestant churches were 'all united' in its support, providing 'an object lesson of the way in which different bodies of Christians may unite to undertake aggressive work'. Recently three young Auckland men had 'spent a week or two here, and during their stay did a great deal to help in the Society's work'.[65] Two months later, a young woman was elected as Te Aroha's representative to the annual convention held in Auckland.[66] In the following month nearly 50 young people attended one of its Thursday night meetings.[67]

In March 1896, a meeting of the 'Te Aroha United Society of Christian Endeavourers' elected the new Wesleyan minister as its president, with the other two Protestant ministers being elected vice-presidents. 'The Society meets alternatively in the Wesleyan and Anglican Churches'. As 'a counter attraction to the races', on race day it organized a picnic at the Willows, downstream from Te Aroha; 'as the weather was favourable, there was a large attendance of the general public'.[68] Two years later the society was still in existence, members being called to meetings by the ringing of the bells of the Anglican Church.[69]

---

[61] *Te Aroha News*, 23 January 1895, p. 2, 13 July 1895, p. 2.

[62] *Te Aroha News*, 27 February 1895, p. 2, 2 March 1895, p. 2.

[63] *Te Aroha News*, 20 March 1895, p. 2.

[64] *Te Aroha News*, 4 May 1895, p. 2.

[65] Te Aroha Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 1 June 1895, p. 23.

[66] *Te Aroha News*, 31 August 1895, p. 2.

[67] *Te Aroha News*, 21 September 1895, p. 2.

[68] Te Aroha Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 21 March 1896, p. 23.

[69] *Te Aroha News*, 19 July 1898, p. 2.

In Easter 1892, Edward Young Cox,[70] a leading Anglican who was the senior lay reader, organized a religious convention 'upon the lines of the one held yearly at Keswick, England'. Being 'entirely unsectarian', several speakers from 'various Christian bodies' were involved, and its promoters hoped it would create 'a greater unity among Christians'.[71] Another convention was held at Eastertide two years later. 'The preparatory meetings held in the different churches have been well attended and have already done much to draw the Christian bodies into closer fellowship'. All the Protestant clergy would attend.[72] A correspondent provided full details of this event:

> The United Christian Convention commenced on Good Friday and concluded on the evening of Easter Sunday. Special preparatory services had been held in the different churches for some weeks before, at which special intercession was made for God's blessing upon the convention. At all these meetings a splendid spirit of unity and love was exhibited. It was originally intended that special subjects should be treated by various Christians from different parts, and that meetings for the discussion of these subjects should be held. Unfortunately, however, it was found that the speakers expected found it impossible to come, and the Convention took more the form of meetings for the mutual comfort and encouragement of believers, and also for the preaching of the Gospel of God's love to the unconverted. In the fulfilment of these two objects there is no doubt the Convention has been eminently successful.
> A good number of friends, representing nearly all sections of the Church of Christ, arrived by train on Thursday and Friday, and the first meeting was held on the Friday morning, at seven o'clock. In the afternoon of that day an open-air service was held in the Domain at three o'clock and was very largely attended. Various speakers gave addresses, and the meeting was most encouraging. In the evening a united evangelistic service,

presided over by the Anglican vicar, with three speakers from different denominations, 'was the means of great blessing to believers and unbelievers'. On Saturday, meetings were held at both 7.00 in the morning and 7.30 in the evening. Despite having four speakers, 'attendance at the latter was not so large as on the previous evening, on account of business places being open, and other attractions, but it was nevertheless a most helpful meeting, and much enjoyed by those present'.

> On Easter morning those attending the Convention attended, at the invitation of the Rev Mr Evans, the early communion service at St Mark's [Anglican] Church. It was a remarkable thing to see representatives of nearly every section of the Protestant Church uniting upon this Easter

---

[70] See *Auckland Star*, 2 October 1890, p. 5; letter from E.Y. Cox, *New Zealand Herald*, 3 August 1894, p. 6; *Hawkes Bay Herald*, 19 January 1895, p. 4; *Press*, 16 November 1900, p. 4, 21 July 1904, p. 5.

[71] Te Aroha Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 9 April 1892, p. 23.

[72] Te Aroha Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 17 March 1894, p. 10.

> morning in commemorating once again the great sacrifice of the Cross and was a practical illustration of the fact that Christians, notwithstanding their unhappy divisions, are one in the faith and worship of the Great Master.

In the afternoon, after a united children's meeting in the hall a public meeting was held in the domain. The concluding meeting, held in the town hall that evening, was addressed by two Hamilton women.

> Afterwards several testified of the good they had received during the Convention, which was then concluded with prayer and the singing of the Doxology.
> There is no doubt that these meetings have done a large amount of good in the way of uniting the members of the different sections of the Church together and proclaiming the gospel of God's grace to a large number of visitors and others.

This correspondent hoped that all Christians would be 'strengthened in their resolve to love and serve God and made to feel that they are all children of the one Father, and that their interests are identical'.[73]

In 1894, the *Te Aroha News* noted an event 'somewhat unique in ecclesiastical circles'. Because of the death of the Anglican clergyman's wife, two Methodist ministers had taken his services. As the Presbyterian minister was away at Paeroa, a Methodist lay preacher filled in for him. At Waihou a Methodist minister preached, and a Methodist lay preacher did likewise at Te Aroha West, meaning that 'all pulpits in and around Te Aroha were supplied by Methodist preachers. One of the most practical evidences of unity and catholicity of spirit amongst the churches that it has been our lot to place on record'.[74] A correspondent explained that the local Methodist minister had preached in the evening service at Te Aroha and a visiting one in the morning.

> The sermons both morning and evening were of a most impressive character, both preachers referring in feeling terms to the great loss sustained by the incumbent…. The Anglican Church at Te Aroha owes a deep debt of gratitude for the services so kindly offered and so efficiently rendered…. After the service in the evening, the vestry met and passed votes of thanks to the clergymen who had officiated.[75]

Edward Cox was concerned that these reports implied 'that the services, except the reading of the lessons, were conducted by the ministers of the Wesleyan denomination. As such a course would be very unusual, I desire to say that the services

---

[73] A Te Aroha correspondent, *New Zealand Herald*, 29 March 1894, p. 6.

[74] *Te Aroha News*, n.d., reprinted in *Waikato Times*, 4 August 1894, p. 8.

[75] Te Aroha Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 4 August 1894, p. 22.

were both conducted by me', with the Wesleyans preaching the sermons. For their 'kind help on this mournful occasion, I, in common with the rest of the Anglican communion in this neighbourhood, am deeply grateful'.[76] Such co-operation was not unique; the following year, at a funeral the Anglican minister was 'assisted' by the Wesleyan one.[77] At an official farewell to the Anglican minister in 1902, both the Presbyterian and Methodist ministers praised him.[78] In the following year, a service celebrating the anniversary of the Methodist Sunday School was attended by the children and teachers of the Anglican and Presbyterian schools.[79]

There were many examples of Protestant laymen and laywomen ignoring denominational exclusiveness. For instance, Charles Ahier, an accountant,[80] was a leading Anglican, being a churchwarden from 1886 to 1893 and a delegate to the Waikato Archideaconal Conference in 1889.[81] When he resigned as people's warden because of leaving the district, the vestry unanimously moved that his resignation

> be accepted sincere regret, and that the hearty thanks of the vestry be conveyed to him for his self-denying services as church-warden for the past eight years, for the able manner in which he has carried out the many duties of his office, and also for his regular attendance at the services of the church and assiduous attention to the visitors and other members of the congregation.[82]

(Before settling in Te Aroha, Ahier had assisted a Thames bazaar for the Primitive Methodists,[83] because his wife was a member of that faith.[84] When their baby son died in 1877, he was given a Baptist funeral.[85])

In 1891, Agnes Baskett, wife of Nathaniel, a Waiorongomai farmer,[86] was praised in the Anglican journal for playing the organ at a confirmation service. She 'for some years has cheerfully given up a great deal of her time in improving the singing at our

---

[76] Letter from E.Y. Cox, *New Zealand Herald*, 3 August 1894, p. 6.

[77] *Te Aroha News*, 13 April 1895, p. 2.

[78] *Auckland Weekly News*, 22 May 1902, p. 40.

[79] *Auckland Weekly News*, 5 November 1903, p. 27.

[80] See *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 6, p. 115.

[81] *Church Gazette*, September 1886, p. 83, April 1889, p. 41; *Te Aroha News*, 24 April 1886, p. 2, 15 January 1887, p. 3, 23 January 1889, p. 2, 25 January 1890, p. 2; *Waikato Times*, 31 January 1888, p. 2.

[82] Te Aroha Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 11 November 1893, p. 23.

[83] *Thames Advertiser*, 14 April 1881, p. 3.

[84] Death Certificate of Jane Margaret Ahier, 30 April 1893, 1893/2362, BDM.

[85] Death Certificate of Charles Francis Ahier, 29 September 1877, 1877/1677, BDM.

[86] See *Te Aroha News*, 1 September 1883, p. 2, 29 September 1883, p. 2, 22 August 1885, p. 7.

services'.[87] When the family moved to Te Aroha in 1902, she resigned as organist, and the congregation presented her with 'a pretty gold brooch'.[88] Her husband was a people's warden at Waiorongomai.[89] Like many other Anglicans, in the absence of an Anglican Sunday School their children were sent to the Wesleyan one.[90] Another example of the latter was George Robert Beeson, a carpenter,[91] who had an Anglican wedding and whose children were baptized as Anglicans.[92] The obituary of his wife Joanna recorded that, after his death, she was a parishioner in the Remuera parish for 25 years 'and took a keen interest in church work'.[93] When at Waiorongomai, her children attended the Wesleyan Sunday School, in which she taught for several years.[94]

The unavailability of clergymen of one's own denomination influenced residents' choice of service, as illustrated by one miner, William McLean.[95] His children were normally baptized into the Church of England, but in 1881, as there was no minister of this church available, his new daughter was the first child to be baptized in the new Wesleyan church.[96]

Te Aroha was hardly unique in the harmonious relations amongst Protestant churches. For instance, when an Anglican minister was transferred from Thames to Te Aroha in 1889, a Thames correspondent described him as 'very popular here and will be greatly missed not only by the members of his own congregation but also by other

---

[87] Te Aroha Correspondent, *Church Gazette*, November 1891, p. 123.

[88] Te Aroha Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 6 March 1902, p. 33.

[89] *Te Aroha News*, 18 January 1890, p. 2.

[90] Waiorongomai Sunday School, Admission Book 1884-1889, entries for 6 January 1889, 13 January 1889, 3050/888, Methodist Archives, Auckland.

[91] See *Te Aroha News*, 27 May 1909, p. 2; *New Zealand Herald*, 8 February 1934, p. 14.

[92] Marriage Certificate of George Robert Beeson, 1 March 1869, 1869/5379, BDM; Notices of Intentions to Marry 1869, Births Deaths and Marriages, BDM 20/14, folio 169, ANZ-W; Church of England, Coromandel District, Baptism Register 1865-1910, nos. 34, 73, 112, 161, 205, Anglican Archives, Auckland; Hamilton East District, Register of Baptisms 1879-1908, nos. 117, 181, 182, 369, 370, Anglican Diocesan Archives, Hamilton.

[93] *New Zealand Herald*, 8 February 1934, p. 14.

[94] Waiorongomai Sunday School, Admission Book 1884-1889, entries for 3 January 1886, 6 January 1889, 3050/888, Methodist Archives, Auckland.

[95] See paper on the Prospectors' Claim at Te Aroha.

[96] Upper Thames Circuit, Baptism Register 1881-1929, no. 8, Methodist Church Archives, Te Aroha; Church of England, Hamilton East District, Register of Baptisms 1879-1908, nos. 102-104, Anglican Diocesan Archives, Hamilton; *Strong Blows the Winds: A brief record of the history of the Te Aroha Methodist Church and Circuit 1881-1956* (Te Aroha, 1956), [p. 5].

denominations'.[97] At Morrinsville in 1902, 'a mixed congregation worships under the charge of ministers of various denominations'.[98]

SPECIAL EVANGELICAL CRUSADES

Periodically, special evangelical meetings were held, usually featuring Protestant preachers from outside the district. For instance, in March 1884, four American evangelists spent two weeks in Te Aroha, holding services and meetings every night, including four temperance meetings (one held at Waiorongomai), in public halls and the Wesleyan chapel.[99] The local newspaper described them as 'decidedly American and rather quaint in their ways'.[100] At the conclusion of their last service, held in the Wesleyan chapel, 'several persons publicly testified at having been personally blessed through their visit'.[101]

In 1889, when the evangelical service earlier noted was held in the Te Aroha hall, the *Te Aroha News* hoped for more such services.[102] When some were held during the convention held over Easter in 1892, the *Observer* Man noted this effort 'for the deepening of spiritual life, and *entre nous* [between ourselves] it will stand deepening'.[103] Three years later, a Wesleyan minister conducted a 'fairly successful evangelical mission', the 'members of all denominations' who attended praising his work.[104] In 1908 a speaker from Auckland held a meeting for men only about 'a subject intensely interesting to young men who wish to succeed in life'; the title of his talk, 'Looking Towards Sodom', enticed 120 to attend.[105]

From 1890 onwards, regular open-air services were held in the domain during the summer months.[106] The first was held in February 1890:

> With commendable foresight and pluck, Rev Mr Evans of St Mark's Anglican Church, having obtained the sanction of the Domain Board to hold religious services in the domain ground, and the co-operation of the other two Protestant clergymen here, Revs Mr Lawry and Norrie held their

---

[97] 'Our Thames Letter', *Observer*, 25 May 1889, p. 11.

[98] *Auckland Weekly News*, 22 May 1902, p. 40.

[99] *Te Aroha News*, 15 March 1884, p. 2, 22 March 1884, p. 2, 5 April 1884, p. 2.

[100] *Te Aroha News*, 15 March 1884, p. 2.

[101] *Te Aroha News*, 5 April 1884, p. 2.

[102] *Te Aroha News*, 27 November 1889, p. 2.

[103] 'Te Aroha', *Observer*, 23 April 1892, p. 17.

[104] *Te Aroha News*, 21 September 1895, p. 2.

[105] *Te Aroha News*, 10 October 1908, p. 3, 13 October 1908, p. 2.

[106] Te Aroha Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 26 November 1892, p. 23.

> first Sunday evening services in the domain before a large assemblage of townspeople and visitors. Very able and instructive addresses were delivered by Messrs Evans and Lawry, and the whole service was most attractive. It was mentioned at the end, by Mr Evans, that next Sunday the Te Aroha brass band will be in attendance and assist to make these services, which they intend to keep up every Sunday evening, more attractive still.[107]

At the beginning of March, all the Protestant clergy addressed a 'large and attentive audience', the largest to date. 'The singing was hearty, led by the harmonium'.[108] At another service held a month later by the Anglican and Presbyterian ministers, bad weather did not prevent a large attendance. As the weather was starting to get colder, these services were to be transferred to the public hall.[109] For the same climatic reason, the next open air service began at four o'clock instead of the usual six o'clock.[110] When these evening services recommenced in November 1892, a correspondent noted that 'the good attendance showed that they have lost none of their popularity', but the singing 'would be much improved if a harmonium could be obtained'.[111]

The Salvation Army first visited the district in July 1884, when over three days it held 'Holiness Conventions' at both Te Aroha and Waiorongomai;[112] no details were published. Four years later, 'two Salvation Army lasses' visited 'with a view, apparently, of ascertaining whether Te Aroha requires the services of the Army or not'.[113] In the following year an odd item of news was published in the *Observer*:

> A certain English millionaire who has a number of relatives at Te Aroha, is said to have received an offer from the Salvation Army (Auckland station) that if he would guarantee the salary of a captain, a branch would be opened at Te Aroha, and all relations would be saved within a twelvemonth. The old gentleman couldn't see it; said he would rather see the lot d—d.[114]

Not until 1890 did a Salvation Army contingent set up their base in the former *Aroha Gazette* office. A correspondent commented that although the township was 'well off for churches and parsons, there are many hard cases their influence does not

---

[107] Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 13 February 1890, p. 3.

[108] *Te Aroha News*, 5 March 1890, p. 2.

[109] *Te Aroha News*, 2 April 1890, p. 2.

[110] *Te Aroha News*, 5 April 1890, p. 2.

[111] Te Aroha Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 26 November 1892, p. 23.

[112] *Te Aroha News*, 26 June 1884, p. 7.

[113] *Te Aroha News*, 1 September 1888, p. 2.

[114] *Observer*, 20 July 1889, p. 11.

reach, and to those the Army should be commended'.[115] One month later, this correspondent implied that the Protestant clergy viewed the Army as interlopers:

> Rumour had it, a week or two ago, that the Salvation Army were to be amongst us. It is true that a family with the S brand on their clothes were wisely taking the very mundane advantage of the flax boom by working at one of the local mills here, but further than this the "Army" has not yet advanced.

As the other ministers had pre-empted their mission by holding their own meetings in the domain, it appeared 'that we can do very well without the "Army" '.[116] When another visit was made two years later, another correspondent was dubious about its value:

> Captain Foster and Lieutenant Scott, of the Salvation Army Prison Gate Brigade, held two meeting here last week, and were fairly successful in interesting people in their worthy work. The meetings were held in the public hall, and were pretty well attended, notwithstanding the very unfavourable weather. It is announced that the Salvation Army intend commencing operations here soon, and I think the feeling generally is that it will be a mistake if they do so. There are already four Christian bodies in the field, namely, Anglican, Roman Catholic, Wesleyan, and Presbyterian; quite as many as at present are actually required, and the advent of a fifth body will only subtract a few from each of the present congregations. Many well-wishers of the Army would like to have occasional visits from some of its officers and would give them a hearty welcome at such times, but they think that ground so well worked as this district is does not present a good field for the permanent efforts of the Salvation Army.[117]

For whatever reason, the Army restricted itself to periodic visits, such as the one held later that year:

> The combination company in connection with the Salvation Army, under the direction of Staff Captain Edwards, arrived here by train on Tuesday evening, and gave an interesting and instructive entertainment in the Public Hall. The meeting consisted of addresses, solos, and duets (both vocal and instrumental), recitations, and choruses. Many of the pieces were very well rendered. The addresses were pointed and earnest and calculated to do good to those that heard them. Several pounds must have been taken at the doors.[118]

---

[115] Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 14 January 1890, p. 2.

