

THE THAMES HIGH SCHOOL ENDOWMENT AT
WAIORONGOMAI

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Te Aroha Mining District Working Papers

No. 9

2016

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ISSN: 2463-6266

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THE UNIVERSITY OF
WAIKATO
Te Whare Wānanga o Waikato

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Abstract: *Before it was known that gold existed nearby, the government selected a block of land at Waiorongomai as an endowment to fund a proposed high school at Thames. Sections of varying sizes and quality were surveyed and leased, at what were commonly viewed as excessive rates, and for decades lessees requested reductions and on many occasions asked the government to take over the endowment. As the goldfield faded, some small farmers abandoned their sections but others succeeded despite being under-capitalized. In the twentieth century, noxious weeds created on-going problems for those remaining on the land.*

The high school board, which supervised the farmers, was accused of not assisting them, notably by not providing access roads. The endowment was never as profitable for the high school as had been anticipated, and in 1949 it, like all similar endowments, was abolished.

ESTABLISHING THE ENDOWMENT

In 1874, Thames residents started campaigning for a high school, but teaching did not commence until April 1880.¹ The board of governors was appointed in January 1879, but with no funds and no endowment of land it could not open it, prompting the government to promise to create an endowment near the future (and unanticipated) Waiorongomai goldfield. At its March 1879 meeting one governor expressed confidence that if the 10,000 acres ‘were worth £10,000 they could get £800 a year on it at once’.² When the Aroha Block came under the jurisdiction of the Waste Lands Board in October, 3,600 acres were allocated, but when surveyed the area turned out to contain 3,394.³ In 1904, the area was recorded as 3,047 acres

¹ Thames High School Board of Governors, Minutes of Meeting of 23 October 1874, High School Archives, Thames; *Thames Advertiser*, 13 April 1880, p. 3; *Thames High School: The first hundred years: 1880-1980* (Thames, 1980), p. 5.

² Thames High School Board of Governors, Minutes of Meeting of 26 March 1879, High School Archives, Thames.

³ *Thames Advertiser*, 18 October 1879, p. 3; *Thames Star*, 19 May 1881, p. 3; ‘Reserves for Secondary or University Education in the North Island, Nelson, and Westland’, *AJHR*, 1883, E-10, p. 2.

19 perches.⁴ In 1885 officials calculated its capital value as £4,812, and in 1888 stated that its estimated value of £10,000 was ‘a great deal more than what it is really worth’.⁵ In 1889 the capital value of the farms was £7,000.⁶

The endowment was ‘considered to be the pick of the Aroha block’, being ‘admirably situated as regards water, carriage and supplies of timber, the river running near it, and a large bush growing on a portion’.⁷ Extracts from an 1873 account of the district were republished to indicate its potential.⁸ In May 1880, two board members reported on their inspection. Being unsurveyed, they did not know the endowment’s boundaries nor how much of the hillside was included and might be ‘fit for occupation’. The flat land between the mountain and the river could

be conveniently divided into two for the purpose of description, the part of it next the hill falling towards the river with a very gentle slope, being generally covered with loose stones, and the soil of good quality, exceedingly well adapted for sheep. The abundant moisture from the mountain causes the formation of a great many small swamps, all of which could be drained without any difficulty, and would then add largely to the area available for farming purposes. These swamps for the most part extend to the river, a fact which must not be lost sight of when determining the liabilities of tenants for a joint system of drainage – it being understood that all swamps must be drained into the river. For a distance of half a mile, or thereabouts from the river, the ground is quite flat, is much less stony than that near the hill, is of equally good character, and more available for grain crops. A road will run through the property north and south, cutting off from the neighbourhood of the river about 300 acres, which may be considered the most valuable part of the estate, both from the quality of the soil and from position as fronting the stream.

As for the ‘lofty and precipitous sides’ of the mountain, they did not anticipate that ‘much of it could be used for other purposes other than wood

⁴ Thames High School Board of Governors, Minutes of Meeting of 29 February 1904, High School Archives, Thames.

⁵ ‘Existing Endowments for Secondary and University Education in the Colony’, *AJHR*, 1885, E-11, pp. 8, 12; ‘Education Reserves in each Provincial District’, *AJHR*, 1888, E-16, p. 5.

⁶ *Te Aroha News*, 20 March 1889, p. 7.

⁷ *Thames Advertiser*, 23 April 1880, p. 2.

⁸ ‘The High School Endowment’, *Thames Star*, 26 November 1880, p. 2.

cutting, but still a survey might reveal the existence of useful land'.⁹ A visiting journalist agreed that 'a good portion' was 'nearly valueless, being a portion of the Aroha mountain, and so steep as to be unfit for cultivation', whereas the remainder was 'excellent land' that would 'yield a good revenue without the expenditure of a very large sum'.¹⁰

In December, miner and newspaper correspondent John McCombie¹¹ reported that 'much' of the endowment would

prove good arable land. Near its northern boundary, although the soil appears to be of good quality, it is so stony that it will be impossible to cultivate it; but much of this description of land will take grass very quickly, so that as the district becomes more settled it will soon be covered with excellent pasture.