[116] Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 13 February 1890, p. 3.

[117] Te Aroha Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 28 May 1892, p. 23.

[118] Te Aroha Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 1 October 1892, p. 23.

In March 1894, 'Major Musa Bhai, the leader of the Indian contingent of the Salvation Army', spent some days at Te Aroha recovering from 'the severe strain of his Australasian tour'. After benefiting from taking the waters, he wrote in the visitors' book that he was 'Delighted with the place and drawn nearer to the Great Creator'. He conducted an evening service at the Wesleyan church 'and afterwards the united prayer meeting. His words on both occasions will make a lasting impression upon those who heard them'.[119] The Army's involvement with other denominations was not unusual; the following year, for instance, at the end of a Presbyterian service Captain Payne gave details of its 'rescue work', presumably meaning saving 'fallen women', for which a collection would be taken.[120] Details of its work have not been recorded after 1900, when in March a meeting in the main street was attended by a 'good crowd'.[121]

Mormon missionaries concentrated their efforts on converting Maori.[122] That Pakeha did not take them seriously was illustrated in 1895, when an Australian lecturer promising 'Feasts of Laughter' on mirthful topics including Mormonism.[123]

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

In 1907, an Auckland columnist feared that New Zealand boys were degenerating.[124] Correspondents agreed that, in particular, they were ignorant of the Bible.[125] This debate prompted a response from 'A Mother' of Te Aroha:

> I am a mother, and have been a Sunday-school teacher, and my experience as such as not unlike that of your correspondents. But I do not believe the children were as ignorant as they appeared. I knew many children, through shyness and a not unnatural reserve before others, refuse to be drawn about such personal matters as their prayers and Bible knowledge. I thought then (and do so still) that few mothers existed who did not teach their infants some simple prayer as soon as they could lisp, and later, "Our Father."

She accused fathers of not fulfilling 'their rightful place as priest of their household and their family's instructor and guide', for the number who did so could be counted 'on the fingers of my two hands. But I know many, and I fear their name is

---

[119] Te Aroha Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 17 March 1894, p. 10.

[120] *Te Aroha News*, 15 June 1895, p. 2.

[121] *Te Aroha News*, 8 March 1900, p. 2.

[122] See paper on Maori Te Aroha after the opening of the goldfield in 1880.

[123] *Te Aroha News*, 3 April 1895, p. 2.

[124] 'Mercutio', 'Gossip', *Auckland Weekly News*, 28 February 1907, p. 16.

[125] Two letters printed in 'Mercutio', 'Gossip', *Auckland Weekly News*, 7 March 1907, p. 16.

"legion," who have never read a line of God's word to their children, or given them one word of religious instruction'.[126]

To make up for this parental laxity, some ministers provided an hour of religious instruction after school on one day a week for children whose parents wished it,[127] and Sunday Schools were established at both Te Aroha and Waiorongomai. As an example of how all Protestants participated in these, when an agent for the British and Foreign Bible Society visited, 'a meeting of the Sunday-school children (Wesleyan, Presbyterian, and Anglican), with their parents and friends', was held in the Anglican church to hear 'a most interesting address'.[128]

A Wesleyan Sunday School was formed in 1883 for children from all the Protestant denominations, and in that year it had 85 members at Te Aroha and nearly 100 at Waiorongomai.[129] The Waiorongomai schoolroom was used for meetings there;[130] George Devey was its superintendent,[131] with Mark Lovell, a leading temperance advocate,[132] one of the teachers, as its secretary and treasurer. At a meeting of the teachers held in July 1886 Lovell announced that 'he had paid parents two visits requesting more regular attendance and expressed his opinion that the parents were indifferent and cold on the matter of their children attending regularly and who did not take the slightest trouble to see the children did go'. Then charges 'of a character somewhat serious were laid' by Devey based on 'information received from some men' who 'had left the School and declined to return while Mr Lovell was there'. During a long discussion, 'no definite reason could be given' by Devey for their action. 'Subsequently Mr Lovell demanded that he should be informed of facts and what the charges were', and when he offered to state what he believed were the charges permission was refused because the complainants should state them. After Devey first saying that 'he could not make his reasons known as the young men had informed him', he explained he was referring to reports made about 18 months previously about money belonging to the Band of Hope. Lovell denied any financial improprieties, and these reports were dismissed as 'frivolous'.

---

[126] Letter from 'A Mother', printed in 'Mercutio', 'Gossip', *Auckland Weekly News*, 28 March 1907, p. 16.

[127] For example, *Te Aroha News*, 11 August 1883, p. 2, 30 April 1887, p. 2.

[128] Te Aroha Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 4 June 1892, p. 29.

[129] *Strong Blow the Winds*, [p. 20].

[130] *Te Aroha News*, 7 July 1883, p. 2.

[131] See paper on George Devey and his family.

[132] See chapter on the temperance movement in the Te Aroha district.

> Mr Devey mentioned other reasons of a personal, official and private nature. Mrs Lovell asked why Mr Devey brought up these things which had nothing to do with matter before the meeting and after such a long period. Mr Devey stated Mr Lovell was unpopular among the young men and with all he heard he thought it best for the school Mr Lovell resign.

After denying that he had offered to play for dances, Lovell resigned as secretary, treasurer and teacher and his wife as teacher and organist.[133]

In mid-August 1887, Lovell placed a notice in the local newspaper: 'I EMPHATICALLY DENY reports originating by Mr GEORGE DEVEY, Senior, re Sunday School matters, and hereby Challenge him to prove anything that he has stated that reflects on my character'.[134] A meeting of the teachers, held on the following day, resolved that Devey 'take no notice of Mr Lovell's advertisement' and that the chairman 'be requested to investigate the matter'.[135] No outcome was recorded, and by January 1889 the two men had resolved their differences, for Lovell became secretary once more on Devey's nomination.[136]

In March 1887, reporting at the anniversary celebration, Devey stated that he had been handicapped by a lack of teachers. Although he had experienced unspecified 'difficulties' in starting this school, and it still needed more funding, 80 children were attending.[137] In October, 'A Service of Song, entitled Uncle Tom', was held at Waiorongomai to raise funds for its proposed library.[138] In January 1889, it was 'improving in attendance and efficiency',[139] A committee was 'working hard' to make the anniversary services and a soiree and concert 'a great success. A large choir is steadily practicing for the occasion'.[140] The local newspaper provided copious details of the events:

> At the afternoon service close on one hundred children were present, and about half that number in the evening, the attendance of adults also being large.

---

[133] Waiorongomai Sunday School, Minutes of Teachers' Meeting of 30 July 1886, Minute Book 1884-1894, 3050/881, Methodist Archives, Auckland.

[134] 'Notice', *Te Aroha News*, 13 August 1887, p. 3.

[135] Waiorongomai Sunday School, Minutes of Teachers' Meeting of 14 August 1887, Minute Book 1884-1894, 3050/881, Methodist Archives, Auckland.

[136] Waiorongomai Sunday School, Minutes of Meeting of 10 January 1889, Minute Book 1884-1894, 3050/881, Methodist Archives, Auckland.

[137] *Te Aroha News*, 19 March 1887, p. 2.

[138] Advertisement, *Te Aroha News*, 29 October 1887, p. 3.

[139] *Te Aroha News*, 5 January 1889, p. 2.

[140] *Te Aroha News*, 16 February 1889, p. 2.

> Mr W.J. Elliot, Home Missionary (Paeroa), conducted both services…. The sermon was an eloquent one and listened to with marked attention. The collection, £2 6s 1d, will be devoted to the Sunday School funds.
> Soiree and Concert: - On the Tuesday evening following, the annual soiree and concert in connection with the same Sunday School was held in the Waiorongomai Public Hall. The weather was fine, and the attendance on the occasion very large, in fact the Hall was crowded; friends from the surrounding districts were putting in an appearance in goodly numbers. The Hall was decorated for the occasion with banners, etc, etc, such mottoes as "Love One Another;" "God Bless Our Labours;" "Suffer the Little Children," &c, being conspicuous; whilst the light from a large number of Chinese lanterns … suspended at intervals around the Hall, and surrounded by ferns, etc, had a very pleasing effect. There were four large tables laid out in the Hall, each well laden with the most varied and abundant supply of good things of every conceivable description, specially provided for the occasion…. About one hundred and twenty children, besides adults, sat down to tea, and lost no time in getting "to work" in real earnest. Full justice having been done to tea, etc, the Hall was cleared for the concert, which commenced about eight o'clock, there being a full house.

After the choir sang 'There's a Work for Each', the chairman, the Wesleyan minister, made 'a few remarks appropriate for the occasion', after which the secretary and treasurer read their reports. 'There were 116 scholars on the roll' and the library contained 140 books, but 'the want of more teachers was greatly felt' and they hoped 'volunteers would offer to take part in so good a work'. Income for the year was £18 5s 9 1/2d. The concert consisted of songs (one accompanied on the violin) and choruses, piano solos and duets, recitations, and a reading; several items were encored, 'and all who took part acquitted themselves well'. In his address, the Anglican minister 'spoke of the great importance of properly educating the young and deplored the fact that religious teaching was totally forbidden in our public schools'.[141] The chairman 'delivered an excellent practical address and appealed for helpers'. After votes of thanks to 'the ladies who presided at the tables, to the kind friends who had contributed to the soiree, and to the ladies and gentlemen who took part in the programme' were 'carried with acclamation', the evening ended with the singing of the national anthem. All present appeared to 'have thoroughly enjoyed themselves'.[142]

In May the following year, an entertainment was held to raise funds, 'like teachers a constant need'. The attendance 'was very large (and included friends from Te Aroha and surrounding districts), the Hall being well filled in every part'. Along with the Wesleyan minister from Thames, the local Anglican, Presbyterian, and Wesleyan ministers were all on the platform, the Anglican and Wesleyan ones sharing the duties of chairman, and all the clergy spoke. 'The various items on the programme were really

---

[141] *Te Aroha News*, 20 March 1889, p. 2.

[142] *Te Aroha News*, 20 March 1889, p. 7.

well rendered, and the several addresses interesting and practical; each of the speakers referring to the great importance of Sunday School work'. The Thames minister 'referred to some very clear and bright cases of the conversion of children of tender years he had met with … and urged both parents and teachers to do their duty towards the children entrusted to their charge'. The Presbyterian minister spoke 'of the great importance of Sunday School work' and considered that 'those who were capable of assisting in such a grand work, but held aloof therefrom, surely failed to realize what a blessing they were losing by so doing'. The Anglican minister also stressed the value of Sunday Schools and 'the great results that might be looked for from early training of the right kind, and of the great need of more helpers coming forward to assist in so very important a movement'. The evening raised £2 18s 10d, but there was no mention of anyone responding to the heavy prompts for more teachers.[143]

In July 1890, John Ilott[144] was farewelled in the Wesleyan church. In addition to editing the *Te Aroha News*, he had been superintendent the Te Aroha Sunday School for seven years, in the last five teaching the senior girls. The teachers provided 'an ample and most excellent tea to which full justice was done by a large gathering of scholars, past and present, and the teachers'. After Ilott and his wife received an address praising them as 'both kind and faithful teachers', he responded that they

> felt very deeply the parting with the Sunday School, with which they had been associated for so many years, and assured them that they did not know till then how fully it had wound itself round their hearts. He had always felt pleasure in attending the school and assisting in connection therewith. He desired to thus publicly thank all the scholars for their uniform excellent behaviour and the attention paid their teachers, and to him, as the Superintendent. It had been a source of very great gratification to him on many occasions to hear strangers who had come to visit or address the School comment on the good order and attention of the scholars.

He thanked 'all the teachers for their hearty co-operation, support, and sympathy in the work', and 'asked the scholars to rally round their teachers, and by their good attendance and attention show they appreciated their self-denying labours'.[145]

RELATIONS BETWEEN CATHOLICS AND PROTESTANTS

In January 1881, a Protestant newspaper reported a service having been held at Te Aroha 'under peculiar circumstances':

---

[143] *Te Aroha News*, 10 May 1890, p. 2.

[144] See paper on the temperance movement in the Te Aroha district.

[145] *Te Aroha News*, 23 July 1890, p. 2.

> Our informant tells us that a prominent Orangeman, whose name we are not quite certain about, had erected a large store for a Thames merchant, and that, as it was near completion, the Wesleyans asked for the use of it for a Sunday service, which request the builder readily granted. On the arrival, however, of the Rev Mr Watkin, Methodist minister, he found the building in the occupation of Father [Patrick] O'Reilly [the Thames parish priest],[146] and the Roman Catholic worship in progress. It is also said that Father O'Reilly, whom we personally know to be most courteous as a gentleman, publicly thanked the Orangeman who had given him the use of the building, and said all Catholics should thank Mr -----, who was present in the congregation; for he had passed by his own people to let the Catholics have the building. He is reported to have said the gentleman who had so acted was not only a Protestant, but he was also a prominent Orangeman. We are also informed that "the Cardinal" [Hugh McIlhone][147] is walking about the Thames slapping the Orangemen on the back and laughing in their faces about this affair. Now, we do not say this is true, but if it is we can only regret it. The Roman Catholics have an undoubted right, equal to that of Protestants, to their places and modes of worship, but it is no part of a Protestant's duty, much less of an Orangeman, to afford a facility for their worship, to the exclusion of a body like the Wesleyans. If this report is not true, we shall be glad to have it contradicted.[148]

It was not. The Orangeman was either John or, more likely, Robert Farrell, who as a partner in Farrell Bros had erected this store in late 1880.[149] John was a Te Aroha builder in the early 1880s,[150] his brother Robert, a fervent Orangeman,[151] remaining in Thames. In the early days of the latter, as captain in charge of the Rangers corps and Master of the Loyal Orange Lodge, Robert's show of force prevented Irish Catholics from Coromandel disrupting an Orange celebration. Despite this conflict, he once assisted Thames Catholics in a way that was long remembered:

> When the church was built in Willoughby Street had been erected it was provided with a bell, which was to be hung from a small belfry in the churchyard. Mr Farrell came along when it lay on the ground waiting to be mounted, and as a practical builder saw at once that the crank was bent in a wrong direction. "Father Chastagnan," he said, addressing the priest of the parish, "that bell will never ring as it is," and he pointed out the defect. His

---

[146] See W.A. Kelly, *Thames: The first 100 years* (Thames, 1968), p. 149.

[147] See paper on Harry Kenrick.

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

[149] *Thames Star*, 29 November 1880, p. 2.

[150] For example, *Thames Advertiser*, 29 November 1880, p. 2, 13 April 1881, p. 3, 5 May 1883, p. 3; *Waikato Times*, 16 December 1880, p. 2; *Auckland Weekly News*, 15 January 1881, p. 17.

[151] For example, *Observer*, 12 November 1931, p. 5.

> reverence became much concerned and asked how the difficulty could be remedied.
> Mr Farrell offered to see to the matter, and carried the bell across to John West's smithy, had the necessary alteration made, and brought it back on his shoulder. "Now put it up in the tower," he said, "and when you pull the cord, father, it will ring." Nevertheless, when the attempt was made, it didn't ring. Mr Farrell was non-plussed for a moment, but then saw what was the matter. "How can we expect a Catholic bell to ring," he said, "with an Orangeman's cap round its tongue?" It was even so. In bringing the bell back he had held it on his shoulder by the tongue, with his cap, and forgotten to remove it. The Orange incubus was taken down, and the Catholics heard their new bell ring out merrily.[152]

Relations between Catholics and Protestants in the Te Aroha district were generally benign, with few examples of outright bigotry. For an example of distaste for Catholicism, in October 1885 Edith O'Gorman Auffrey, otherwise the 'Escaped Nun', lectured in the public hall and also gave an address in the Wesleyan chapel to 'Ladies Only'.[153] The *Te Aroha News* assured its readers that she was a genuine 'escaped nun', having been a nun for several years, but was now lecturing on the realities of life in a convent, most recently in Auckland. 'She holds the highest credentials of character and ability and is a speaker of great eloquence'.[154] Her three lectures were entitled 'Life in a Convent', 'The Romish School System', and 'The Romish Priesthood'. The Wesleyan minister presided over large gatherings, her listeners frequently and warmly applauding her.[155]

There were many more instances of harmony than of disharmony. When the Anglicans arranged an entertainment to raise funds in 1889, the committee organizing one for the Catholic church 'most considerately decided to postpone' it for a week to avoid a clash of events.[156] Many residents assisted both Catholic and Protestant churches on such occasions.[157] When the current Anglican priest was officially farewelled in 1908, a leading Catholic, Thomas Gavin,[158] spoke of his 'devotion to duty and rectitude of life. Mr Gavin said that in his official capacity on the Charitable Aid Board he had seen frequent examples of Mr Cowie's kindliness of heart, and he knew of his being out at all hours and in all weathers on errands of mercy'.[159] One devout

---

[152] Kelly, p. 86.

[153] Advertisement, *Te Aroha News*, 24 October 1885, p. 7.

[154] *Te Aroha News*, 24 October 1885, p. 2.

[155] *Te Aroha News*, 7 November 1885, p. 2.

[156] *Te Aroha News*, 10 November 1889, p. 2.

[157] See, for instance, the paper on Alfred Henry Whitehouse.

[158] See paper on his life.

[159] *Auckland Weekly News*, 26 July 1908, p. 36.

Catholic, Michael Cronin, was prominent in the Waiorongomai Band of Hope, a Protestant organization.[160] Francis Pavitt, a civil engineer and architect,[161] was a leading Anglican,[162] yet, in 1884, he supervised, free of charge, the erection of the Catholic church, and later participated in a concert to raise money for it.[163] Three years later he chaired a Presbyterian concert and welcomed its new minister.[164]

Of serious concern for many Protestants and Catholics were 'mixed marriages', as illustrated by a letter from the local Catholic priest to his bishop in 1905:

> My Lord I require a dispensation in a mixed marriage immediately. The girl is a catholic and a child has lately been born extra matrimonium. I suppose your Lordship heard of a civil separation that took place between two catholics of this district. They are the parents of this girl, who I believe was the immediate occasion of the separation. Her father objected to her marriage with this man and the mother upheld it. There is no knowing what the father may do if he discovers the state of the case now. So I wish to have it done privately, and as soon as possible to avoid unpleasant consequences. If it is kept quiet for some time the father will be gone from here.[165]

In contrast to this family crisis, there were several examples of apparently happy mixed marriages and of some lack of concern for denominational distinctions. For instance, Peter Baine, a prominent Te Aroha timber merchant who had been born in Ireland,[166] was a Catholic.[167] He married Miriam Hotchin, whose mother, Ann, was a Wesleyan.[168] Miriam's sister Mary Jane married a Presbyterian.[169] Five of the Baine children were baptized as Catholics,[170] as might be expected with a Catholic father, yet

---

[160] See chapter on the temperance movement in the Te Aroha district.