Near the eastern and southern boundaries the land was 'of very fair quality'.¹² As the warden commented in 1905, the hillside was only useful 'as a grazing run'.¹³

In February 1880, the board's chairman, considering that the government had 'made it an excuse for not defining land for an endowment' that Ngati Rahiri reserves had not been marked off, had contacted the Native Agent, Edward Walter Puckey, who saw 'no reason' why the endowment 'should not be surveyed at once'. A survey could not 'in any way interfere' with these reserves, which had 'long since been laid off, and they have no claim on land in the Aroha block other than that selected by themselves and laid off'.¹⁴ Confident that they had '£10,000 worth of land', the governors advertised for teachers and opened the school in April.¹⁵ The following month, two governors were delegated to consult with Puckey's

⁹ High School Board, *Thames Advertiser*, 11 May 1880, p. 3.

¹⁰ Own Reporter, 'Tour in the Aroha, Waitoa, and Piako Districts', *Thames Advertiser*, 22 June 1880, p. 3.

¹¹ See paper on Billy Nicholl.

¹² Te Aroha Correspondent, 'Te Aroha District', *New Zealand Herald*, 2 December 1880, p. 5.

¹³ R.S. Bush (Warden) to Under-Secretary, Mines Department, 14 November 1905, Thames Warden's Court, Warden's Letterbook 1905-1909, p. 26, BACL 14458/3a, ANZ-A.

¹⁴ Memorandum dated 25 February 1880, Thames High School Board of Governors, Minute Book no. 1, High School Archives, Thames.

¹⁵ *Thames Advertiser*, 13 April 1880, p. 3.

successor, George Thomas Wilkinson,¹⁶ about having the boundaries ‘finally settled’.¹⁷ Wilkinson informed the June meeting that at his meetings with Ngati Rahiri ‘they had agreed to withdraw all opposition to the survey of the outside lines of the Omahu and Wairakau reserves’ and that the survey could proceed.¹⁸ The two governors who had inspected the endowment recommended that the terms of leasing should be ‘as attractive as possible to tenants’ because the board had ‘no means at command for improving the estate before leasing it; everything to that end must therefore be done by the tenants’. They recommended ‘long’ leases, meaning from 21 to 30 years, with rents in the first years ‘merely nominal, or at least very light’, and compensation guaranteed for ‘substantial improvements’. As there was a ‘probability of gold being found in the reserve’, the board should ‘guard’ its rights.¹⁹

Not until the chairman had met with William Rolleston, the Minister of Education, was a survey ordered. Told of ‘the great difficulty the Board would experience in maintaining the School’, Rolleston empowered it to sell the land. Four governors were appointed in September to consider how best to use it; being ‘of very good quality’, sections were expected to ‘fetch a fair price’ if sold.²⁰ As the chairman preferred to sell it, for if leased ‘the return for years would be very little’, a committee was appointed to investigate its sale.²¹ After the board decided to subdivide it ‘into small farms suitable for sale on deferred payments’, the Waste Lands Department agreed to provide surveyors to subdivide, classify, ‘and report upon the value of the proposed farms, together with suggestions as to the best mode of selling’.²²

With the discovery of gold, the *Thames Star*, presumably reflecting the views of one governor, its owner William McCullough,²³ recommended that

¹⁶ See paper on Merea Wikiriwhi and George Thomas Wilkinson.

¹⁷ Thames High School Board of Governors, Minutes of Meeting of 10 May 1880, High School Archives, Thames.

¹⁸ Thames High School Board of Governors, Minutes of Meeting of 16 June 1880, High School Archives, Thames.

¹⁹ High School Board, *Thames Advertiser*, 11 May 1880, p. 3.

²⁰ Thames High School Board of Governors, Minutes of Meeting of 8 September 1880, High School Archives, Thames; *Thames Star*, 6 September 1880, p. 2.

²¹ *Thames Star*, 7 September 1880, p. 2.

²² Thames High School Board of Governors, Minutes of Meeting of 1 October 1880, High School Archives, Thames.

²³ See *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 2, p. 96.

it would be most profitable to lease it to the government for mining purposes.²⁴ The discovery prompted James Kilgour,²⁵ one of the governors who had made the initial report,²⁶ to convene a special meeting at the end of October. ‘He had been informed on good authority’, probably his friend, Harry Kenrick,²⁷ the warden,²⁸ that the goldfield ‘was likely to be opened about the end of November’ and would be ‘around the High School reserve’. As there would be ‘many applications for leases’, they should consider terms and conditions. McCullough thought they should ‘wait until some arrangement had been made in regard to’ the reserves, as they did not know under which Act the goldfield would be opened. ‘If anything turned up about the management of the Government reserves, they could be guided by that. He thought it would be as well not to say too much about what they would or would not do, but allow men to prospect upon it and let them come and offer what terms they liked’. Another governor agreed ‘they would be able to make better terms by waiting a while’. Kilgour noted that, although ‘they were not yet in actual possession of the land’, they had been ‘informed that there was no necessity for receiving a Crown grant’. As they ‘could do nothing without a plan’, the survey department was asked to provide one.²⁹

The government decided to include the endowment within the goldfield on the same terms as those offered to Maori, these ‘to be formally arranged afterwards’.³⁰ On 5 November, the board agreed to Kenrick’s and Wilkinson’s proposals for how the endowment would be included in the goldfield. ‘The terms proposed were practically the same as those embodied in the agreements’ made with Ngati Rahiri, including the right to withdraw portions from the field for township or other purposes.³¹ McCullough considered that, as ‘townships were being surveyed on all sides of’ their

²⁴ *Thames Star*, 30 October 1880, p. 2.

²⁵ See *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 2, p. 286.

²⁶ High School Board, *Thames Advertiser*, 11 May 1880, p. 3.

²⁷ See paper on his life.

²⁸ For example, *Thames Advertiser*, 15 July 1880, p. 3, 17 July 1880, p. 3, 22 June 1881, p. 2.

²⁹ Thames High School Board of Governors, Minutes of Meeting of 30 October 1880, High School Archives, Thames.

³⁰ *Thames Star*, 3 November 1880, p. 2; Memorandum by Under-Secretary, Mines Department, 26 August 1882, Mines Department, MD 1, 6/61, ANZ-W.

³¹ Thames High School Board of Governors, Minutes of Meeting of 5 November 1880, High School Archives, Thames; *Thames Star*, 3 November 1880, p. 2.

land, they should do likewise: ‘the endowment was central and they had a very good chance of establishing a township on it’. Frustrated by not having received a plan of the land, and one governor suggested ‘some little discretion should be exercised in fixing upon a spot for the township’. They agreed to advertise that ‘when a sufficient number of applications for sections in any particular part of the endowment have been received, the Board will lay off a township’. Two members, one of them McCullough, were delegated to visit and ‘arrange about the boundaries’.³² Should it contain the principal mining township, as anticipated, this would ‘materially increase’ its value.³³

LEASING THE ENDOWMENT

In mid-November the board announced that it would lay off a township at an early date.³⁴ It was ‘prepared to deal liberally’ with those seeking to acquire sections ‘for building or trade purposes’, and would survey the township when ‘a sufficient number of applications’ were received.³⁵ Applications for leases were being received by the end of the month.³⁶ In mid-December, the board considered a report by two of its members, one being Kilgour, on how best to benefit from their endowment. They explained that agreement reached with the government was that it would receive all goldfields revenue ‘arising within the reserve’ and that land not required for mining could be withdrawn from the goldfield. They could determine the fees for felling ‘all trees three feet in girth or upwards’; the cost of a timber-cutting license, £10, was double the norm. Township lands were to be ‘free from goldfields regulations as regards the surface’. Despite the warden wishing to lease three-quarter of the water in the Waiorongomai Stream to a sluicing company, the governors ‘asserted their right to deal with the water on the estate’. They ‘asserted the desirability of leasing in preference to selling the land except in respect to townships and also of cutting up a part of it in ten (10) acre lots for the use of miners’. Most of the land would be let to farmers. It was considered ‘to be neither wise not necessary to

³² Thames High School Board of Governors, Minutes of Meeting, n.d. [November 1880, first entry in second minute book], High School Archives, Thames.

³³ *New Zealand Herald*, n.d., reprinted in *Thames Advertiser*, 3 December 1880, p. 3.

³⁴ *Thames Star*, 16 November 1880, p. 2.

³⁵ *Thames Advertiser*, 18 November 1880, p. 2.

³⁶ *Thames Advertiser*, 29 November 1880, p. 2.

hurry in these arrangements which must depend in a great degree upon the development of the goldfield'.³⁷ Not until August 1882 was the agreement signed with the Crown leasing the endowment on these terms for mining purposes.³⁸

In January 1881, after 'a long discussion' about 'the best manner of dealing with the endowment', Daniel Henry Bayldon³⁹ was appointed to survey 'about 1000 acres into small sections'.⁴⁰ The following month he was recorded in the board's minutes as describing the land as 'not worth 6d per acre for farming purposes', but when McCullough's newspaper cited this statement Bayldon denied making it.⁴¹ By early March he had marked out 'about 1024 acres' into 15 farms, the largest being 171 acres and the smallest 24.⁴²

From the start, critics considered that the board's terms for renting its land would retard development, as a Te Aroha resident explained in January 1881. 'They, Shylock-like, are not satisfied with the terms that the natives are getting, but want exactly double the amount for all rights'. Water rights were double those on any other goldfield, and the terms for taking up farms were far too high.⁴³ A Thames columnist gave the governors 'a hint' about the rent they should charge:

Bear in mind the fact *that land is only worth what it will produce*, and any tenant holding land at too high rental neither does good for himself nor for his landlord. Men of capital will not *lease* land, preferring *freehold*; therefore, the tenants will be struggling men, and entitled to every consideration. Let every inducement be held out to permanently improve the land, and you will, if the soil is good, see many smiling homesteads and happy contented faces in the course of a few years; whereas, if you try and screw a high

³⁷ Thames High School Board of Governors, Minutes of Meeting of 17 December 1880, High School Archives, Thames; High School, *Thames Advertiser*, 18 December 1880, p. 3.