[161] See *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 2, p. 825.

[162] *Church Gazette*, April 1883, p. 37; *Te Aroha News*, 24 April 1886, p. 2; Te Aroha Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 2 July 1908, p. 36.

[163] *Te Aroha News*, 8 March 1884, p. 2, 24 April 1886, p. 7.

[164] *Te Aroha News*, 17 August 1889, p. 2.

[165] Fr. McGuiness to Bishop Lenihan, 27 June 1905, Te Aroha Parish Papers 1897-1910, LEN 35-2, Catholic Archives, Auckland.

[166] See *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 2, p. 832.

[167] Death Certificate of Peter Baine, 22 August 1948, 1948/30676, BDM.

[168] Death Certificate of Ann Hotchin, 17 July 1900, 1900/4381, BDM.

[169] Marriage Certificate of Mary Jane Hotchin, 24 January 1883, 1883/1773, BDM.

[170] Catholic Church, Register of Paeroa and Ohinemuri Baptisms 1884-1949, no. 117; Register of Te Aroha Baptisms 1884-1949, nos. 182, 190, 275, 286, Catholic Archives, Auckland.

his first child had been baptized into the Church of England.[171] And in 1901, Miriam assisted at an Anglican conversazione.[172] Despite Bridget Jansen, mother of Richard Thomas Jansen, a miner, being born in Ireland and a lifelong Catholic,[173] she sold tickets for a concert for the organ fund of the Band of Hope.[174] Both her Danish husband and her son had Anglican funerals.[175] Edward Jennings, a carpenter,[176] was married in the Baptist Church in Thames in 1875.[177] His mother was an Anglican, his children were baptized into that church, and both he and his wife were buried by it.[178] All the children were sent to the Wesleyan Sunday School at Waiorongomai, which his wife actively assisted.[179] Despite this strong Protestant background, their eldest son would marry a Catholic,[180] although their daughter had an Anglican wedding.[181] Ralph

---

[171] Birth Certificate of Edna Bower O'Neil Baine, 23 November 1893, 1893/17253, BDM; Church of England, Hamilton East District, Register of Baptisms 1879-1908, no. 359, Anglican Diocesan Archives, Hamilton.

[172] *Church Gazette*, December 1901, p. 231.

[173] List of Catholics at Waiorongomai, ?1907, Te Aroha Parish Papers 1897-1910, LEN 35-2, Catholic Archives, Auckland; Avondale Asylum, Register of Admissions 1885-1896, no. 1995, YCAA 1021/2; Casebook 1890-1892, folio 713, YCAA 1048/5, ANZ-A.

[174] Waiorongomai Band of Hope, Minute Book 1883-1889, 3050/916, Methodist Archives, Auckland.

[175] Death Certificates of Peter Thomas Jansen, 8 June 1909, 1909/2624; Richard Thomas Jansen, 5 April 1911, 1911/4051, BDM.

[176] See *Te Aroha News*, 27 October 1926, p. 8.

[177] Marriage Certificate of Edward Jennings, 9 December 1875, 1875/2645, BDM; Marriage Register 1872-1880, no. 12, Baptist Church Archives, Thames.

[178] Church of England, Thames Burial Register 1894-1907, no. 430; Thames Baptisms Register 1874-1880, no. 352; Thames Baptisms Register 1880-1889, nos. 5, 221, Anglican Archives, Auckland; Hamilton East District, Register of Baptisms 1879-1908, nos. 78, 144, 185, Anglican Diocesan Archives, Hamilton; Death Certificates of Mary Jennings, 17 August 1923, 1923/1197; Edward Jennings, 23 October 1926, 1926/6523, BDM.

[179] Waiorongomai Sunday School, Admission Book 1884-1889, entries for 9 March 1884, 3 March 1885, before 3 January 1886, 6 January 1889, 13 January 1889, 27 January 1889, 3 March 1889, 3050/888, Methodist Archives, Auckland; *Te Aroha News*, 19 March 1887, p. 2.

[180] Marriage Certificate of James Edward Jennings, 30 August 1905, 1905/1440, BDM; St Francis' Church, Marriage Register 1905-1909, no. 325, St Francis' Church Archives, Thames.

[181] Marriage Certificates of Kate Millicent Jennings, 3 January 1899, 1899/248; Emily Jane Jennings, 15 September 1903, 1903/4299; Leila Adelaide Jennings, 13 April 1909, 1909/7607; Mary Eliza Jennings, 26 April 1910, 1910/3420, BDM; St Mark's Church, Te Aroha, Marriage Registers 1895-1905, nos. 32, 65; 1906-1910, nos. 38, 45, Anglican Church Archives, Te Aroha.

Lake Somers, a prominent publican and mayor,[182] born in County Cork, was a leading Anglican, serving as vicar's warden for 12 years.[183] Although his final illness was spent in the Catholic hospital in Auckland, he had an Anglican funeral.[184] His New Zealand-born wife was active in the Catholic Church.[185]

One man who, for unexplained reasons, changed his faith was Thomas Bradley, a prominent coach proprietor.[186] Born in County Derry, Ireland,[187] he had an Anglican wedding in 1870, and in the 1880s a daughter was baptized into that church and he was elected to the Shaftesbury church committee.[188] Yet when he died in 1897, he received a Catholic funeral.[189] Edmund Healy, a bushman and labourer, was an Irish Catholic married to an Anglican.[190] Their children were sent to the Wesleyan Sunday School,[191] and were brought up as Anglicans.[192] There was disharmony between Healy and his wife, caused not by religious differences but by his 'excessive drinking' and his assaulting and threatening to kill her.[193] Another problem drinker was David Kerr Young, an Irish miner who gave his religion as Presbyterian when arrested for

---

[182] See paper on the drink problem in the Te Aroha district.

[183] *Te Aroha News*, 1 December 1944, p. 5.

[184] Death Certificate of Ralph Lake Somers, 29 November 1944, 1944/27889, BDM.

[185] Death Certificate of Kate Louise Somers, 19 July 1936, 1936/19949, BDM; *Te Aroha News*, 22 July 1936, p. 1.

[186] See paper on the drink problem in the Te Aroha district for outline of his career.

[187] Birth Certificate of Ella Nathan Bradley, 21 January 1886, 1886/1527, BDM.

[188] Marriage Certificate of Thomas Bradley, 12 November 1869, 1869/8985, BDM; Church of England, Hamilton East District, Register of Baptisms 1879-1908, no. 98, Anglican Diocesan Archives, Hamilton; *Church Gazette*, November 1882, p. 103.

[189] Death Certificate of Thomas Bradley, 11 September 1897, 197/3908, BDM; *Thames Advertiser*, 16 September 1897, p. 2.

[190] Auckland Hospital, Register of Admissions 1870-1885, folio 64, no. 109, ZAAP 15287/2a, ANZ-A; Marriage Certificate of Edmund Healy, 3 March 1878, 1878/251; Death Certificates of Edmund Healy, 6 January 1897, 1897/405; Harriet Healy, 30 April 1903, 1903/2671, BDM.

[191] Waiorongomai Sunday School, Admission Book 1884-1889, entries for 17, 24 March 1889, 3050/888, Methodist Archives, Auckland.

[192] Death Certificates of Nora Elliott, 10 January 1904, 1904/629; Edmund Healy, 1 June 1920, 1920/12158, BDM.

[193] Armed Constabulary Force, Return of Charges taken at Te Aroha Lock-Up 1880-1903, 5/1892, Te Aroha Gold Mining Archive, University of Waikato Library; Te Aroha Magistrate's Court, Criminal Record Book 1881-1896, 7-9/1892, BCDG 11220/1a, ANZ-A; Magistrate's Court, *Te Aroha News*, 12 January 1884, p. 7.

drunkenness in 1892 and 1900.[194] Yet in the 1870s and 1880s his children were baptized as Catholics.[195] The reason for their entering this church was that their Irish mother was a Catholic, meaning that Young had been married in a Catholic cathedral.[196] On his death he was given an Anglican funeral, as was one of his sons three years later.[197] One of his sons remained a Catholic.[198] Another miner, George Tilsley, was married in the Te Aroha registry office but baptized all his children into the Church of England.[199] He would receive a Catholic funeral;[200] his wife's funeral, 12 years later, was a Salvation Army one.[201]

What the laity did was one thing; what priests insisted on was another. For instance, when arrangements were made for a Turua couple to adopt an orphan after testimonials were received of their 'fitness', a Catholic priest prevented the adoption by insisting the boy be brought up by Catholics.[202]

Sometimes non-Catholics used Catholic schools or hospitals. For instance, John Purvis, an Irish Presbyterian labourer, when in feeble health lived for several years with the Little Sisters of the Poor in Auckland.[203] Another Presbyterian, John James White,

---

[194] Armed Constabulary Force, Return of Charges taken at Te Aroha Lock-Up 1880-1903, 13/1892, 1/1900, Te Aroha Gold Mining Archive, University of Waikato Library..

[195] Thames Catholic Church, De Courcy James Young, Register of Baptisms 1868-1874; Catherine, Joseph Henry, David Sydney, and Albert Walter Francis Young, Register of Baptisms 1874-1886, Catholic Archives, Auckland.

[196] List of Catholics at Waiorongomai, ?1907, Te Aroha Parish Papers 1897-1910, LEN 35-2, Catholic Archives, Auckland; Marriage Certificate of David Kerr Young, 26 July 1868, 1868/7457; Death Certificate of Catherine Young, 15 June 1920, 1920/12141, BDM.

[197] Death Certificates of David Kerr Young, 14 July 1908, 1908/4816; David Sidney Young, 5 December 1911, 1911/8047, BDM.

[198] Death Certificate of De Courcy James Young, 29 October 1908, 1908/6896, BDM.

[199] Marriage Certificate of George Tilsley, 27 February 1890, 1890/321, BDM; Church of England, Register of Katikati Baptisms 1879-1944, nos. 178, 189; Register of Paeroa Baptisms 1896-1922, nos. 390, 555, Anglican Diocesan Archives, Hamilton; Register of Thames Baptisms 1889-1900, no. 986, Anglican Archives, Auckland.

[200] Death Certificate of George Tilsley, 8 November 1930, 1930/6155, BDM.

[201] Death Certificate of Mary Ann Tilsley, 3 August 1942, 1942/25736, BDM.

[202] Thames Orphanage and Training School, Meetings of 2 December 1879, 27 January 1880, 3 February 1880, Minute Book 1879-1885, YBAZ 1244/1, ANZ-A.

[203] Auckland Hospital and Charitable Aid Board, Applications for Relief 1894-1907, folio 182, no. 15409, YCAB 15245/2a; Auckland Magistrate's Court, Old Age Pensions Minute Book 1899, folios 348-349, BADW 10496/1, ANZ-A; Death Certificate of John Purvis, 22 September 1915, 1915/5295, BDM.

saddler, lamplighter, and in his last years a bath attendant,[204] after his daughter had only two months at the local primary school sent her to be educated at the Te Aroha convent.[205]

KEEPING THE SABBATH HOLY

To some residents, the Sabbath was to be strictly observed. In 1884, for instance, many residents, along with the local newspaper, deplored men playing football on Sunday.[206] Six years later, the *Observer* Man regretted that the town board had held its first meeting on a Sunday.[207] In 1896, a resident complained about one consequence of the latest mining boom:

> I notice that a great deal of Sunday work goes on in the goldmining districts on the part of some of the leading goldmining companies, who are working in our midst. Last Sunday, for instance, surveyors were at work at Waiorongomai taking levels, etc, for some projected works which are to be carried out by the Exploration Company. What sort of example, I ask, is this for our rising generation? I consider that the firms who allow this sort of thing to go on should be thoroughly ashamed of themselves. For the sake of earning a few pounds they send their assistants up to desecrate the Sabbath and set an example to our youths of which they should be anything but proud. The Company are as much to blame as the surveyors or engineers, in the matter of fact, more so, and when one comes to see that several of the Company's servants are apparently men of strong religious views, one ponders why things are thus.[208]

Twenty years later, a labourer and part-time farmer would plead guilty of 'working at his calling in public view on Sunday'. He explained that he 'was employed away from home during the week and had to do some digging to grow potatoes' for his

---

[204] Marriage Certificate of John James White, 21 June 1899, 1899/2046, BDM; St David's Church, Register of Marriages 1884-1904, no. 46, Presbyterian Church Archives, Te Aroha; Death Certificate of John James White, 22 February 1910, 1910/839, BDM; *Te Aroha News*, 23 November 1896, p. 2, 24 February 1910, p. 2; *New Zealand Gazette*, 6 May 1897, p. 1936.

[205] Te Aroha School, Admissions Register no. 4 (1904-1918), no. 1890, Primary School Archives, Te Aroha.

[206] *Te Aroha News*, 30 August 1884, p. 2.

[207] 'Te Aroha', *Observer*, 4 October 1890, p. 17.

[208] Letter in *Te Aroha News*, n.d., reprinted in *Thames Advertiser*, 16 September 1896, p. 2.

large family on his 35-acre farm. ‘A team of horses had been lent him, and he wanted to get some potatoes in. The information was withdrawn, in view of the facts stated’.[209]

Others disliked an over-strict observation of the Sabbath. According to one newspaper, at a meeting of the domain board in 1902 there was an ‘absurd outburst against the desecration of the Sabbath, in connection with the taking of photos and band playing’.[210] This day had been the only good one for taking photographs during the past month, but the *Observer* noted that one board member ‘reckons that nothing but resignation will mollify his pricked conscience’.[211]

In 1910, ‘Reverence’ protested at ‘Sunday desecration’:

> Yesterday being the second day of the shooting season, and hills and dales of Te Aroha resounded in the reports of guns. When a few Chinamen are caught gardening on Sunday the law punishes them; but when the peace and calm of the Christian Sabbath, the Day of Rest, and of Public Worship, is broken by “sportsmen” (?) no notice is taken. It would be expected that those who have no respect for God would at least have respect for men. This is not the case, however, shooting took place almost within the bounds of the town and even the cemetery, the place where we lay our dead, was invaded by those in quest of game. If the Christian conscience of Te Aroha tolerates such a thing, then that conscience must be in a bad state. What have the local churches to say in the matter?[212]

Protestant clergymen may have had something to say on this topic in their sermons, but they did not express their views in the newspaper. Catholic priests were not so concerned, to the horror of a 14-year-old Protestant youth, writing in his family ‘newspaper’ two years later:

> SOMETHING THAT HAPPENED ON SUNDAY.
>
> Whilst the members of our family were inside the house last Sunday afternoon the bang of a gun was heard. Up jumped a certain individual who rushed outside to ascertain the cause of the cause of the “bang.” You see, he thought that some bad person must have been trying to shoot our fowls. Well… lo and behold! There, standing in the churchyard (a Catholic churchyard) was a man. And the man was a priest… a Catholic priest. And… the Catholic priest had a gun in his hand. Well, of course, our inquisitive friend was a tiny bit frightened. How did he know when this DANGEROUS CRIMINAL might point the gun at him and make it go “bang.” And the dangerous criminal did make it go “bang” … but… not…

---

[209] Te Aroha Magistrate’s Court, Criminal Record Book 1913-1918, 103/1916, BCDG 11220/2b, ANZ-A; Magistrate’s Court, *Te Aroha News*, 18 October 1916, p. 2.

[210] *Ohinemuri Gazette*, 8 October 1902, p. 2.

[211] ‘They Say’, *Observer*, 11 October 1902, p. 7.

[212] Letter from ‘Reverence’, *Te Aroha News*, 17 May 1910, p. 3.

> at our frightened friend. He made it go "bang" at a target, hung on a wall. Well, when he did that, our friend (his name is not allowed to be mentioned) gave the alarm, and soon half-a-dozen interested spectators were watching…. They were hidden, of course, and they were hidden behind a thing that was not transparent.
> Well, the priest had a few more shots and hit the target several times. Then another priest came out and he had a couple of shots. But, alas! Their sport was soon interrupted by the children arriving for Sunday School. But anyhow, the gun was hidden and the two priests went away feeling very happy.
> And all this happened on Sunday.
> (The names of the priests may be had by applying to the editor.)[213]

THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND[214]

In mid-December 1880, Bishop William Garden Cowie,[215] accompanied by the Hamilton clergyman, William Calder, and Archdeacon William Newcombe De Loval Willis of Cambridge,[216] convened a meeting in the dining room of the Hot Springs Hotel. 'The attendance was large, the room being quite filled, whilst some were absent by mistake – the meeting having been notified to be held at two different places'. Cowie said he was 'pleased to meet so many people'.[217]

> He had taken the very earliest opportunity of providing the ministration of the church for its members at Te Aroha, and likewise for members of other denominations. The stability of the field has not yet been proved, and it would be impossible to make more than temporary provision for Church services and [accordingly] he did not purpose asking a guarantee for maintenance from them, leaving it entirely to their own ability and generosity.

The bishop announced that as Calder 'did not like to see the spiritual wants of the people neglected', he 'was willing to inconvenience himself for their sake' by making the 'long and trying ride' from Hamilton. He 'suggested that a committee of twelve should be elected by the meeting and said he thought that that number would be sufficient, though he believed about half the population of the district belonged to the

---

213 *Burrator Weekly News*, 11 May 1912, printed in Ted Axford, *A Childhood in Te Aroha, 1907-1913* (Wellington, 1992), pp. 28-29.

214 For a chronological list of clergymen and of the erection of church buildings, see *Auckland Star*, 22 October 1926, p. 8; *Waikato Times*, 25 October 1926, p. 6.

215 See *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 2, pp. 214-215.

216 For full names, see *New Zealand Gazette*, 25 January 1883, p. 113; *Waikato Electoral Roll, 1884*, p. 23.

217 *Church Gazette*, January 1881, p. 3.