³⁸ Agreement dated 14 August 1882, Mines Department, MD 1, 6/61, ANZ-W.

³⁹ See *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 7, p. 49.

⁴⁰ Thames High School Board of Governors, Minutes of Meeting of 24 January 1881, High School Archives, Thames.

⁴¹ Thames High School Board of Governors, Minutes of Meeting of 8 February 1881, High School Archives, Thames; *Thames Star*, 8 February 1881, p. 2; *Thames Advertiser*, 8 March 1881, p. 3.

⁴² *Thames Advertiser*, 8 March 1881, p. 3.

⁴³ *Te Aroha Miner*, n.d. [January 1881], reprinted in *Thames Star*, 12 January 1881, p. 2.

rent out of your tenants and load them with hard conditions, your success will not be great.⁴⁴

Despite some members of the public wanting the land sold,⁴⁵ the board's April meeting considered a committee's recommendations about terms for leasing 14 lots:

1. That the term of the lease be 31 years.
2. That compensation be allowed to the lessee at the expiration of the lease, for dwellings, farm buildings, fencing, tile draining, open drains, growing crops, and orchards.
3. That should the Board and the lessee be unable to agree as to the amount of the compensation, then the matter shall be settled by arbitration....
4. That the upset rental be 7 1/2 per cent on the value of the land, as estimated by the surveyor.
5. That the rent be paid half-yearly in advance on the 1st April and 1st October in each year. The Board to have the power to re-enter if rent is 30 days in arrear.

The committee believed 'such favourable terms' were 'quite as advantageous to the occupier as a freehold'. The chairman considered they provided 'a very good opportunity for poor men to lease land on reasonable terms, with a certainty that it would fall into their hands at the end of 31 years'. After 'lengthy discussion', for one governor preferred to sell, the terms were agreed to and plans made for an auction.⁴⁶ It was reported that the first sections to be sold were the pick of the land.⁴⁷ In May, after receiving Bayldon's estimate of the values, the board decided that land valued at £5 per acre be offered at the upset price of £3 10s, that valued at £4 10s at £3, and that valued at £3 10s at £2 10s. The term was reduced to 21 years, and a clause was added 'empowering the governors to sell at any time when application is made for the freehold at such price as they shall

⁴⁴ 'Paul Pry', 'At the Corner', *Thames Star*, 23 February 1881, p. 2.

⁴⁵ *Thames Star*, 1 April 1881, p. 2.

⁴⁶ Thames High School Board of Governors, Minutes of Meeting of 4 April 1881, High School Archives, Thames; *Thames Advertiser*, 5 April 1881, p. 3.

⁴⁷ *Thames Star*, 8 April 1881, pp. 2-3.

determine'.⁴⁸ At the warden's request, the two main hillside sections were withdrawn from sale and retained within the goldfield.⁴⁹

'Snooks' urged intending settlers to look carefully at 'the shameless offer':

Land valued at £5 per acre; the rent will be 7s 6d per acre per annum, or £11 12s for the term of the proposed lease. Surely no sane man will try to persuade those who are anxious to make homes for themselves and families that they can do so on those terms. Why, the greatest land sharks in the colony would be ashamed to ask such terms for land, especially of such a quality.

By comparison, the government's terms for some 'equally good' land on the opposite side of the river was £3 an acre, spread over ten years under the deferred payment scheme. He doubted whether the governors would be able to give compensation for improvements, as promised. If they had 'the good of the district at heart', they should 'alter their terms, and give fair inducements to the heads of families to settle'. The present terms were 'in keeping with the other liberal offers of this wise board: £50 per head for water, £10 for a license to cut timber, and £1 for every tree over one foot through'.⁵⁰ Four days later, 'A Colonist' made similar points:

For the privilege of being permitted to occupy and improve land now entirely in a state of nature, and which has no special advantages, being at a distance of nearly forty miles from the nearest and only available market, the purchasers of these leases at the minimum upset price of say £4 would have to pay a yearly rental of 6s an acre, which rent would be proportionately increased as the upset price may advance at auction.

There was no guarantee tenants would be paid for improvements. Claiming to have 'no hostile spirit' towards the governors, he argued that they had 'an exaggerated notion' of the endowment's value. 'Many purchasers of wild land in the Upper Thames and in other places south of Auckland have made similar mistakes, and are now lowering their prices'.⁵¹

⁴⁸ *Thames Advertiser*, 3 May 1881, p. 3.

⁴⁹ Harry Kenrick to Under-Secretary, Mines Department, 18 May 1881, Mines Department, MD 1, 6/61, ANZ-W.

⁵⁰ Letter from 'Snooks', *Thames Star*, 7 April 1881, p. 2.

⁵¹ Letter from 'A Colonist', *Thames Star*, 11 April 1881, p. 2.