Church of England'. On Calder's nomination, the warden, Harry Kenrick,[218] was elected as his churchwarden; ten vestrymen were selected, including one Maori,[219] the rangatira Rewi Mokena.[220] Calder 'explained that he could, so far as he now saw, come out from Hamilton (about forty miles) thirteen times a year – for the Sunday nearest to full moon'.[221] Kenrick 'assured his Lordship that the visiting clergyman would be at no personal loss in attending to the spiritual affairs of Church members'.[222] After the meeting agreed on 10 o'clock as being the best time for a service and recommended that a lay reader be appointed, a church site was selected. 'It is prettily situated, and if the field should be prosperous, we may soon hope to see a building erected on it'.[223]

During 1881 Calder visited monthly, and was praised as being a 'most energetic and popular little parson'.[224] Because of large congregations, during summer months the services were held in the open.[225] According to one correspondent, 'the next best thing to going to church' was 'to sit down in the shade of the woods and listen to the sound of psalm and hymn (accompanied by a cornet and concertina) borne upwards from the plain below'.[226] During winter a 'shed, or an old [and] deserted boarding-house', were used.[227] In November 1881, Calder was moved to Thames and subsequently to Auckland, where he rose to the rank of archdeacon.[228]

After being appointed, temporarily, in November 1881, to take charge of Te Aroha, Piako, and Waihou, in 1882 Rev Henry Samuel Davies settled in the district and conducted regular services at Te Aroha, Waiorongomai, and Waihou.[229] Having been a Congregational minister and run a boys' school in Hamilton for ten years, in 1879 he was ordained into the Church of England and was in charge of several Waikato parishes in the early 1880s.[230] In July 1883, the *Te Aroha News* reminded readers of a concert to

---

[218] See paper on his life.

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

[220] See paper on his life.

[221] *Church Gazette*, January 1881, p. 3.

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

[223] *Church Gazette*, January 1881, p. 3.

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

[225] *Waikato Times*, 27 January 1881, p. 2.

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

[227] Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 27 February 1883, p. 2.

[228] *Waikato Times*, 24 November 1881, p. 3, 4 August 1883, p. 2, 11 December 1916, p. 6.

[229] *Waikato Times*, 3 November 1881, p. 2; C.T. Harris, 'The Upper Thames Valley', *Te Aroha News*, 23 September 1936, p. 8.

[230] *Observer*, 18 June 1904, p. 5; *North Otago Times*, 20 June 1879, p 3; *Waikato Times*, 15 September 1881, p. 3, 3 November 1881, p. 2; *Bay of Plenty Times*. 15 November 1883, p. 2.

raise funds. ‘Owing to a variety of causes, chiefly bad roads, the attendance has been scanty of late, and the offertory has so suffered that enough has not been gathered to provide for the minister’s stipend and current expenses’.[231] With the assistance of people from Paeroa and Thames, this concert and dance raised £20.[232] As this was insufficient, Davies was forced to leave because his stipend was not paid; in late 1885 money had to be collected to pay ‘some dues due’ to him.[233] Judging from a letter written by ‘Churchman (Te Aroha)’ to the *Observer*, his farewell was niggardly. Although the journal did not publish this letter, it commented that it did not ‘undertake to solve religious puzzles. Perhaps they had a spree with the spouse, or the audience only put pieces of quartz and buttons in the offertory. The usual devise under such circumstances is to present a clergyman with a nickel-plated tea and coffee service’.[234]

When the vestry met in January 1884, ‘regret was expressed at the apathy of some Church members’.[235] After Davies took his last services at the end of March (he moved back to Hamilton and then worked in Auckland for the rest of his career),[236] there was no resident Anglican minister,[237] leaving the Presbyterian and Wesleyan ministers to provide Protestant services.[238] A layman conducted Anglican services at Waiorongomai.[239] In November, an archdeacon met Anglicans at both Te Aroha and Waiorongomai, and, according to the *Church Gazette*, ‘notwithstanding great depression, a liberal promise was everywhere made towards the support of a clergyman, and a universal desire was expressed that an appointment should be made as soon as possible’.[240] Early the following year, another effort was made to obtain a clergyman, because since Davies’ departure ‘very little has been done to keep the congregation together, as services have been conducted only at long intervals’.[241] A new vestry, elected in January, guaranteed £40 towards a stipend of a minister who would provide weekly services at Te Aroha, Waiorongomai, Waitoa, Shaftesbury, Morrinsville, and Te

---

231 *Te Aroha News*, 14 July 1883, p. 2.

232 *Te Aroha News*, 14 July 1883, p. 2, 21 July 1883, p. 3.

233 *Church Gazette*, January 1885, p. 4.

234 ‘To Correspondents’, *Observer*, 25 August 1883, p. 15.

235 *Te Aroha News*, 19 January 1884, p. 7.

236 *Waikato Times*, 14 January 1886, p. 3; *New Zealand Herald*, 23 October 1886, p. 5, 14 November 1888, p. 6, 26 April 1889, p. 4; *Observer*, 14 January 1893, p. 1.

237 *Te Aroha News*, 29 March 1884, p. 2; *Waikato Times*, 25 September 1884, p. 2.

238 For example, *Te Aroha News*, 10 May 1884, p. 2.

239 *Te Aroha News*, 17 May 1884, p. 2.

240 *Church Gazette*, January 1885, p. 4.

241 Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 10 February 1885, p. 3.

Aroha West, which all had vestries.[242] In March, when it was announced that James Marshall, formerly of Belfast, had been appointed, it was noted that services had been 'few and far between for some time past'.[243]

In 1885, the Te Aroha district became an independent parish no longer tied to Hamilton, with James Marshall as its first vicar.[244] By August, the congregation had 'rapidly grown in strength' and plans were made to erect a church estimated to cost about £600; building would start within a few months, once half the funds had been obtained.[245] To assist, a bazaar and gift auction was held two months later.[246] Entertainments were held for both the church and organ funds.[247] In November an Anglican Mission run by two English clergymen attracted a good attendance.[248]

During the following winter, the church was constructed on land opposite the public hall.[249] On the basis of a design produced by a member of the vestry,[250] local architect and civil engineer, Henry Crump,[251] an Auckland architect drew up detailed plans and supervised the work, all at no cost to the parish.[252] In August 1886 the *Church Gazette* enthusiastically reported the long-awaited opening:

> Sunday, August 22, was a red-letter day in Te Aroha. It was the day appointed for the dedication of our new church, and had been long looked forward to, not only by the inhabitants of the township, but by the residents in the neighbouring districts, who were most anxious to be present at the opening services. As far as the latter were concerned, however, their design was frustrated by the severity of the weather, the long-expected Sunday being the close of one of the severest storms of rain that have occurred during the winter…. On Sunday the Bishop took part in the morning service with the Rev Mr Marshall, read the dedicatory prayers, and celebrated the Holy Communion. His sermon was a practical one, having special reference to the circumstances of the Church and district. Notwithstanding the severity of the morning the church was well filled, and it was evident that had the day been more propitious, it could not have accommodated the worshippers. The storm had almost exhausted its force during the day, and

---

242 *Te Aroha News*, 31 January 1885, p. 2.

243 *Te Aroha News*, 21 March 1885, p. 2.

244 C.T. Harris, 'The Upper Thames Valley', *Te Aroha News*, 23 September 1936, p. 8.

245 Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 4 August 1885, p. 3.

246 *Te Aroha News*, 16 October 1885, p. 3.

247 *Te Aroha News*, 14 May 1886, p. 3, 27 June 1886, p. 7.

248 *Te Aroha News*, 14 November 1885, p. 2, 21 November 1885, p. 2.

249 *Waikato Times*, 10 June 1886, p. 2.

250 *Church Gazette*, October 1882, p. 94, April 1883, p. 37; *Te Aroha News*, 15 April 1884, p. 2, 31 January 1885, p. 2, 24 April 1886, p. 2; *Thames Advertiser*, 9 April 1886, p. 3.

251 See 'Thames Gossip', *Observer*, 1 September 1894, p. 23.

252 *Church Gazette*, September 1886, p. 83.

> the evening service was still more largely attended, every available seat being occupied. The Bishop again took part in the service and preached…. The services were most hearty, and the Bishop expressed the pleasure that it gave him to find the congregation taking their part so well in the singing and responses…. The offertories at both services were devoted to the Church Building Fund.

The new church was 'a neat, unpretending building, capable of accommodating 150 people'. The Auckland architect 'expressed his satisfaction' at the work of the contractors, also from Auckland. It had been built 'with a special view to enlargement when required, and it to be hoped that the debt will soon be cleared off, so that there may be no impediment in the way of this being done'. The bishop announced that it would be named St Mark's 'in token of the respect of the people' for Marshall, 'who had for many years been incumbent of a church in the old country named after that Evangelist'. The harmonium was played during the dedication service by a woman who had 'for two years kindly and efficiently acted as organist'.[253] To help meet the outstanding debt, in November a bazaar was organized by a 'committee of ladies' who collected 'donations of work from the surrounding districts, and also from Auckland and the Thames'.[254] Assisted by members of other denominations, £85 was raised.[255]

In September that year, William Francis Hunt, a Waiorongomai farmer and justice of the peace,[256] was licensed as a lay reader.[257] In the following month, a meeting was convened to discuss continuing services there, using an abandoned store.[258] Services would be held there in coming years; when a vestry was elected at Waiorongomai at the beginning of 1889, it was reported that offertories for the past five quarters had totaled £47 4s 2d.[259] By 1905, services were being held at Waiorongomai on Sunday afternoons, usually fortnightly.[260]

By 1888, the Te Aroha choir comprised 24 singers, including ten boys.[261] In 1891 the woman who had played the organ for over a decade was praised for giving up 'a great deal of her time in improving the singing'.[262]

---

[253] *Church Gazette*, September 1886, p. 83.

[254] *Te Aroha News*, 13 November 1886, p. 2.

[255] *Te Aroha News*, 13 November 1886, p. 3.

[256] See *Te Aroha News*, advertisement, 16 June 1883, p. 3, Police Court, 3 February 1886, p. 2, 20 March 1889, p. 7; *Tauranga Electoral Roll, 1887*, p. 12.

[257] *Te Aroha News*, 11 September 1886, p. 2.

[258] *Te Aroha News*, 9 October 1886, p. 3.

[259] *Te Aroha News*, 16 January 1889, p. 2.

[260] For example, *Te Aroha News*, 22 July 1905, p. 2.

[261] *Te Aroha News*, 24 October 1888, p. 2.

In February 1889, it was announced that the 'popular' Marshall would move to Auckland.[263] (He would serve in Waikato as well as in Auckland.[264]) It was over three months before his replacement, Frank George Evans, arrived.[265] He was the son of Rev William Evans.[266] As a young student of theology, he had taken Presbyterian services,[267] but since becoming an Anglican had been vicar at Thames. Having had to leave this post after five years because of poor health, he accepted the Te Aroha parish on condition that he received a stipend of at least £200 plus a parsonage; it was agreed to provide the £200 and an additional £30 in lieu of a parsonage.[268]

Evans also proved popular; for instance, on the following Easter Day the church was so crowded that some of the congregation had difficulty finding seats.[269] In August 1892, on the evening of the first Arbor Day a soiree and concert was judged 'a great success. More than 250 people partook of the good things which had been most liberally provided by the ladies of the congregation, and one and all voted it one of the best teas they had attended'. Due to the absence of a couple of local soloists, the concert 'was not so good as had been anticipated', although the musical items performed were 'well given, and well received'. Evans played the piano.[270] Two days before Christmas, some of the friends of the 'deservedly popular' Evans 'waited upon him at the Parsonage and presented him with an address and a Christmas present in the form of a return ticket to Melbourne, via the Southern ports, and a purse of money with which to pay the expenses of the trip'. They hoped he would return 'benefited both spiritually and physically'.

> Mr Evans, in reply, said that words were insufficient to express the deep feeling of gratitude which he felt towards those who had so kindly and so unexpectedly made him this valuable present. He would be most happy in availing himself of it, as, during the thirteen years he had been in New Zealand he had never had two consecutive Sundays of rest from clerical

---

[262] *Church Gazette*, November 1891, p. 123; Te Aroha Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 6 March 1902, p. 33.

[263] *Te Aroha News*, 20 February 1889, p. 2.

[264] *New Zealand Herald*, 26 January 1891, p. 11, 16 January 1892, p. 4, 24 July 1894, p. 1; *Waikato Times*, 20 February 1894, p. 2; *Waikato Argus*, 20 July 1899, p. 4; Auckland Correspondent, *Otago Witness*, 29 October 1909, p. 72.

[265] *Te Aroha News*, 3 April 1889, p. 2, 6 July 1889, p. 2, 13 July 1889, p. 2.

[266] *New Zealand Herald*, 14 April 1882, p. 4.

[267] *Descriptive Handbook to the Waikato: Its condition and resources* (Hamilton, 1880), p. 20.

[268] *Te Aroha News*, 24 May 1889, p. 2.

[269] *Te Aroha News*, 9 April 1890, p. 2.

[270] Te Aroha Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 13 August 1892, p. 37.

> work, and he would appreciate the holiday on that account as well as from the kind sympathy which had prompted the gift. Hitherto he had been the recipient of presents only when he was leaving one parish for another, and he took this as a great encouragement, and as a sign that his work was not unappreciated by those amongst whom he laboured.[271]

In December 1893, Bishop Cowie spent several days at Te Aroha, preaching to 'large congregations' and confirming 15 young women. He presided at a meeting of the Church Missionary Society, which attracted only 'a moderate attendance'.[272] The next report of church activities was published in the following November, when Evans 'preached upon some of the lessons to be learnt' from the sinking of the 'Wairarapa'.

> There was a crowded congregation, and Miss Alice Rimmer, of Auckland, sang "The Treasures of the Deep," as an offertory solo. Appropriate hymns were sung by the choir and congregation, and at the close of the service the "Dead March in Saul" was played by Miss E. Wainwright, in memory of the late Mr Arthur Mills [son of James],[273] one of the sufferers of the catastrophe. The large congregation stood during the playing to mark their respect for the deceased.[274]

Five days later, a 'very successful' soiree and concert was held to raise funds for the church:

> Both halls had been engaged, and willing hands all day on Friday were busy decorating them, until, when the time arrived for the doors to be opened, they presented a very bright and beautiful appearance. The tables for the tea were laid out in the public hall, and they literally groaned with the weight of good things provided, people from all parts of the district having generously sent in large quantities of cakes and pastry of all kinds.

Twenty-one women organized the meal and 'presided over' the tables, and ten men gave 'their time and labour during the day both in decorating and waiting upon the ladies in charge of the tables'. Afterwards, everyone attended the concert in the town hall. 'Before the time announced for the entertainment to begin the hall was filled to overflowing, many being unable to obtain seats'. Everything was 'exceedingly well rendered and it was only the great length of the programme that prevented many encores being given'. Amongst those thanked were two Aucklanders. 'There can be no

---

[271] Te Aroha Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 31 December 1892, p. 23.

[272] Te Aroha Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 23 December 1893, p. 22.

[273] See paper on James Mills.

[274] Te Aroha Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 17 November 1894, p. 23.

doubt that this is one of the most successful entertainments ever held in Te Aroha, and those who brought it to so successful an issue are to be heartily congratulated'.[275]

Evans tried to make St Mark's a centre of both church and social life. As he was honorary chaplain of the Te Aroha Rifles, church parades were held there.[276] Every month a children's service was held, as was an annual harvest thanksgiving.[277] Soirees and concerts were held periodically,[278] and the interdenominational United Christian Endeavourers met in the church.[279] In August 1895, Evans, who had broken his leg, was described as a 'familiar figure'.[280] The *Observer* Man was pleased one month later that he had 'quite recovered from his late painful accident, and is about again as of old. Our clergymen are all popular, but Mr Evans is liked by all'.[281]

Evans left in November 1896, to take charge of the Paeroa and Waihi districts; he would end his career as Archdeacon of Taranaki.[282] His replacement was Edgar James McFarland, another Irishman.[283] There was only a 'moderate attendance' at his first annual meeting of parishioners in the following July. McFarland reported 'that unfortunately there had been no records kept in the past of the church work, and he had, therefore, nothing to lay before them excepting the treasurer's accounts. The omission referred to would be remedied in the near future'. While the outlying districts of Paeroa and Waihi had been removed from the parish, Lichfield, Waharoa, and some other settlements had been added; he thanked the lay readers 'who had so willingly given their time' to provide services in these 'out districts'. He wanted to increase attendance at Te Aroha, where during the past year 'the average attendance at the morning services had been 45, and at the evening services 110. He thought those numbers could easily be doubled. There had been twelve celebrations of the Holy Communion with an average attendance of 15 which he thought was very small indeed'. He hoped that 'well directed efforts' would wipe out the parish's debt, £15 16s 1d. The need to erect a vicarage 'was discussed at some length', McFarland stating his willingness 'to pay the same rent for a vicarage as he paid for a private house, or he would be prepared to bear half the cost of a suitable building if the parish would provide the remainder'. Joseph Campbell, an

---

[275] Te Aroha Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 17 November 1894, p. 23.

[276] For example, *Te Aroha News*, 2 February 1895, p. 2, 31 July 1895, p. 2.

[277] *Te Aroha News*, 2 March 1895, p. 2, 6 March 1895, p. 2.

[278] For example, *Te Aroha News*, 30 October 1895, p. 2, 16 November 1895, p. 2.

[279] *Te Aroha News*, 27 February 1895, p. 2.

[280] 'Te Aroha', *Observer*, 3 August 1895, p. 21.

[281] 'Te Aroha', *Observer*, 21 September 1895, p. 22.

[282] *Thames Advertiser*, 26 July 1897, p. 3; *Te Aroha News*, 5 April 1898, p. 2.; *Taranaki Daily News*, 14 January 1911, p. 7, 13 November 1929, p. 13.

[283] See *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 2, p. 827; *Auckland Star*, 28 December 1944, p. 6.

Australian clergyman and self-proclaimed mining expert,[284] 'called upon to express his views', obliged:

> Twelve months ago, he found the late vicar comfortably situated on the hill overlooking their beautiful domain, and now he found their worthy minister dwelling in a house that to his mind was not quite what it should be, and it certainly did not reflect [well] either on the community or the members of the Church of England. He reckoned that a parish without a vicarage was incomplete, and the people should see that adequate shelter was provided for those entirely devoting their lives to the furtherance of the glorious work.