‘Snooks’, writing from ‘the Upper Country’, challenged the governors to ‘pay the 7s 6d per acre and get a living off the land’.⁵² After the first sale, controversy continued over whether the terms were fair and whether sections should have been sold rather than leased.⁵³

The *Thames Advertiser* encouraged interest in acquiring land, in April describing it as ‘good’ and ‘admirably situated’ on the banks of the river and close to the goldfield. The board was testing ‘the alleged demand for small farms by persons of slender means’ by leasing 25, 50, and 100-acre lots. The upset price was based on Bayldon’s estimate of their value, meaning that small farms could be obtained ‘for a mere payment of a low rate of interest on a moderate assessment of the value’. Because improvements would be recouped upon expiry of the lease, men ‘almost without capital’ would be able to farm undisturbed for 31 years on condition that they could pay the 7 1/2 per cent interest on the current value. ‘No doubt arrangements for purchase could be made in the meantime, where the lessee was anxious, and if not, there are few persons who would seek to oust them at the close of their term of lease, even if prepared to pay for all the improvements’.⁵⁴ Bayldon reported that seven of the 13 sections had ‘flat land of good quality’ covered in ‘fern, manuka, tupake, and swamp flax’, with frontages on the main road and the river, the smaller sections being ‘very convenient’ to Te Aroha. Another four sections had similar land and vegetation; three fronted onto the main road and one on the side road to the valley. The final two sections had ‘flat and undulating land, good soil, and some portions, more especially above the old track, are rather stony; vegetation – fern, and a little bush’.⁵⁵ On the day of the auction, the *Thames Advertiser* explained that the upset price had been lowered to five per cent of the valuation, which was ‘far cheaper than borrowing money to purchase land’.⁵⁶ It anticipated ‘some lively competition’.⁵⁷ The *Thames Star* also encouraged purchase, stating the terms were ‘very reasonable’.⁵⁸

⁵² ‘Snooks’, ‘Jottings from the Upper Country’, *Thames Star*, 14 April 1881, p. 2.

⁵³ Letters from ‘Aurut’, *Thames Advertiser*, 14 June 1881, p. 3, 20 June 1881, p. 3; letter from L.J. Bagnall [a governor], *Thames Advertiser*, 15 June 1881, p. 3.

⁵⁴ Editorial, *Thames Advertiser*, 2 April 1881, p. 3.

⁵⁵ *Thames Star*, 19 May 1881, p. 3.

⁵⁶ *Thames Advertiser*, 7 June 1881, p. 2.

⁵⁷ *Thames Advertiser*, 7 June 1881, p. 2.

⁵⁸ *Thames Star*, 6 June 1881, p. 2.

When this first batch of sections was auctioned on 7 June, at Thames, the board's secretary recorded 'a good attendance. The bidding was spirited and good prices were realized'. Of the 13 lots offered, 12 were sold, ten fetching 'considerably over the upset price'. The highest amount was £20 2s, for 111 acres, and the lowest £5, for 26 acres, both comprising 'flat land of good quality' and with a frontage to the road and river.⁵⁹ One section not sold on the day was 'taken up afterwards'.⁶⁰ The proceeds were £139 15s, less expenses of £47 14s. 'Members expressed their satisfaction at the results of the sale', and another was to be held 'in a few weeks'.⁶¹

It was to be more than a 'few weeks'. By February 1882 Bayldon had marked off 735 acres, of varying quality: some flat, good quality land; some swamps; and some fern hills. He had also pegged out allotments for the proposed township.⁶² Late the following month the board asked for more flat land to be withdrawn from the goldfield so it could be auctioned; the warden agreed, as it was not likely to be needed for mining.⁶³ Eight sections were sold in the second and final sale on 10 May, under the same terms as the previous sale. The *Thames Advertiser* wrote that the land was 'highly spoken of' and that 'keen competition' was expected.⁶⁴ The lowest price was £11, for 117 acres, and the highest £32, for 85 acres. Two of the governors acquired sections, thereby indicating, the newspaper suggested, their good opinion of the land.⁶⁵

The second auction meant that a total of 1,780 acres had been leased; 1,613 acres of hillside were not surveyed into sections because of being 'unfit for agriculture'.⁶⁶ Almost 638 acres were reserved for occupation for mining purposes.⁶⁷ In August 1882, when forwarding the agreement signed

⁵⁹ Memorandum by Secretary, Thames High School Board of Governors, 7 June 1881, Minute Book no. 2, High School Archives, Thames.

⁶⁰ *Thames Advertiser*, 8 June 1881, p. 3.

⁶¹ Thames High School Board of Governors, Minutes of Meeting of 4 July 1881, High School Archives, Thames; *Thames Advertiser*, 5 July 1881, p. 3.

⁶² *Thames Advertiser*, 7 February 1882, p. 3.

⁶³ Secretary, Thames High School Board of Governors, to Colonial Secretary, 28 March 1882; Harry Kenrick to Under-Secretary, Mines Department, 1 April 1882, Mines Department, MD 1, 6/61, ANZ-W.

⁶⁴ *Thames Advertiser*, 9 May 1882, p. 3.

⁶⁵ *Thames Advertiser*, 11 May 1882, p. 3.

⁶⁶ *Te Aroha News*, 20 March 1889, p. 7.