After noting that it was 'monstrous' that in 'a progressive place like Te Aroha' women were not permitted to elect the vestry, Campbell advised those present 'to make a start and lay out their plans so that if they could not complete the building at once for lack of funds, they could readily add to it later on', offering to 'contribute his fair share'. After his rousing speech, it was agreed, unanimously, to erect a vicarage. 'The question of inaugurating some scheme to assure a regular income' was then considered, Campbell 'again offering valuable suggestions together with a promise to contribute to the Church funds'.[285]

The number attending communion on Christmas Day 1897 was 'all too small for a place of the size of Te Aroha', but the offertories for the past six months had totaled £69, an increase on the previous six months.[286] By the following March McFarland had built up a 'large and influential congregation', but had so undermined his health that he took a sea voyage to regain it, Campbell taking the services in his absence.[287] By late April, although McFarland was somewhat better, Campbell was still taking one of the two services.[288] McFarland was soon well enough to join the committee of the agricultural and horticultural society and to referee a boys' football match.[289] At Easter, the choir was 'largely augmented by visitors from Auckland'.[290] In the year to June there were large congregations and good offertories.[291] The Anglicans now had their

---

[284] See paper on Joseph Campbell and his thermo-hyperphoric process.

[285] *Thames Advertiser*, 26 July 1897, p. 3.

[286] *Te Aroha News*, 8 January 1898, p. 2.

[287] *Te Aroha News*, 10 March 1898, p. 2.

[288] *Te Aroha News*, 30 April 1898, p. 2.

[289] *Te Aroha News*, 14 May 1898, p. 2, 11 June 1898, p. 2.

[290] *Te Aroha News*, 12 April 1898, p. 2.

[291] *Te Aroha News*, 19 July 1898, p. 2.

own Sunday School; by the end of the century 75 children ‘frequently’ attended on Sunday afternoons.[292]

A vicarage adjoining the church was erected during 1898.[293] Two years later it was decided to enlarge the church.[294] In May 1902, McFarland preached his farewell sermon before departing for an Auckland parish. ‘In spite of boisterous weather there was a good congregation, many members of other churches being present’. At a meeting chaired by the mayor a ‘public testimonial’ was presented to McFarland. ‘There was a large audience, representative of every section of the people of Te Aroha and the surrounding districts. Although the weather was very unfavourable, yet even Morrinsville, some 14 miles distant, was well represented’. The testimonial ‘was not connected in any way with the church; it had been subscribed to by all sorts and conditions of men and was a token of the general esteem in which Mr McFarland was held as a citizen and as a man’. £61 had been collected. A representative from Morrinsville, ‘where a mixed congregation worships under the charge of ministers of various denominations’, praised his ‘unfailing tact’. The Presbyterian minister said that ‘in every branch of church, civic, and social work’ McFarland was ‘a man of broad mind and liberal views’. The new Methodist minister ‘said that in a comparatively brief acquaintance he had been impressed by Mr McFarland’s qualities of mind and heart’. Four other speakers praised his ‘many good qualities’ and regretted his departure. The mayor thanked him for ‘the good work he had done as chaplain of the local volunteer corps, and as member and chairman of the school committee’. When McFarland rose to respond, he was greeted with ‘loud and prolonged applause’. In thanking them, he ‘feared he had fallen short of his ideals. Still, the people had always been most kind, and again and again he thanked them’. Members of the gymnastic club later presented him with ‘a handsome inkstand’ because he had ‘taken a leading part’ in its establishment.

Calder, now an archdeacon, announced that Edmund Mortlock Cowie, the bishop’s son,[295] would replace McFarland. ‘Mr Cowie had been doing yeoman service as diocesan missionary, and as a man and a minister’ churchgoers ‘would find him deserving of their confidence and respect’.[296] He would rise to be Archdeacon of Waikato.[297]

---

[292] *Te Aroha News*, 21 July 1898, p. 2; *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 2, p. 827.

[293] *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 2, p. 827.

[294] *Thames Star*, 6 November 1900, p. 4.

[295] See *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 2, p. 218.

[296] Te Aroha Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 22 February 1902, p. 40.

[297] *New Zealand Herald*, 5 December 1894, p. 6; *Ohinemuri Gazette*, 16 June 1914, p. 2; *Waikato Times*, 3 July 1928, p. 8.

PRESBYTERIANISM

In early 1881, Thomas Allan Norrie held the first Presbyterian services at Te Aroha, in Josiah Clifton Firth's receiving store.[298] A son of a Presbyterian minister, Thomas Norrie, he was always described as Rev Norrie despite not being ordained at this time.[299] He continued to provide services in 1882, assisted by a committee of laymen chaired by Robert Mackie, a butcher,[300] the mining inspector, George Wilson,[301] being its secretary. According to Mackie, this committee, 'without any difficulty whatever, found every penny' required to support Norrie, who 'expressed himself as being perfectly satisfied with respect to the manner in which he had been treated' and expressed 'great regret at having to leave' in 1883 to complete his studies.[302] The Presbyterians received free use of the public hall for their services because they provided all the lights and half the seats.[303]

In late November 1883 Norrie's successor, William Ferguson (whose career has not been traced), took his first service.[304] In the following month, the monthly meeting of members expressed 'surprise and indignation' at reports that he might be moved to another parish because he had written what the Auckland Presbytery considered to be an impertinent letter about a petty dispute in Paeroa.[305] Ferguson was not removed. In the following March an anniversary concert attracted a 'large and appreciative audience'. The programme 'was well arranged and was gone through in a most satisfactory manner', encores showing that 'the audience most thoroughly enjoyed the entertainment, which certainly was one of the most successful that has ever taken place in Te Aroha'.[306] After 18 months, in mid-May 1884 Ferguson gave his farewell sermon,[307] and left for Auckland 'on account of delicate health and other reasons'. A correspondent wrote that 'by his unostentatious bearing and his genial manners' he had been 'greatly respected and esteemed'.[308] His farewell 'had none of the milk-and-

---

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

[299] Lists of Marriage Celebrants, *New Zealand Gazette*, 1881-1894; *Waikato Times*, 7 August 1939, p. 6.

[300] See paper on Robert and Elizabeth Mackie.

[301] See paper on his life.

[302] *Te Aroha News*, 3 July 1889, p. 2.

[303] *Te Aroha News*, 3 July 1889, p. 2.

[304] Church Services, *Te Aroha News*, 24 November 1883, p. 2.

[305] *Te Aroha News*, 15 December 1883, p. 2.

[306] *Te Aroha New*, 22 March 1884, p. 2.

[307] Church Services, *Te Aroha News*, 17 May 1884, p. 2.

[308] Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 17 May 1884, p. 2.

wateriness which, as a rule, characterizes church soirees and tea meetings. Of the stereotyped kind of speech making there was very little, the prevailing taste lying more in the direction of mild festivity'.[309]

After Ferguson's departure, the Wesleyan and Presbyterian ministers arranged that one or other would take the Sunday evening services and sometimes a morning one as well, with lay readers deputizing on other occasions.[310] Alexander McIntosh took his first service at the beginning of June that year and his last at the end of October.[311] 'Owing to family affliction', namely his wife's serious illness, he left for what was meant to be a short time.[312] As he never returned, no Presbyterian services were held for some years,[313] Presbyterians attending Anglican and Wesleyan ones.[314]

In 1887, the congregation was unable to guarantee a minister's stipend,[315] but in June 1889 they met to discuss reviving their services.[316] A leading Anglican doubted the wisdom of re-establishing these, not because he had any objection to the minister, but because it was so difficult to pay the existing clergy.

> There are morning and evening services held in both the Anglican and Wesleyan churches, and there are not more than enough church going people to form decent congregations at the existing services. Our Presbyterian brethren have hitherto worshipped harmoniously with us, and as they are not numerous enough to form a separate congregation I trust they will continue to do so.[317]

Presbyterians described his letter as in 'very bad taste' and being written by a man who treated them as 'dissenters'.[318] William Hetherington, a farmer,[319] who chaired this

---

309 Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 29 May 1884, p. 2.

310 *Te Aroha News*, 12 July 1884, p. 2.

311 Church Services, *Te Aroha News*, 31 May 1884, p. 2, 25 October 1884, p. 2.

312 *Te Aroha News*, 1 November 1884, p. 2.

313 Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 10 February 1885, p. 3; for spelling of his name, see *New Zealand Gazette*, 25 January 1883, p. 114.

314 For instance, letter from E.Y. Cox, *Te Aroha News*, 29 June 1889, p. 7.

315 *Te Aroha News*, 11 June 1887, p. 2.

316 *Te Aroha News*, 29 June 1889, p. 7.

317 Letter from E.Y. Cox, *Te Aroha News*, 29 June 1889, p. 7.

318 *Te Aroha News*, 3 July 1889, p. 2.

319 See Bank of New Zealand, Paeroa Branch, Half-Yearly Balances as at 30 September 1895; Ohinemuri Branch, Half-Yearly Balances as at 30 September 1903, Report on Advances, Bank of New Zealand Archives, Wellington; *Te Aroha News*, 26 November 1887, p. 2, 7 May 1907, p. 2, 29 November 1933, p. 1, 9 March 1934, p. 7.

meeting, explained that it had been called because Norrie had returned to Te Aroha 'and was very anxious to take up his residence amongst them, and get together the Presbyterian church again'. After Hetherington explained that 'he would have some difficulty now in getting the congregation together again, or in obtaining and guaranteed stipend', Norrie 'told him he did not ask for any guarantee but would like a committee formed to assist him in his work; and with such was quite willing to take up his residence amongst them and work up the cause'. Mackie recalled that Norrie, when he left in 1883, had 'hoped' to 'return again to reside amongst them', and considered that, as 'the country was far more settled now than was the case at that time', there would be no problem in paying his stipend. Peter Ferguson, a mine manager,[320] wanted separate committees formed at Te Aroha and Waiorongomai, as these settlements were too far apart for joint meetings. Mackie said they would get additional financial support from Katikati and Paeroa, and Hetherington said that since Norrie had returned 'one party from Waitoa came to me and promised to give £2 2s a year, and more if he could afford to'; he knew of others who would assist. They hoped to use the public hall for services and were angry that four lights and two chandeliers they had given to the Church of England (after the Presbyterians had ceased to use the hall), along with two collection plates and their organ, were not being returned. Hetherington 'said he believed a good many people in Te Aroha were of opinion it was not advisable to bring another minister amongst them', but as those present unanimously supported Norrie's return a committee was elected to assist him.[321]

In mid-August, a 'Concert and Poke' followed by a dance was held to raise funds.[322] 'The weather was very unpropitious and undoubtedly prevented a good many who would otherwise have been present'. Despite this, 'a very lively interest was evinced in the proceedings, and the large Hall was comfortably filled'. During the interval, pokes (meaning bags of refreshments) were handed around. One purpose of this gathering was to give 'a hearty welcome' to Norrie, who expressed 'heartfelt thanks' for their 'kind and hearty expression of good feeling'. The subsequent dance was 'kept up with spirit for several hours'.[323]

At Waiorongomai, the public hall was used for the revived services.[324] Norrie was described as 'a very earnest worker' who 'deserves to succeed'.[325] A Sunday School

---

[320] See paper on Peter Ferguson and his New Era.

[321] *Te Aroha News*, 3 July 1889, p. 2.

[322] Advertisement, *Te Aroha News*, 27 July 1889, p. 7.

[323] *Te Aroha News*, 17 August 1889, p. 2.

[324] *Te Aroha News*, 22 June 1889, p. 2.

[325] 'Te Aroha', *Observer*, 8 February 1890, p. 15.

was established, which, like others, attracted support by providing an annual picnic.[326] In October 1893, Norrie's father, Thomas, then ministering at Papakura, visited Te Aroha and most of the Ohinemuri mining settlements in response to the request that these places 'should be constituted into a charge'. The Te Aroha petitioners' request was accepted 'on condition that no steps be taken towards the settlement of a minister, till the people are in a position to give £150 a year of stipend, exclusive of any grant from the Church Extension Fund'. At most of the townships, committees were formed to raise the amount required.[327] The district was formed into a 'separate charge' in 1894, meetings being held during May to produce 'a communicants' roll, which is necessary before a call can be given to a minister'. The state of the church 'and its ability to call a minister' was 'due entirely' to Norrie's 'patient and persevering work'.[328] In September his ordination and induction was 'witnessed by a large number of people', and a correspondent congratulated the Presbyterians 'on having an ordained pastor at last, and one so suitable in every way. All denominations were represented in the congregation at the ordination service, which was very solemn and impressive'. After a visiting clergyman explained 'the steps taken in the formation of this mission station into a church', Norrie's father ordained him.[329] Norrie would leave to work throughout the entire Coromandel Peninsula in 1897.[330]

Rev R.J. Wright, son of the Secretary of the British and Foreign Bible Society in London, had come to New Zealand early in 1897 accompanying his brother, another minister, who was suffering from ill-health. After assisting at Dannevirke, Wright had moved to Te Aroha by 1898; although intending to remain in the colony he departed after less than two years.[331] When leaving Te Aroha in late 1898, Wright asked Thomas Walls to succeed him.[332] Walls had arrived in New Zealand in 1893, where he ministered at Woodville for 18 months before returning to Scotland, then returning to the colony in 1898 and settling at Te Aroha, where he worked until 1905.[333] He took services at Waihou, Gordon, Walton, Manawaru, Morrinsville, and Waharoa in addition to evening services at Te Aroha every Sunday.[334] Early in the year, an anonymous woman donor offered £100, free of interest, to be repaid in ten years, for the erection of

---

326 'Te Aroha', *Observer*, 17 January 1891, p. 18.

327 *Auckland Weekly News*, 14 October 1893, p. 10.

328 Te Aroha Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 12 May 1894, p. 23.

329 Te Aroha Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*. 22 September 1894, p. 22.

330 *Waihi Telegraph*, 7 August 1939, p. 2.

331 *Evening Star*, 20 March 1897, Supplement, p. 2; *Te Aroha News,* 7 April 1898, p. 2; Google.

332 *Te Aroha News*, 26 March 1898, p. 2, 7 April 1898, p. 2; *Waikato Argus*, 13 August 1898, p. 2.

333 *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 2, p. 827; Google

334 *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 2, p. 827.

a church. Her offer was accepted, churchgoers agreeing to erect one to hold 200 people, for a maximum cost of £200.[335] Less than two months later, a working bee leveled the site,[336] and more entertainments were organized to raise money.[337] In August, St David's Church, described as 'a very handsome building, with a tasteful interior' and 'most comfortable', seating 150, held its first service.[338] Also in that year, services were revived at Waiorongomai.[339] By the end of the century, the Presbyterian Sunday School enrolled 60 children.[340]

The annual meeting held in September 1901 attracted 'a good attendance', including 'several from the outlying districts'. Although the finances were satisfactory, collections, subscriptions, an 'extension grant', concerts, and selling the organ producing a surplus of £5 11s 1d, 'the ladies' were asked to 'make all necessary arrangements' for another fundraising social.[341] Two years later, these socials were being held monthly.[342] They were well attended; one involving indoor games, songs, and a tug of war between men and women (won by the latter) caused much amusement.[343] In December the following year, a correspondent reported 'a somewhat "breezy" ['short-tempered'][344] meeting of the Presbyterians at the Kirk on Thursday evening last'.[345] A week later, he reported that, 'as a sequel to certain unpleasantness that has arisen amongst the members of St David's Church, the Auckland Presbytery has appointed … a Commission of enquiry'.[346] With the loss of the local newspaper, the nature of this 'unpleasantness' is unknown.

METHODISM

---

[335] *Te Aroha News*, 26 March 1898, p. 2.

[336] *Te Aroha News*, 14 May 1898, p. 2.

[337] For example, *Te Aroha News*, 26 July 1898, p. 2.

[338] *Thames Advertiser*, 19 August 1898, p. 1; *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 2, p. 827.

[339] *Te Aroha News*, 19 March 1898, p. 3.

[340] *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 2, p. 827.

[341] Te Aroha Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 12 September 1901, p. 25.

[342] *Te Aroha News*, 4 August 1903, p. 2.

[343] *Te Aroha News*, 8 August 1903, p. 2.

[344] Eric Partridge, *A Dictionary of Slang and Unconventional English*, 8 ed., ed. Paul Beale (London, 1984), p. 133.

[345] Own Correspondent, 'Te Aroha Jottings', *Thames Star*, 5 December 1904, p. 2.

[346] Own Correspondent, 'Te Aroha Jottings', *Thames Star*, 14 December 1904, p. 1.

In 1931, James Thomas Pinfold[347] claimed to have been the first minister to preach at Te Aroha.[348] In fact, he was not yet a minister, for only after studying at universities in both Auckland and Otago would he be ordained, in 1885.[349] Pinfold described arriving at Te Aroha by steamer on 16 December 1880. 'All at once, as we turned one of the bends, the Te Aroha mountain appeared, having tents largely covering it, through the canvas of which candles were seen shining brightly. It was a fairy scene'.[350] (He not only exaggerated by describing the mountain as being largely covered in tents but was wrong in claiming to have given the first sermon, as William Calder of the Church of England had preceded him on 5 December.) On 19 December, as he recalled, 'I started my life's work as a Christian minister by preaching from the doorway of a Warden's Office' (which was a tent, not a building).[351] About 100 people attended, and 30s was collected. As he was not used to sleeping in tents, he was permitted to sleep under the bar counter of the Hot Springs Hotel.[352]

In mid-May 1881, the Wesleyans, as they were usually termed at the time, having waited in vain for the erection of a hall or a school, decided to build a church, for which £30 was promised.[353] The first meeting of the building committee was held on 1 July and the church, costing £80 5s, was opened on 7 August.[354] This unlined building was 30 feet long, 20 feet wide, 'with 12ft studs and 16ft rafters'.[355] Its construction was supervised by James Lavery, a timber merchant and builder; one of the most prominent Methodists, he would become superintendent of its Sunday School, in which his daughter taught.[356] There were 'good' congregations at the first services, which were taken by a visiting minister.[357] 'Notwithstanding the cold and inclement weather', the soiree held to celebrate the opening 'was a most pronounced success in every way'. The tables 'were loaded with the best teacakes and other good things. The building was

---

[347] For his photograph, see *Strong Blow the Winds: A brief record of the history of the Te Aroha Methodist Church and Circuit 1881-1956* (Te Aroha, 1956), [p. 15]; *Te Aroha News*, 5 August 1931, p. 6; *Hauraki Plains Gazette*, 8 June 1932, p. 4.