⁶⁷ *Auckland Weekly News*, 27 May 1882, p. 17.

by the governors permitting mining in their endowment, Kenrick noted that the governors had always insisted on having their rights reserved, and anticipated the agreement would ‘prove somewhat troublesome to work as the gold field progresses’.⁶⁸

By 1901, when one governor viewed the endowment as a ‘white elephant’,⁶⁹ it was agreed to lease some of the hillside to the most active miner, Edwin Henry Hardy,⁷⁰ for 2s 6d instead of £3 an acre because it could not be used in any other way; should he find any gold, their income would increase.⁷¹ Requests for reduced rents for mining property continued.⁷² As leases expired and sections were sold to new owners, some requests for compensation for improvements resulted in arbitration, which in turn led to a request to the Minister of Education to assist with meeting the liabilities.⁷³ The sale of six of the better farms were postponed almost at the last moment in mid-1902 to await the results of arbitration, but eight of the nine on offer were sold, there being ‘very keen’ competition for a couple of them. As five sections achieved higher prices than anticipated, the board realized £44 above the upset rentals.⁷⁴ Another sale nearly two months later obtained ‘a substantial increase’ in rents. As the board was required to pay nearly £900 to outgoing tenants for improvements, the government would have to permit it to borrow upon its endowments.⁷⁵ The *Te Aroha News* reported that for ‘at least one’ of these farms it was ‘a case of confusion worse confounded’: the outgoing tenant refused to hand over the keys until he received the amount awarded to him by the arbitrators.⁷⁶

⁶⁸ Harry Kenrick to Under-Secretary, Mines Department, 12 August 1882, Mines Department, MD 1, 6/61, ANZ-W.

⁶⁹ High School Board, *Thames Star*, 6 August 1901, p. 4.

⁷⁰ See paper on his life.

⁷¹ High School Board, *Thames Star*, 2 July 1901, p. 4.

⁷² *Thames Star*, 8 April 1902, p. 1; Thames High School Board of Governors, Minutes of Meetings of 16 February 1903, 3 March 1903, 4 May 1904, High School Archives, Thames.

⁷³ For example, Thames High School Board of Governors, Minutes of Meetings of 6 April 1903, 22 June 1903, High School Archives, Thames.

⁷⁴ *Ohinemuri Gazette*, 9 May 1902, p. 2, 25 June 1902, p. 3, 11 July 1902, p. 2; *Auckland Weekly News*, 17 July 1902, p. 6.

⁷⁵ *Thames Star*, 19 August 1902, p. 4, 2 September 1902, p. 1; *Auckland Weekly News*, 4 September 1902, p. 37.

⁷⁶ *Te Aroha News*, n.d., cited in *Ohinemuri Gazette*, 8 September 1902, p. 2.

With a 1903 revaluation of the endowment and far fewer miners living there, the board anticipated ‘a considerable easing’ of income.⁷⁷ When more leases were sold in mid-1903, a local correspondent reported ‘a large attendance and keen competition ... for the splendid farms’.⁷⁸ However, by April 1905 some lessees had abandoned their holdings.⁷⁹ Several tenants claimed to be unable to pay all their rent and appealed for clemency; some were sued and threatened with having their leases terminated, a threat carried out in some cases.⁸⁰ One tenant ‘wished to take up 50 acres he had apparently given up owing to not being able to get on amicably with another tenant, but the Board declined to grant a rebate’.⁸¹

During the early twentieth century there were continual problems with tenants failing to pay all or part of their rent, and some ‘unsatisfactory tenancies’ were terminated, requiring arbitration to determine the value of improvements.⁸² In 1907 the *Thames Star* argued that longer leases would be ‘a distinct advantage’ to the tenants, who considered short leases ‘did not make it worthwhile to make extensive improvements’ and consequently had been living ‘largely from hand to mouth’. The board was extending leases upon request, ‘and with a good prospect before them, things on the Endowment should take a decided turn for the better’.⁸³

The following year, responding to the board criticisms of some tenants, a farmer living near Waiorongomai, who had observed the endowment since it was surveyed, claimed they had ‘one of the worst land tenures in New Zealand’, with ‘a rack rent’ for only 21 years. The board wanted incompetent farmers turned off. The writer noted that, until creameries began operating, tenants did not depend on their farms for a living. Making good money as road and mining contractors, they had spent much of this income improving

⁷⁷ Thames High School Board of Governors, Minutes of Meetings of 4 May 1903, 1 June 1903, High School Archives, Thames.

⁷⁸ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Thames Star*, 15 July 1903, p. 1.

⁷⁹ *Thames Star*, 6 April 1905, p. 4.

⁸⁰ For example, Thames High School Board of Governors, Minutes of Meetings of 7 December 1903, 25 January 1904, 29 February 1904, 28 March 1904, 3 August 1904, 7 September 1904, 1 March 1905, High School Archives, Thames.

⁸¹ High School Board, *Thames Star*, 5 August 1902, p. 4.

⁸² For example, Thames High School Board of Governors, Minutes of Meetings of 2 June 1908, 7 July 1908, High School Archives, Thames.

⁸³ *Thames Star*, n.d. [June 1907?], press cutting in Thames High School, School Diary 1907, High School Archives, Thames.

their farms. He claimed tenants now paid higher rent with nothing for improvements, and asked how many of the former tenants had taken up their farms under the new leasing arrangements. He charged the board with stopping 'the progress of our district, as regards farming and mining, both of which it has handicapped to such an extent that it has crushed them out of existence within the boundaries of the Endowment'. Only if it was more 'liberal' would farmers and miners do better financially.⁸⁴

Noting that rent arrears totalled £700, 'Another Farmer' commented that whereas some farmers worked their land well, others were 'a disgrace to the district'. He denied that the governors hindered mining, for 'everyone in Waiorongomai' knew that they had ceded their mining rights to the Crown and that mining leases on their land had the same terms as any other lease.⁸⁵ Two months later, lessees petitioned the board about it not providing for any consideration for improvements or for the right of renewal at the end of the 21-year leases. It was not possible to work lands profitably without permanent drainage, 'the full benefit of which would not be realized during the currency of the leases'. They claimed most rentals were excessive because of the quality of the land and liability to losses by flooding and other causes. As the board had ignored requests to ameliorate conditions, they wanted the government to take over the land and provide better agreements.⁸⁶

In October, tenants again petitioned the government to take over the endowment and lease it 'under terms that would enable tenants to farm the land profitably'.⁸⁷ And shortly afterwards, the county council won its case to force the board to pay rates.⁸⁸ In 1910, tenants again unsuccessfully asked the government to take over their leases; although it was willing, the board refused to sell its land.⁸⁹ Two years later, it offered tenants the opportunity to surrender their present leases and obtain new ones for 21 years with rent at five per cent of the current value, with the right of renewal for another 21

⁸⁴ Letter from 'One of the Freeholders Alongside', *Te Aroha News*, 9 June 1908, p. 3.

⁸⁵ Letter from 'Another Farmer', *Te Aroha News*, 13 June 1908, p. 3.

⁸⁶ *Te Aroha News*, 8 August 1908, p. 2.

⁸⁷ *Te Aroha News*, 8 October 1908, p. 2.

⁸⁸ Magistrate's Court, *Te Aroha News*, 29 October 1908, p. 3.

⁸⁹ Thames High School Board of Governors, Minutes of Meeting of 1 November 1910, High School Archives, Thames; *Te Aroha News*, 26 June 1931, p. 5.

years, when revaluations would be made.⁹⁰ Eight tenants sought to extend their leases under these conditions.⁹¹ In 1914, the board declined to grant five tenants rights of renewal in perpetuity.⁹² As the township had few residents by 1918, from then on it moved to resume all unoccupied sections, arrears being treated as unrecoverable.⁹³

In 1931, renewed dissatisfaction led to a deputation to the Minister of Mines. Tenants were 'very dissatisfied with conditions of their leases, which give no right of renewal'. Rents were too high, many tenants having paid 'far too much' for their sections, which discouraged farmers from making improvements before leases terminated, and gave 'no inducement' to farmers to keep their land free from noxious weeds. 'The lessees contended that it was not fair to call tenders for the leases every 21 years and wanted perpetual renewal leases'.⁹⁴ No changes resulted.

After many years of coping with the problems of sometimes marginal farming, in 1939 the board asked 'to be relieved of the responsibility of the Waiorongomai Endowment Leaseholds' by the Education Department.⁹⁵ The department did agree to grant new leases in 1940, and all lessees petitioned for improved terms.⁹⁶ The responsibility of inspecting the farms was retained by the board, which in the 1940s recorded some successful farms but continual weed problems.⁹⁷ In 1948, it was informed that the

⁹⁰ Thames High School Board of Governors, Minutes of Meeting of 5 March 1912, High School Archives, Thames.

⁹¹ Thames High School Board of Governors, Minutes of Meetings of 1 July 1912, 8 October 1912, High School Archives, Thames.

⁹² Thames High School Board of Governors, Minutes of Meeting of 5 May 1914, High School Archives, Thames.

⁹³ Thames High School Board of Governors, Minutes of Meetings of 21 August 1918, 12 February 1919, 20 October 1920, 23 February 1921, 28 February 1923, 24 February 1931, 24 March 1931, 26 May 1931, 25 August 1931, 24 May 1932, 25 October 1932, 22 November 1938, High School Archives, Thames.

⁹⁴ *Te Aroha News*, 26 June 1931, p. 5.

⁹⁵ Thames High School Board of Governors, Minutes of Meetings of 27 July 1939, 26 September 1939, High School Archives, Thames.

⁹⁶ Thames High School Board of Governors, Minutes of Meetings of 28 November 1939, 27 February 1940, High School Archives, Thames.

⁹⁷ Thames High School Board of Governors, Minutes of Meetings of 22 October 1940, 24 March 1942, 24 August 1943, 4 July 1944, 5 December 1944, 27 February 1945, 26 February 1946, 22 April 1947, 23 March 1948, High School Archives, Thames.