[348] *Te Aroha News*, 5 August 1931, p. 6; *Strong Blow the Winds*, [p. 3].

[349] *Dominion*, 31 July 1933, p. 10.

[350] *Strong Blow the Winds*, [pp. 3-4]; Pinfold, p. 66.

[351] Pinfold, p. 67.

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

[353] *Waikato Times*, 19 May 1881, p. 2.

[354] *Strong Blow the Winds*, [p. 4]; for a photograph of the church, see [p. 5].

[355] *Waikato Times*, 11 August 1881, p. 2.

[356] See *Waikato Times*, 11 August 1881, p. 2, 8 October 1881, p. 2; *Te Aroha News*, 26 April 1884, p. 2, 2 May 1885, p. 2, 28 January 1888, p. 2.

[357] Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 11 August 1881, p. 2.

filled with a most appreciative audience amongst whom were a number of Maoris'. After the food was eaten, a hymn was sung and the first baptism took place. The local doctor, William Harvey,[358] then took the chair 'and the remainder of the evening was passed in a most enjoyable manner'.[359] 'A novel feature of the meeting was an address by a lady', Harvey's wife, who was the local teacher. 'Mrs Harvey is a very fluent and graceful speaker and greatly interested the audience by relating her experiences in connection with church work at the Great Queen-street Methodist Church, London'. After the visiting minister gave 'a humorous speech on the pulpit and the pew', Pinfold spoke on unity, 'with the history of his efforts at getting the building erected'. Harry Whitaker, an Anglican,[360] spoke 'on nothing in particular and everything in general', and two rangatira 'expressed their pleasure at being present and seeing such a fine place of worship erected and hoped all would attend it'. The choir and soloists provided songs, accompanied by piano and harmonium, and the circuit steward gave 'a most satisfactory financial statement', for 'only about £10 more than already subscribed would clear the church of debt'.[361] (Not all subscribers to the church fund were Wesleyans.[362]) After a vote of thanks 'to all who had so ably assisted', including a couple who had come from Thames for this event, the national anthem was sung 'and an evening's intellectual enjoyment and amusement was brought to a close. The event will not soon be forgotten by either the European or native portion of the population'.[363]

Immediately afterwards, there were complaints that although those who had contributed money had been led to believe that the building would be used for a school at a nominal rental, the church committee was asking for 12s a week.[364] A member of the committee responded that it had been offered for 8s a week, including cleaning, but the school committee had considered this too low and proposed the higher sum.[365] Being the first church erected, both Anglicans and Presbyterians were granted the right to use it, and it was rented for a school until one was built.[366] (The first wedding ceremony in the church was not held until April 1897 because of the custom for weddings to be held in family homes.[367])

---

[358] See paper on physical and mental health issues in the Te Aroha district.

[359] Te Aroha Correspondent, *Thames Advertiser*, 12 August 1881, p. 3.

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

[361] Te Aroha Correspondent, *Thames Advertiser*, 12 August 1881, p. 3.

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

[363] Te Aroha Correspondent, *Thames Advertiser*, 12 August 1881, p. 3.

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

[365] Letter from D.J. Frazer, *Waikato Times*, 25 August 1881, p. 3.

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

[367] *Strong Blow the Winds*, [p. 5].

In July 1882 it was reported that the church had been 'lined and made comfortable, and we are improving in our morale, as the Church was hardly large enough to hold the congregation' at the first service in the improved building. Pinfold 'was delighted, and no wonder considering the state of the roads'.[368] The cost of these improvements was £22 10s 6d.[369] In October, after it was reported that a concert and dance had been held to raise funds to purchase a harmonium, to be used by all denominations, Pinfold responded that the dance was nothing to do with either the concert or the harmonium fund, and that the latter instrument would be solely the property of the Wesleyans, although it could be used by all who used their church.[370] Shortly afterwards it was claimed that other denominations felt humiliated by having to use this building and to collect money for it at their services, and that Pinfold regarded the concert for the harmonium 'of too low a class to permit him or any of his adherents attending'.[371]

During his time in the district, Pinfold preached at Te Aroha, Waitoa, Paeroa, Morrinsville, and Matamata, walking between each settlement.[372] After he left to study for his ordination, Pinfold became a hard-working minister in 13 other districts before retiring in 1921; he was also active in the Sunday School movement and the Christian Endeavour Union. Outside his religious duties, he was interested in a wide range of intellectual pursuits, including Maori history and culture as well as geology and mining.[373]

By early 1883, when George Thomas Marshall was appointed as minister, the Upper Thames Circuit extended from Waitekauri to Shaftesbury.[374] This was Marshall's first appointment after finishing his training; in the future he would be appointed 'to some of the most arduous and difficult circuits', serving 'with faithfulness and courage of the highest order'.[375] Later in 1883, the *Observer* Man reported that 'the W. Church was full to overflowing on Sunday last, and as a consequence the dimes rolled in *ad libitum*. Old R's face was a picture to behold when counting the cash'.[376]

---

[368] Te Aroha Correspondent, *Thames Star*, 13 July 1882, p. 2.

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

[370] *Thames Advertiser*, 23 October 1882, p. 2, 26 October 1882, p. 2.

[371] *Thames Advertiser*, 4 November 1882, p. 3.

[372] C.T. Harris, 'The Upper Thames Valley', *Te Aroha News*, 5 October 1936, p. 8.

[373] Pinfold; *Dominion*, 31 July 1933, p. 10.

[374] C.T. Harris, 'The Upper Thames Valley', *Te Aroha News*, 5 October 1936, p. 8.

[375] Methodist Church of New Zealand, *Minutes of the Annual Conference ... 1939* (Christchurch, 1939), p. 17.

[376] 'Te Aroha', *Observer*, 29 September 1883, p. 8.

(George Ripley, a jeweller and watch and clock maker, was a trustee.[377]) There was a controversy late that year over the initial refusal of the school committee to allow Marshall to use the public school for an hour a week to give 'religious instruction to any children sent to him by parents'.[378]

After serving 'with much success' for a year, in April 1884 Marshall was replaced by Thomas John Wills.[379] A 'tea meeting' held to welcome him had a 'rather small' attendance, 'owing, no doubt, to the short notice'. Henry Buttle, the circuit steward,[380] reminded those present that 'it was the duty of the people to help their pastor. There had been a great deal done in the past, but there was a great deal still to do, and a great deal of sin to be combatted'. John Ilott, editor of the *Te Aroha News*,[381] hoped Wills 'would quickly establish himself [as] a favourite amongst the ladies and have them on his side', because 'they would prove valuable and important assistants in every good work'. Ilott and his wife 'loved their little church, and had spent many happy hours within its walls', and also 'were greatly interested in' the Sunday School.

> Too much importance could not be placed on the work amongst the children, and that was why he was so interested in the Band of Hope. Teach the children to have nothing to do with strong drink and carefully instruct them in the grand old truths of the Bible and you were doing a noble work, the good results of which must be felt, both now, and also far more in later years, when these children would be taking leading parts in the affairs of life. With regard to their new minister he believed he was a man fully consecrated to the Master's work, able and willing to labour actively amongst them, and there was ample work for him to do in this district.

In responding to the welcoming speeches, Wills said that he had a 'very high opinion' of Marshall. 'He had seen and known a good deal of him, and the more he saw him the more he loved him. He knew Mr Marshall had laboured earnestly amongst them, and he expected to see the results'. He urged Wesleyans 'to get quickened themselves, if they were to see a year of successful work', and praised the temperance cause as 'the greatest on earth next to that of the church itself'.[382] During that year, a

---

[377] *Te Aroha News*, advertisement, 15 September 1883, p. 1, 24 April 1886, p. 2; *Strong Blow the Winds*, [p. 10].

[378] *Waikato Times*, 14 August 1883, p. 2; *Te Aroha News*, 20 October 1883, p. 2.

[379] Te Aroha Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 17 May 1884, p. 22.

[380] See paper on the temperance movement in the Te Aroha district.

[381] See paper on the temperance movement in the Te Aroha district.

[382] *Te Aroha News*, 26 April 1884, p. 2.

committee selected and leased a site for a church at Waiorongomai, and a district meeting sanctioning erecting one to seat 200.[383] (It was never erected.)

Being the sole Protestant clergyman in the district for a time, Wills was 'taking well with the people, large crowds attending the service every Sabbath'.[384] The Wesleyans and Presbyterians arranged for a minister to take a service at Te Aroha every Sunday evening and sometimes in the morning, with lay readers filling in on other occasions.[385] At Waiorongomai, William Henry Hawkins, a prominent temperance advocate,[386] took the services.[387] The success of Wills' and others ministers' efforts is impossible to assess, although the Wesleyans considered that they had achieved important results in the early 1880s. Waiorongomai was described as being worse, morally, than Te Aroha, but with the help of the temperance movement, 'God wrought miracles of grace', and 'hardened drinkers signed the pledge and many, renowned for their depravity, were won for Christ'.[388]

On the eve of Good Friday in April 1885, a bazaar was held to aid the church fund and was continued on the following Saturday. 'Considering the dullness of the times' it was a success, raising over £40.[389] In September, a Maori named Paul visited, and on Sunday 'addressed (in English) a goodly congregation of Europeans'.[390] Although described as a Maori Wesleyan minister, as he was not being recorded as a marriage celebrant[391] he must have been of a lower status. The other notable visitor was the 'escaped nun', as detailed above. Wills was farewelled in March 1886, and his successor, Oliver Dean, was welcomed one month later.[392] In the following January, after a row over having to sit exams that other trainee ministers were not required to sit, Wills left the Wesleyan Church and became an Anglican minister.[393] At the same time

---

[383] *Te Aroha News*, 5 January 1884, p. 2; *Thames Advertiser*, 4 March 1884, p. 2; *Thames Star*, 1 November 1884, p. 2.

[384] Te Aroha Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 17 May 1884, p. 22.

[385] *Te Aroha News*, 12 July 1884, p. 2.

[386] See paper on the temperance movement in the Te Aroha district.

[387] For example, Church Notices, *Te Aroha News*, 17 May 1884, p. 2.

[388] *Strong Blow the Winds*, [p. 5].

[389] Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 7 April 1885, p. 2.

[390] *Waikato Times*, 10 September 1885, p. 3.

[391] Lists of marriage celebrants in the *New Zealand Gazette*.

[392] *Te Aroha News*, 13 March 1886, p. 2, 17 April 1886, p. 2.

[393] *Te Aroha News*, 29 January 1887, p. 3, 26 March 1887, p. 2, 16 April 1887, p. 2.; *Hawke's Bay Herald*, 27 January 1902, p. 3.

his successor also resigned and successfully applied for employment with the Church of England.[394]

In March 1886, Mark Lovell once again called for the rection of a church at Waiorongomai.[395] Nine months later, he recorded that a canvass of Waiorongomai and Te Aroha West 'to solicit names and Quarterly subscriptions in aid of the Church Funds' had resulted in 'some 25 or 30' people promising to assist because they wanted services re-established.[396] Thus encouraged, in January he called a public meeting.[397] Chaired by Thomas Alfred Joughin, a future minister in this district, only four church members attended apart from Lovell; one of them was a woman, Mary Ann Hirst, the wife of Samuel Luther Hirst (discussed below). Joughin regretted 'such a poor attendance', but, undaunted, 'it was unanimously resolved to resume services, all present being of opinion that this would be well supported and considered a great wrong had been done in discontinuing the same'. Two evening services a month were proposed plus an 'occasional' afternoon one taken by a lay reader. Lovell stated that his canvass had proved that sufficient funds would be available. 'It was thought £5 could be easily raised per quarter by Quarterly subscriptions irrespective of Service collections'. It was also agreed that a soiree and concert be held on Good Friday and an 'Easter Tree' on Easter Monday.[398] One month later, Lovell was appointed secretary of the congregation, and, after another man declined to be chairman, was unanimously elected to that position as well.[399] In March, he informed a meeting of the congregation of the arrangements made for the soiree and Easter Tree:

> The Secretary reported having gathered a few things together and otherwise had pushed the business forward to the best of his ability. The Committee resolved to make every effort to make the meetings a success, and reported their canvass, being satisfactory. It was resolved to unite to make the best arrangements possible.

---

394 *Te Aroha News*, 29 January 1887, p. 3; *Waiapu Church Gazette*, 1 August 1933, p. 4.

395 *Te Aroha News*, 27 March 1886, p. 2.

396 Methodist Church, Waiorongomai Congregation Minute Book 1886-1889, entry for December 1886, 3050/701, Methodist Archives, Auckland.

397 *Te Aroha News*, 8 January 1887, p. 2.

398 Methodist Church, Waiorongomai Congregation Minute Book 1886-1889, minutes of public meeting of 12 January 1887, 3050/701, Methodist Archives, Auckland.

399 Methodist Church, Waiorongomai Congregation Minute Book 1886-1889, minutes of meeting of 12 February 1887, 3050/701, Methodist Archives, Auckland.

The bachelors were to be asked 'to provide a tray', and Lovell would 'write to Friends to assist at the Concert'.[400] Two weeks later, he recorded a 'Note' in his minute book: 'Several meetings were announced to be held but no members of the Committee turning up and on one or two occasions only one and so the whole responsibility rested with the Secretary [himself] to work the affair up at all'.[401] At a meeting held less than two weeks later, there was 'considerable discussion' about the arrangements made for the Easter Tree. After Lovell explained 'the utter impossibility of a change being effected at the eleventh hour', he recorded that members 'were of opinion that the whole of the responsibility rested with the Secretary, who had called meetings but none of the Committee turned up. It was decided to leave the matter in the hands of the ladies – the meeting dispersed having done no business'.[402]

At the end of July, Samuel Luther Hirst,[403] a prominent layman and for a time the superintendent of the Sunday School,[404] stated that the Easter Tree service and concert had failed because, Lovell having defied the committee's resolutions, the latter had refused to assist. Lovell recorded his justification:

> Mr Lovell contradicted the statement, and explained that no member of the Committee had complained to him and that the frequent non-attendance when meetings were called, was after certain arrangements had been made and responsibilities contracted accordingly as reported by Mr Lovell and unanimously approved of by the Committee on different evenings with members about the previous meetings when it was too late to postpone the affair the majority of Committee who promised to do the best they could under the circumstances did not carry out or in any way endeavour to assist but as it was left unaccountably at the last moment.[405]

---

[400] Methodist Church, Waiorongomai Congregation Minute Book 1886-1889, minutes of meeting of 7 March 1887, 3050/701, Methodist Archives, Auckland.

[401] Methodist Church, Waiorongomai Congregation Minute Book 1886-1889, 'Note', 21 March 1887, 3050/701, Methodist Archives, Auckland.

[402] Methodist Church, Waiorongomai Congregation Minute Book 1886-1889, minutes of meeting of 3 April 1887, 3050/701, Methodist Archives, Auckland.

[403] See *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 2, p. 829; *Te Aroha News*, 19 July 1933, p. 1.

[404] Waiorongomai Band of Hope, Minute Book 1883-1889, minutes of meetings of 5 June 1884, 17 May 1889, 3050/916, Methodist Archives, Auckland; *Strong Blow the Winds*, [p. 10]; *Te Aroha News*, 5 April 1890, p. 2, 22 June 1895, p. 2; *Thames Star*, 1 May 1907, p. 2; *New Zealand Herald*, 7 May 1934, p. 12.

[405] Methodist Church, Waiorongomai Congregation Minute Book 1886-1889, minutes of meeting of 29 July 1887, 3050/701, Methodist Archives, Auckland.

At the next meeting, held on 6 December, the new minister, Samuel Lawry, who had been appointed to the Upper Thames Circuit in March that year (he had started his training in 1876),[406] objected to these minutes, 'being of opinion they were irregular; inasmuch as they were verbatim'. Lovell responded that there had been no previous complaint. As the Easter Tree concert, soiree, and bazaar had made a loss of 13s, it was agreed to sell the remaining goods to the Te Aroha bazaar committee, which produced a return of £19.[407] No more minutes of the committee representing the Waiorongomai congregation were taken, but services continued to be held there, usually run by lay readers.[408] (Presumably because of these squabbles with the church, the Sunday School, and the Band of Hope, by the beginning of 1889 Lovell had joined the Church of England and become one of its vestrymen at Waiorongomai.[409])

One of Lawry's first acts upon his arrival was to form a Bible class.[410] By then it was agreed that as the church was crowded, uncomfortable, out of the way, and had 'bad approaches' it was only suitable for the Sunday School.[411] Construction of a replacement building was delayed because of the difficulty of raising sufficient money; instead, the lining of the existing church was to be improved, a porch built, and the fencing completed.[412] The church was made more comfortable in 1888, but not until 1891 were the porch and new windows added, which were seen as 'very marked improvements'.[413]

At the beginning of 1888, the choir and some of their friends, 24 people in all, sang 'the well-known Service of Song, "Uncle Tom" ', in the town hall, followed by a tea and coffee supper. About 100 people attended; for what it considered to be a disappointing turnout the *Te Aroha News* blamed the high price of tickets, 2s.[414] A harvest festival was held in March, and in the following month a 'sale of work' raised

---

406 *Te Aroha News*, 12 March 1887, p. 2; W.A. Chambers, 'Samuel Lawry', *Dictionary of New Zealand Biography*, first published in 1993, reprinted in *Te Ara – the Encyclopedia of New Zealand*, p. 1, online.

407 Methodist Church, Waiorongomai Congregation Minute Book 1886-1889, minutes of meeting of 6 December 1887, with balance sheet, 3050/701, Methodist Archives, Auckland.

408 For example, Church Services, *Te Aroha News*, 10 March 1888, p. 2, 14 July 1888, p. 2, 18 August 1888, p. 2, 22 December 1888, p. 2.

409 *Te Aroha News*, 16 January 1889, p. 2.

410 *Te Aroha News*, 11 June 1887, p. 2.

411 *Te Aroha News*, 28 May 1887, p. 2.

412 *Te Aroha News*, 18 February 1888, p. 2.

413 *Te Aroha News*, 16 February 1889, p. 2; 'Te Aroha', *Observer*, 4 July 1891, p. 18; photograph, *Strong Blow the Winds*, [p. 5].

414 *Te Aroha News*, 7 January 1888, p. 2.

about £25.[415] The Methodist journal was informed, in November, that the church was 'small and neat, perhaps holding 200 persons. About forty or fifty attended the morning service; the small choir sang very pleasantly and heartily'.[416] In the following February, a soiree was held to celebrate the church's anniversary. After having a meal at 6.30, the entertainment commenced at 8 o'clock. Residents were assured that the programme was 'a varied and attractive one, consisting of songs by several ladies and gentlemen of musical repute, anthems by the choir, selections of instrumental music, recitations, addresses, etc'.[417] Of particular note was the quality of the food.[418]

Early in 1889, a Home Missionary preached at both Te Aroha and Waiorongomai, his last visit to the district.[419] A meeting of Wesleyans regretted that it could not pay for a replacement minister; Lawry was spending some of his time lecturing in nearby circuits.[420] Another harvest festival was held in March.[421] During this year, laymen conducted services in the Waiorongomai public hall; one was a proprietor of the *New Zealand Herald*, who attracted 'a very large congregation' to a service that was 'a most hearty and enjoyable one throughout'.[422] In May, prompted by Lovell, two meetings were held in his Waiorongomai home to consider erecting a church estimated to cost about £150. A working committee of eight was appointed. 'It was resolved to distribute a number of circulars, setting forth what was proposed to be done, and inviting financial assistance', and future meeting would 'arrange for a complete canvass of the district'.[423] Nothing further was heard of this proposal, the collapse of mining making it unfeasible.

In the following March, the Home Missionary returned and combined with the Presbyterians in open air services in the domain.[424] Also in 1890, a committee was elected to arrange a celebration of the Methodist Jubilee.[425] In April, Lawry, who had 'won the respect and esteem of all classes and all denominations', was replaced by John Law.[426] (In total, Lawry would spend 24 years in circuit work in all parts of New Zealand apart from Wellington, usually as the superintendent minister, and was

---

415 *Te Aroha News*, 17 March 1888, p. 2, 28 April 1888, p. 2.

416 *New Zealand Methodist*, 17 November 1888, p. 4.

417 *Te Aroha New*, 13 February 1889, p. 2.

418 *Te Aroha News*, 16 February 1889, p. 2.

419 *Te Aroha News*, 5 January 1889, p. 2, 23 March 1889, p. 2.

420 *Te Aroha News*, 5 January 1889, p. 2; *Bay of Plenty Times*, 7 October 1889, p. 2.

421 *Te Aroha News*, 27 March 1889, p. 7.

422 *Te Aroha News*, 16 February 1889, p. 2, 10 April 1889, p. 2.

423 *Te Aroha News*, 22 May 1889, p. 2.

424 *Te Aroha News*, 26 March 1890, p. 2.

425 *Te Aroha News*, 5 April 1890, p. 2.

426 *Te Aroha News*, 9 April 1890, p. 2, 7 April 1890, p. 2.

appointed to a variety of leadership roles in the church.[427]) Law, who had arrived in the colony in 1868 and immediately settled in Cambridge, was the pioneer Wesleyan minister in the Waikato, who went on to be in charge of several circuits.[428]

In September 1890, the choir enthralled Te Aroha's *Observer* Man:

> Talk about Madame Patti's singing. As I sat in the Wesleyan Church the other night and listened to the choir singing one of their beautiful anthems, it reminded me of so many sweet singing birds. Much credit it due to Mr Hirst, choirmaster, for the manner in which he has trained them. The Church of England will have to make rapid strides, or else they will be left in the cold, as far as the singing is concerned.[429]

Social occasions continued, for example in October a concert and tea and coffee supper being held in the church.[430] And a 'desirable residence' was acquired for the minister.[431]

Law was described, in 1891, as being 'highly esteemed' and as being responsible for the 'very marked improvements' made to the church, all carried out in a 'very tasteful way'.[432] Fundraising continued, a correspondent writing in the following year about preparations for another bazaar: 'Sewing bees are being held weekly, and a wonderful autograph quilt is in process of manufacture, which is said to be a perfect mine of wealth, the prices for the privilege of having one's name inscribed upon it ranging from £20 downwards'.[433] The 'cake and apron fair' for which it was made was held in December:

> The hall in which the fair was held had been most tastefully decorated by willing hands and looked quite bright and gay. Fancy stalls were arranged on either side, and at one end the refreshment stall stood, covered with most attractive viands. The autograph quilt was hung in a prominent position on the platform, and was an object of great interest, seeing that it has brought over £50 to the funds.

The fair opened at three o'clock, 'proceeded right merrily until five o'clock, commencing again at seven, and continuing until ten o'clock. In the evening the hall was crowded, and a good business done'. A highlight was an 'automatic cradle', other

---

[427] Chambers, pp. 2-3.

[428] *Evening Star*, 3 August 1908, p. 4; *Observer*, 8 August 1908, p. 4.

[429] 'Te Aroha', *Observer*, 22 September 1890, p. 18.

[430] 'Te Aroha', *Observer*, 4 October 1890, p. 17.

[431] *Thames Star*, 2 October 1890, p. 2.

[432] 'Te Aroha', *Observer*, 4 July 1891, p. 18.

[433] Te Aroha Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 6 August 1892, p. 23.

attractions including ‘fishponds, lucky bags, shooting gallery, etc, which seemed to be veritable silver mines, so well were they patronized by the young people’. The fair was expected to raise about £90 ‘for the liquidation of the circuit debt’.[434]

An English woman visiting in 1894 recorded that the congregation’s ‘fervour in prayer, their zest in singing, their “amen” and “hallelujah” to mark approval of the preacher’s word assured her that here were “true Methodists” ’.[435] By then, Thomas Alfred Joughin[436] was the minister.[437] He had arrived in the colony in 1880 at the age of 17, commenced studying theology three years later before having six years as a missioner to Maori living at Hokianga before being moved to the Upper Thames district.[438] In May 1895, he returned to Hokianga because of his wife’s health; having suffered from tuberculosis for several years, she died in December.[439] Joughin later recalled the circuit as being ‘one of magnificent distances, small congregations and stringent financial resources’.[440] After his wife’s death, he would serve in the South Island, becoming in due course a president of the Methodist Conference.[441]

Over one week in September in 1895 a visiting clergyman conducted well-attended evangelical services in Te Aroha and elsewhere.[442] At the conclusion of his mission, the *Te Aroha News* commented that it had been ‘fairly successful’. Attendance had been ‘good, and much spiritual blessing has resulted’. All denominations participated, and ‘his utterances were clear, pronounced eloquent and fervid, and the meetings were spiritual always’.[443] In November, the annual ‘home mission’ sermons were delivered.[444]

In 1896, Samuel Griffith became minister.[445] (His career has not been traced; he was recorded, upon his death at the age of 87, as being ‘well-known throughout New Zealand’.[446]) In January 1898, a missionary gave a lantern lecture on missionary work

---

[434] Te Aroha Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 24 December 1892, p. 23.

[435] *Strong Blow the Winds*, [p. 6].

[436] See *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 3, p. 450; *Auckland Weekly News*, 10 December 1930, p. 55, photograph 6; Probates, BBAE 1570, 136/1942, ANZ-A.

[437] *Auckland Weekly News*, 2 June 1895, p. 22.

[438] *Auckland Star*, 12 January 1942, p. 6.

[439] *Te Aroha News*, 11 May 1895, p. 2, 4 December 1895, p. 2.

[440] C.T. Harris, ‘The Upper Thames Valley’, *Te Aroha News*, 5 October 1936, p. 8.

[441] *Auckland Star*, 12 January 1942, p. 6.

[442] *Te Aroha News*, 4 September 1895, p. 2, 11 September 1895, p. 2.

[443] *Te Aroha News*, 21 September 1895, p. 2.

[444] *Te Aroha News*, 9 November 1895, p. 2.

[445] See *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 2, pp. 827-828.

[446] *Wairarapa Age*, 20 November 1937, p. 5.

in Fiji.[447] Three months later the anniversary festival featured a limelight entertainment with 'over 100 superb views', including of the battle of Trafalgar.[448] Later that month, a 'grand musical entertainment' held in the church featured a clergyman billed as 'Auckland's greatest baritone', who sang Negro spirituals.[449] This entertainment, a 'happy blending of mirth and melody, eloquence and story', including a history of the Fisk Jubilee Singers,[450] received 'frequent loud applause, and at the end a cordial vote of thanks was enthusiastically carried'.[451] The same man would sing in a 'grand musical festival' for the Wesleyan anniversary two years later.[452]

As by 1900 the congregation had increased to over 200, a new church was erected, the largest in the district, for a total cost of £817.[453] As a local correspondent explained, 'for some time past, particularly during the height of the visiting season', it had become apparent that more seating was required.

> The new building is being built on the site occupied by the old one. The latter has been moved to one side and will be used for Sunday-school work and general meetings. The new church will be 45ft by 30ft, with two rooms at the back, one a classroom 19ft by 12ft, and the other to be used as a vestry, 12ft by 9ft. The main building will provide seating accommodation for 250 people…. The floor is graded from the entrance to the end of the building, so that those seated at the back will always have an uninterrupted view of the pulpit…. The church, when completed, will have every convenience necessary for a building of that sort, and architecturally will be a distinct acquisition to the town.

'Prominent Auckland friends' contributed to the cost, and one of them had gifted the foundation stone.[454] The laying of the latter was attended by five Methodist ministers and 'a large assemblage of the congregation and general public'; the Anglican and Presbyterian clergymen 'congratulated their Wesleyan friends on the progress they had made, and wished them all success in the future'.[455] In the following year, a nine-roomed house was erected for the minister at a cost of £683 3s 6d.[456] The Upper

---

[447] *Te Aroha News*, 25 January 1898, p. 2.

[448] *Te Aroha News*, 19 April 1898, p. 2, 30 April 1898, p. 2.

[449] *Te Aroha News*, 21 May 1898, p. 2.

[450] See paper on black Americans and Te Aroha mining.

[451] *Te Aroha News*, 2 June 1898, p. 3.

[452] *Te Aroha News*, 29 March 1900, p. 2.

[453] *Thames Star*, 6 November 1900, p. 4, 13 December 1900, p. 2; *Strong Blow the Winds*, [p. 6].

[454] Te Aroha Correspondent, *New Zealand Herald*, 2 October 1900, p. 3.

[455] *New Zealand Herald*, 6 October 1900, p. 4.

[456] *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 2, p. 827; *Strong Blow the Winds*, [p. 6].

Thames circuit, with its headquarters at Te Aroha, by then included the districts of Paeroa, Waihi, Karangahake, and Morrinsville; three ministers serviced 16 'preaching places'.[457]

CATHOLICS

In 1931, the *Te Aroha News* published 'Prodigal's' recollections:

> The first priest to visit Te Aroha was Dr James McDonald, brother of Father Walter,[458] so well-known to the people of Auckland 40 years ago. Dr McDonald was a "Selwyn" among the Maoris. On horseback or on foot, his pack on his back, over mountains and through forests and swamps toiled this good man. At some time or other he is said to have visited every Maori pa in the province. In the course of his wanderings, he was at Te Aroha more than once before any white man settled there.[459]

From the 1860s onwards, McDonald, who had a good knowledge of the Maori language, conducted mission work in Maori communities, in 1880 becoming responsible for all Maori throughout the diocese.[460]

As 'Prodigal' recalled, 'shortly after the opening of the goldfield at Te Aroha the district was included in the Thames parish, under Father (later Monsignor) O'Reilly[461] who celebrated the first Mass in the township in 1880'.[462] Being without a church, on his monthly visits he celebrated 'the divine mysteries in private buildings'.[463] Patrick O'Reilly also had a good knowledge of the Maori language. Sent to Coromandel in 1871, he was moved to Thames in 1878, where he was parish priest until 1902. In this post, he was responsible for Te Aroha and

---

[457] *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 2, p. 827.

[458] See *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 2, p. 229.

[459] 'Prodigal', 'The Catholic Church: Its Work in Te Aroha: Some Reminiscences', *Te Aroha News*, 4 May 1931, p. 3.

[460] E.R. Simmons, 'McDonald, James and McDonald, Walter', *Dictionary of New Zealand Biography*, first published 1990, reprinted in *Te Ara – The Encyclopedia of New Zealand* [online]; see also *New Zealand Herald*, 12 July 1890, p. 5.

[461] See *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 2, pp. 226-227.

[462] 'Prodigal', 'The Catholic Church: Its Work in Te Aroha: Some Reminiscences', *Te Aroha News*, 4 May 1931, p. 3.

[463] *Te Aroha Mail*, 3 June 1882, p. 2; *Freeman's Journal*, 21 March 1884, p. 12.

Ohinemuri until 1882.[464] He was, according to one Te Aroha newspaper, 'greatly respected by all'.[465]

In May 1882, the *Te Aroha Mail* reported an important development:

> The Rev Fr O'Reilly, on the occasion of his last pastoral visit to Te Aroha, held a meeting at [Patrick] Quinlan's Hotel[466] for the purpose of "considering the necessity for the erection of a church on a site already set aside for the purpose." There was a large attendance considering the weather; and a liberal response was met with. Upwards of £80 was promised by those in attendance, and steps will be taken to secure suitable designs and call for tenders for the work.[467]

Under O'Reilly's guidance, 'a number of the influential members of his flock' formed a church committee and a firm of Auckland architects prepared plans for 'a building commensurate with the requirements of the place for some time to come'. The 'very suitable' site, provided by Mokena Hou through the 'kind offices' of George Lipsey, was 'on an eminence adjoining the Hot Springs Domain'. The building would cost £260.[468] Later in the year, as 'a large sum of money' had been promised 'and an influential committee appointed', construction was to commence at once.

> The good people of the place are not satisfied with an edifice of the same proportions as the modest looking church at Paeroa but are going in for a stately temple in keeping with the importance of the town, to be built in sections as occasion requires it. There are some of them so sanguine as to predict that at no distant date … a large city with lofty spires will rear its head on the spot on which now stands the picturesque and flourishing town of Te Aroha.[469]

Despite this enthusiasm for the prospects of both church and district, for financial reasons construction did not commence immediately. A subscription list was made to meet the cost,[470] and in December 1883 a concert held for the building fund was a 'great success', attracting an 'extremely large' attendance. A Catholic newspaper

---

[464] Caroline Moynihan, 'Fr Patrick O'Reilly', *Dictionary of New Zealand Biography*', first published in 1993, reprinting in *Te Ara – The Encyclopedia of New Zealand* [online].

[465] *Te Aroha Mail*, 3 June 1882, p. 2.

[466] See paper on his life.

[467] *Te Aroha Mail*, 3 June 1882, p. 2.

[468] Own Correspondent, 'Opening of the Church of St Joseph, Te Aroha', *Freeman's Journal*, 21 March 1884, p. 12.

[469] Thames Correspondent, *Freeman's Journal*, 24 November 1882, p. 7.

[470] *Te Aroha News*, 8 December 1883, p. 3.

tendered 'hearty congratulations' to O'Reilly', an 'indefatigable pastor', to whose 'wise foresight must be attributed the securing of the present site – the best in the district – for his church'.[471]

Designed by Auckland architects, Francis Pavitt (who was not a Catholic) supervised its construction, all providing their services free of charge.[472] When completed in March 1884, St Joseph's Church was described as 'a neat structure occupying a commanding position on the hill'.[473] The local newspaper agreed that it had a 'very suitable site' on an 'eminence' adjoining the domain, for it could 'never be built in, or hidden from sight'.

> Two sections have been secured for the church and its grounds. The building has just been completed; in style of architecture, it is Gothic throughout. Its dimensions are length 33ft, width 21ft, height to eaves 14ft, total height to ridge 32ft. A porch is added 10ft x 7ft x 18ft. Inside the building 9ft at the upper is divided from the body of the church by handsome communion rails, 2ft 8in in height. Here the platform and altar are erected. The altar is 8ft 6 inches by 6ft, with one step. A handsome screen of ornamental kauri extends across the whole width of the altar, and projects 2ft 6 inches from the end wall of the building, On this the tabernacle of carved kauri stands. The building is lighted by four double-sash windows on each side, 8ft x 2ft, whilst a handsome little 3 foil window is placed in the gable end, partly ground and partly stained glass. A free circulation of air is secured by a double row of ventilators. The roof is constructed of 3 "principles," strengthened with iron rods. The structure is match-lined throughout, and the exterior neatly painted. The roof is shingled and spouting and down pipes are provided all round. A large wooden cross is fixed on the gable end of the roof, whilst a smaller one is placed over the porch. Four very large and convenient steps lead to the church door…. Only temporary seats will be provided until there are more funds in hand.[474]

It could hold 'about 130 worshippers'.[475] A correspondent gave an enthusiastic account of the opening:

> The … building, called after the Patron Saint of the Universal Church, was solemnly blessed and opened on Sunday, March 9th, by the Right Rev Dr Luck, Bishop of Auckland, in the presence of a large congregation, and passed off most successfully. After the blessing and before Mass a very flattering address was read and presented to His Lordship, by Mr S[amuel]

---

[471] *Freeman's Journal*, 14 December 1883, p. 10.

[472] *Te Aroha News*, 8 March 1884, p. 2.

[473] Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 8 March 1884, p. 2.

[474] *Te Aroha News*, 8 March 1884, p. 2.

[475] *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 2, p. 827.

> M[eagher] Hutchinson [a prominent Thames miner],[476] on behalf of the Catholics of the district. In replying to the address, the Bishop said, that he saw the need of a resident priest there, but was not in a position at present to supply it, but when he would be, he promised that the spiritual necessities of the people of that extensive portion of the diocese should receive his first care.

Mass was sung by both local and Auckland singers, whose solos had 'never before' been

> heard to such advantage, the superior acoustic properties of the building doubtless having a good deal to do with it. The Bishop preached an excellent sermon, the worst feature connected with the whole affair being that the church was not large enough to accommodate one half that came to hear him and had to content themselves by standing outside. The people responded liberally to his appeal in aid of the building fund, inasmuch as nearly £50 was collected at the offertory. Devotions were also held in the evening, when the Bishop again preached, the sermon, "The Salvation of the Soul," being a continuation of that delivered in the morning. Again, numbers who could not gain admission had to content themselves with remaining outside.

Of the cost, £120 had been collected 'and £80 more promised, so that, practically speaking, the sacred edifice is only £40 in debt'. A local tailor, Pietro Faes,[477] who was an active member of the church,[478] was praised for his 'artistic' decorations.[479]

Nearly 50 years later, 'Prodigal' recalled that the church 'was not long erected when it was blown over. Later it was re-erected and for two years it was a familiar sight propped up with heavy baulks of timber, its high roof and walls being ill-suited to resist the fierce blasts that now and then whirled round the mountain'.[480] A 'Grand Concert' was held in 1889 to repair the damage caused by one storm.[481] 'Prodigal' also recalled the first priest appointed when Te Aroha became a separate parish:

---

[476] See *Thames Advertiser*, 21 March 1884, p. 2, 29 October 1888, p. 2, 2 December 1889, p. 2; Thames Correspondent, *New Zealand Herald*, 28 January 1888, p. 20.

[477] See *Thames Star*, 7 August 1882, p. 2; *Te Aroha News*, advertisement, 9 June 1883, p. 1, 26 October 1889, p. 7.

[478] *Te Aroha News*, 16 March 1887, p. 3, 4 April 1888, p. 2, 16 February 1889, p. 7.

[479] Own Correspondent, 'Opening of the Church of St Joseph, Te Aroha', *Freeman's Journal*, 21 March 1884, p. 12.

[480] 'Prodigal', 'The Catholic Church: Its Work in Te Aroha: Some Reminiscences', *Te Aroha News*, 4 May 1931, p. 3.

[481] Advertisement, *Te Aroha News*, 13 November 1889, p. 7.

> In 1885 Te Aroha became a separate parish with the Rev Father [Thomas] Kehoe in charge. Father Kehoe was a simple, kindly, earnest man who went quietly and unobtrusively doing all the good he could. He suffered from one handicap – he could neither ride nor drive with confidence – some form of nervousness. A rather good story was told about this. The late Ned Gallagher[482] who kept a livery stable lent him a quiet old horse and trap to go and visit someone in the country. The old horse jogged off. As the shades of evening came on the men at the stables saw the horse coming at a trot from the direction of Stoney Creek, but no sign of a driver. Rushing to intercept they found the good priest lying in the bottom of the trap. Ned said he had his prayer book open at the "Prayers for the Dead."[483]

Born in Ireland, the only time that Kehoe made his political views plain was when he sat on the platform when a visiting Irish delegate explained the plight of his fellow countrymen.[484] He was recalled as being 'a very learned man'.[485]

As with all denominations, the church held regular concerts and dances to pay for the upkeep of the church and the priest's stipend.[486] A house was also provided for the priest.[487] In 1889, a church site at Waiorongomai was granted,[488] but with the decline of mining there no more was heard of erecting a church. Instead, Kehoe visited regularly, which for a man scared of horses must have been a trial, especially because of the way he was treated when he hired a buggy, as the *Observer* Man explained in 1890: 'And so it has come to pass that now-a-days when the Catholic priest goes to Waiorongomai in Gallagher's buggy, he is obliged to act as his own stable boy. Is the fellow in charge too proud or too lazy?'[489] As Edward Gallagher was a Catholic,[490] although not one who took any leadership role in the church, it was surprising that he was not more helpful. Ten years later, to assist Catholics to attend services in Te Aroha, special coach services were provided.[491]

---

[482] See paper on Edward Gallagher.

[483] 'Prodigal', 'The Catholic Church: Its Work in Te Aroha: Some Reminiscences', *Te Aroha News*, 4 May 1931, p. 3.

[484] *Te Aroha News*, 13 November 1889, p. 2; *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 2, p. 827.

[485] *Auckland Star*, 10 October 1914, p. 6.

[486] For instance, advertisements, *Te Aroha News*, 10 April 1886, p. 7, 17 March 1888, p. 11.

[487] *Te Aroha News*, 23 March 1889, p. 2.

[488] *Te Aroha News*, 8 June 1889, p. 2, Waiorongomai Correspondent, 20 July 1889, p. 2, Warden's Court, 18 September 1889, p. 2.

[489] 'Te Aroha', *Observer*, 1 March 1890, p. 14.

[490] Death Certificate of Edward Gallagher, 25 August 1925, 1925/3401, BDM.

[491] Advertisement, *Te Aroha News*, 25 January 1900, p. 2.

In late 1893, Kehoe 'bade farewell to his people' after serving them for seven years.

> They showed their appreciation of his past services to them by the presentation of an address and a purse of sovereigns. The address expressed their deep regret at the severance of the bond of friendship that had existed between them, and wished him health and prosperity in this world, and eternal happiness in the next. Father Kehoe replied in suitable terms, saying how sorry he was to leave Te Aroha, where he had spent some of the happiest years of his life.[492]

He would spend the rest of his career in Tuakau, where he was 'highly esteemed'.[493]

In September 1894, Dean James Joseph Hackett, who was notable for his 'noble and self-sacrificing work' for the temperance cause in Auckland, and had been in charge of the Ohinemuri parish, was sent to Te Aroha to restore his health.[494] In December 1895 tenders were called to remove and re-erect the church on a new site,[495] for reasons Hackett explained to his new bishop, George Michael Lenihan:[496]

> This Church was originally erected on the hill overlooking the domain. I found it necessary to remove it to its present site which I procured in exchange from the Maoris who formerly gave the original site to Father O'Reilly. My reasons for removing the church were approved of by the late Bishop Luck (1) Invalids staying at the Baths found it impossible to climb the hill leading to the Church (2) The strong winds were very trying on it owing to its exposed position (3) There was no enclosure for the horses of the settlers who came to Mass.

The costs of removing, re-erecting, painting, re-shingling, and erecting and painting a fence was met by a subscription list.[497] Hackett told Lenihan of the difficulties experienced in obtaining title to the new site:

> You must remember that the two sites down in Te Aroha on which the Church now stands were given me in exchange by the Maoris for the site we abandoned after a great deal of trouble. The document we hold for new site on which church is built had to be carried from Thames to [the] King

---

[492] Te Aroha Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 9 December 1893, p. 10.

[493] *Auckland Star*, 10 October 1914, p. 6.

[494] *Observer*, 8 September 1894, p. 3; *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 2, p. 843.

[495] *Te Aroha News*, 11 December 1895, p. 2.

[496] See *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 2, pp. 225-226.

[497] J.J. Hackett, 'Removal of St Joseph's Church Te Aroha', 1896 memorandum, Parish Papers: Paeroa, INT IV 3-6, Catholic Archives, Auckland.

> Country to obtain proper signatures from Maori owners. In due course the property will be made over to you. Now any one of the Maori owners can be brought into Court and he can simply ask us "we gave you sites in township in exchange for those you left abandoned on hill – are you not satisfied?"[498]

Three days later, he assured the bishop that he was sorting out this problem with the clerk of the warden's court.

> If we succeed in retaining or rather regaining those sites, I will let you know…. Had those who accepted the "gift for Church purposes" taken the trouble to have a proper written title executed all this bother would not arise. The Maori who gave the sites [Mokena Hou] is long since dead and his confreres or descendants still living are not very anxious to carry out his last wishes.[499]

This difficulty over the title would continue for several years. Hackett, who returned to Paeroa in 1897 when his predecessor returned from a trip to Europe, and later moved to Ellerslie in Auckland, was recalled as being 'a very popular priest, and was noted for his charity, which was indiscriminate, people of all persuasions benefitting from his purse'.[500]

In the year ending in December 1897, of 74 Catholics living in the district 60 had received Easter Communion. The offertories amounted to £78 9s 7d.[501] In that year, Kehoe was re-appointed to a parish which stretched from Paeroa to Matamata and Morrinsville.[502] By then, the church had a choir and Faes' daughter was the organist.[503] In April 1898, 'a specially bright musical service' was performed in a 'well filled' church, with Kehoe's sermon' being 'appropriate to the occasion'.[504] In that year, 50 adults received Easter Communion, and the offertories totaled £82 2s 3d.[505] In June, the

---

[498] J.J. Hackett to Bishop Lenihan, 26 September 1896, Parish Papers: Paeroa, INT IV 3-6, Catholic Archives, Auckland.

[499] J.J. Hackett to Bishop Lenihan, 29 September 1896, Parish Papers: Paeroa, INT IV 3-6, Catholic Archives, Auckland.

[500] *Thames Star*, 16 August 1923, p. 4; *Hauraki Plains Gazette*, 17 August 1923, p. 2.

[501] Statistical Return for Year ending 31 December 1897, Te Aroha Parish Papers 1897-1910, LEN 35-2, Catholic Archives, Auckland.

[502] *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 2, p. 827.

[503] *Te Aroha News*, 1 March 1898, p. 2.

[504] *Te Aroha News*, 5 April 1898, p. 2.

[505] Statistical Return for Year ending 31 December 1898, Te Aroha Parish Papers 1897-1910, LEN 35-2, Catholic Archives, Auckland.

priest in charge of Mount Magdala Magdalen Asylum in Christchurch, for 'fallen women',[506] attracted a large attendance to his mission services.[507] The *Te Aroha News* described both preacher and congregation, which it considered to be solely Irish:

> The genial father has a racy style of preaching, in strong contrast to which are his occasional outbursts of invective when he has to deal with what he deems an abuse or a departure from the doctrine and practice of the true Church…. There is, for some of us at any rate, a singular charm in the rapid play of the emotions visible in an Irish congregation. The sincerity of their devotion is as unquestionable as it is touching; but the readiness of their response to the slightest suggestion of humour from the officiating priest is as marvellous as it is captivating.[508]

When his services concluded, this newspaper described the priest as having some of the 'fierce proselytizing spirit' and 'uncompromising thoroughness' of Ignatius Loyola. 'There are no half-measures in the doctrines he meets out', and he told the congregation 'to steadfastly maintain with its early purity the faith of their fathers'.[509]

In the following year, two more people received Easter Communion, but the offertories fell slightly to £79 4s 6d.[510] In July 1902, Kehoe wrote to Lenihan about erecting a new church:

> The progress made re raising the wherewithal to build a New Church is as follows – For several weeks after your being here we had different meetings of the members of the Congregation, of Committees appointed, and four collectors were appointed to canvass the district, and the result was a failure. They did not even get the promise of a shilling.
> As I thought I'd try what I could do myself and drew out a list of the names of all the Catholics & jotted down after each about how much I thought he or she could or rather would give. So I am personally calling on the lot. Already I have nearly done the borough of Te Aroha and been more successful than I thought I should be. Three have promised £20 apiece & several 10 -.[511]

---

[506] See *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 3, p. 161.

[507] *Te Aroha News*, 4 June 1898, p. 2, 9 June 1898, p. 2.

[508] *Te Aroha News*, 9 June 1898, p. 2.

[509] *Te Aroha News*, 14 June 1898, p. 2.

[510] Statistical Return for Year ending 31 December 1899, Te Aroha Parish Papers 1897-1910, LEN 35-2, Catholic Archives, Auckland.

[511] Thomas Kehoe to Bishop Lenihan, 7 July 1902, Te Aroha Parish Papers 1897-1910, LEN 35-2, Catholic Archives, Auckland.

Kehoe left the parish in 1905,[512] and died in 1914, aged 74.[513] A local storekeeper, John Williams,[514] who was not a Catholic,[515] wrote a tribute describing him as 'one of the founders of Te Aroha':

> All the old identities who can look back will remember the kindly, gentle, good-natured gentleman. He was known by all for a liberal minded man who never refused to assist any one in trouble. He shared all the ups-and-downs of his own people. Cheerfully he did his duty as their spiritual Father. For many years there was not a great deal of money among the farming community, but that never gave him a thought. He married them, christened them, and buried a good many of them, and I am safe in saying his stipend was the last thing he thought of. His own people held him in love and reverence, while the general public held him in the greatest respect. He was of a most retiring nature, his books, his garden, and his duty to his people satisfied him. He was of a humble kindly nature who always looked on the bright side of things.

Williams urged the erection of a memorial tablet, feeling 'assured every denomination will be willing to subscribe to it. We all knew him as a scholar and tolerant man towards other people's opinions. He was respected by all' and lived on 'in the memory of his own people, and innumerable friends throughout New Zealand'.[516]

Kehoe was succeeded by James McGuiness, 'a young priest from Ireland' who served until 1921, and was recalled as being 'full of zeal for his work, and under him parish affairs made much progress'.[517] In February 1905 he told Lenihan that he hoped George Lipsey would grant the freehold, or at least a reduced rent, for the church site.[518] Three months later, a prominent Catholic, Thomas Gavin,[519] forwarded a petition from several 'old residents' to Lenihan asking that a new church be erected on

---

[512] 'Prodigal', 'The Catholic Church: Its Work in Te Aroha: Some Reminiscences', *Te Aroha News*, 4 May 1931, p. 3.

[513] *New Zealand Herald*, 12 October 1914, p. 9.

[514] See *Te Aroha News*, 13 June 1888, p. 2, 3 November 1908, p. 2, 19 December 1915, p. 2, 17 October 1917, p. 2; *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 2, p. 831.

[515] Marriage Certificate of John Williams, 6 November 1892, 1892/2933, BDM.

[516] Letter from John Williams, *Te Aroha News*, 19 October 1914, p. 3.

[517] 'Prodigal', 'The Catholic Church: Its Work in Te Aroha: Some Reminiscences', *Te Aroha News*, 4 May 1931, p. 3.

[518] James McGuiness to Bishop Lenihan, 27 February 1905, Te Aroha Parish Papers 1897-1910, LEN 35-2, Catholic Archives, Auckland.

[519] See paper on his life.

the existing site close to the hot springs.[520] Gavin explained that, as there were few people to meet the cost, they wanted a cheap church erected, and urged him to talk to the congregation about this issue. 'I am sure that would be the means of cementing them together. And at present unfortunately they are very much divided'.[521] The petition was ignored, and the foundation stone of the new St Joseph's was laid in November, when a school site was also obtained.[522] That the parishioners continued to be divided is indicated by McGuiness' letter to Lenihan in mid-1906 that he was 'struggling for a decent existence and dealing with the people I have to have to deal with' made him anxious.[523] In 1907, there were 13 Catholics at Waiorongomai, two of them being women.[524] The following year, St Joseph's Convent was erected, which provided high school education.[525]

In one instance, Catholic mission services produced unintended consequences. In 1910, Agnes Mary Casey, an unmarried 21-year-old whose occupation was recorded as 'home duties', was admitted to the asylum suffering from what was diagnosed as 'Adolescent Insanity'.[526] Her mother provided details of an attack lasting four days:

> Patient was quite well until Monday last when after a series of attendance at Mission Services she began to pray and mimic the priest at the altar, then saying she would sacrifice herself for the family, went to the convent at Te Aroha to become a nun. Since that time, she has been talking religion almost incessantly, has not slept, was at time violent.

After attending these services, she refused food and drink 'and said that she must go to the Convent to make a sacrifice of herself for God. She was constantly praying with her hands and imitating the priest in manner. On Monday last she tried to dress like a priest. Sometimes she gets very excited and runs away from her people'. After spending three months in the asylum, she was discharged.[527]

---

[520] Petition, n.d. [May 1905], Te Aroha Parish Papers 1897-1910, LEN 35-2, Catholic Archives, Auckland.

[521] Thomas Gavin to Bishop Lenihan, 15 May 1905, Te Aroha Parish Papers 1897-1910, LEN 35-2, Catholic Archives, Auckland.

[522] *Thames Star*, 13 November 1905, p. 2.

[523] James McGuiness to Bishop Lenihan, 22 June 1906, Te Aroha Parish Papers 1897-1910, LEN 35-2, Catholic Archives, Auckland.

[524] List of Catholics at Waiorongomai, n.d. [?1907], Te Aroha Parish Papers 1897-1910, LEN 35-2, Catholic Archives, Auckland.

[525] *Te Aroha News*, 18 December 1912, p. 3, 30 September 1976, p. 1.

[526] Avondale Asylum, Register of Admissions 1906-1912, folio 88, no. 3998, YCAA 1021/5, ANZ-A.

[527] Avondale Asylum, Case Books 1908-1910, folio 287, YCAA 1048/11, ANZ-A.

CONCLUSION

Although some sort of religious belief was the norm, as many people were little more than nominally Christian there was a constant need for special mission services and the like. Attempts to convert miners occurred on all goldfields, with varying success; and even notionally Christian miners were unwilling to pay for their clergy, whom some mocked, and they commonly ignored the Sabbath.[528] It is impossible to be precise about the depth of belief and how widespread it was. For example, in 1894 one prominent Christian, Thomas McIndoe, refuted a perception that Waiorongomai residents were irreligious:

> Sir, - I was very sorry to read in your valuable paper an extract from the "Recorder," which you cordially endorsed, and which indirectly implied that the Waiorongomai people had already forsaken or were in danger of forsaking God. Now, I have had a good many opportunities of watching the lives of Waiorongomai people, and have no hesitation in saying that they are, generally speaking, as honest, straightforward, truthful, sober, and religious as most people are. I have always thought that Godliness means honesty, truthfulness, sobriety, kindness, gentleness, goodness, and as most of the Waiorongomai people exercise these virtues, surely it is a mistake to imply that they are forsaking or about to forsake God. If by Godliness is meant the attendance at a place of worship, then in proportion I believe that the Waiorongomai people are far more godly than the Te Aroha people are, because a greater number in proportion to the population attend the services there (when there are any to attend) than at Te Aroha.[529]

Despite this praise for the godliness of most residents, many miners and others behaved in morally inappropriate ways,[530] resulting in constant efforts to increase attendance at religious services and meetings and to encourage temperance and to strengthen family life.[531]

---

[528] See Steven Eldred-Grigg, *Diggers Hatters and Whores: The story of the New Zealand gold rushes* (Auckland, 2008), pp. 295-300.

[529] Letter from Thomas McIndoe, *Te Aroha News*, n.d., reprinted in *Thames Star*, 7 June 1894, p. 2.

[530] See papers on larrikins, crime, and the drink problem in the Te Aroha district.

[531] See papers on the temperance movement and women's lives in the Te Aroha district.