Education Department was contemplating asking that the Lands Department be vested with the control of all high school endowments.⁹⁸ It responded that, as it had administered its endowment ‘for several years at a very low cost, and with satisfactory results to the tenants and in the interest of the farms which had gradually been improved’, it did not wish to lose control.⁹⁹ Despite its views, in 1949 an Act transferred the endowments to the Lands Department.¹⁰⁰

SUPERVISING THE ENDOWMENT

Owning the endowment required regular visits by delegated governors to report on the farms, for they were concerned to ensure that farmers farmed rather than sell their land for speculative gain. As an indication of the potential for making a quick profit, in July 1882 a section was sold for a bonus of £130 above the yearly rental.¹⁰¹ However, six months later nobody bid for another leasehold section.¹⁰² In December 1883 the governors believed some sections were ‘being held apparently for speculation in place of agricultural purposes’ and resolved to inspect how tenants were improving and farming their land, as required under the terms of their leases.¹⁰³ The following March, the ‘non-improvement of certain of the sections’ was discussed and ‘steps were taken to obtain accurate information’ to show which tenants were not fulfilling the terms; they would be ‘compelled’ to work or surrender their land.¹⁰⁴

From the start, it seemed that lessees would be successful farmers. At the beginning of January 1882 one showed the *Thames Advertiser* ‘a

⁹⁸ Thames High School Board of Governors, Minutes of Meeting of 27 January 1948, High School Archives, Thames.

⁹⁹ Thames High School Board of Governors, Minutes of Meeting of 24 February 1948, High School Archives, Thames.

¹⁰⁰ Thames High School Board of Governors, Minutes of Meetings of 22 March 1949, 26 April 1949, High School Archives, Thames; ‘An Act to Consolidate and Amend Certain Enactments of the General Assembly Relating to Land Held for Educational Purposes’, *The Statutes of New Zealand, 1949* (Wellington, 1950), p. 430.

¹⁰¹ *Thames Advertiser*, 24 July 1882, p. 2.

¹⁰² *Thames Star*, 25 January 1883, p. 2.

¹⁰³ High School Board, *Thames Advertiser*, 21 December 1883, p. 3.

¹⁰⁴ High School Board, *Thames Advertiser*, 4 March 1884, p. 2.

splendid sample of potatoes', proving 'the fertility of the soil'.¹⁰⁵ In November, it reported the farmers 'beginning to make their properties look attractive, fencing and ploughing going on in every direction'.¹⁰⁶ In January 1885 it was told that 'some of the industrious lessees' could 'show satisfactory results'.¹⁰⁷

A special board meeting in July 1882 considered an offer to repurchase two sections to construct a new road to the township, which might need more land. One governor considered that, 'in the face of the difficulties that were continually cropping up it would be worth while to have the whole reserve thrown into the goldfield as matters could be more conveniently arranged'. The chairman agreed, for 'there were sure to be similar difficulties arising in the future'. Kilgour 'was disposed to acquiesce in' this proposal: 'No harm could be done to any body, as compensation was bound to be paid'. It was resolved to discuss the matter with Kenrick. Referring to 'the outcry' made for an extension of the township, the chairman considered that a frontage to the road be obtained in three sections, which would create 'a number of valuable allotments' and 'interfere but slightly with the remainder'. This suggestion 'was considered a good one, but was deferred until the question of the reversion to the goldfield was finally decided'.¹⁰⁸ When Kenrick recommended that 'the whole reserve be thrown into the Goldfield, to save having to pay large sums of money for compensation in the future', the board decided to take legal advice.¹⁰⁹

During 1883, the issue of resuming some sections was discussed, and a large portion of one was resumed to enable the township to expand.¹¹⁰ Because some tenants erected houses, ignoring the terms of their leases, which only permitted farm buildings, the board reminded them of the rules.¹¹¹ With mining in serious decline in early 1885, the board acceded to

¹⁰⁵ *Thames Advertiser*, 9 January 1882, p. 3.

¹⁰⁶ *Thames Advertiser*, 7 November 1882, p. 3.

¹⁰⁷ *Thames Advertiser*, 8 January 1885, p. 2.

¹⁰⁸ Thames High School Board of Governors, Minutes of Meeting, n.d. [17 July 1882], High School Archives, Thames.

¹⁰⁹ Thames High School Board of Governors, Minutes of Meeting of 7 August 1882, High School Archives, Thames.

¹¹⁰ Thames High School Board of Governors, Minutes of Meetings of 5 March 1883, 19 March 1883, High School Archives, Thames.

¹¹¹ Thames High School Board of Governors, Minutes of Meeting of 7 February 1883, High School Archives, Thames.

a petition from holders of business sites at Waiorongomai that it grant rebates of rental of unoccupied sections and those used for homes. When 'considered advisable', it would reduce rents for business sites from £5 to £1.¹¹² The following year, when the governors visited in May they were 'pleased with the amount of cultivation and grass land', all but four of the sections 'being steadily improved'.¹¹³

Three governors reported in March 1897 on their inspection. Some tenants seemed 'well satisfied with their lot', but others were not. One, 'who expressed the greatest satisfaction with the productive capacity of his section', stated that settlers 'were adverse to making any improvement because the leases had not long to run and might not be renewed'. One governor, whose claim to speak for the others went unchallenged, responded that 'there would be no difficulty in the renewal of leases, and this would certainly be easier to accomplish for tenants who had both improved the land and paid their rent than where no improvements had been made and arrears existed'. Although floods and winds had caused 'considerable damage to some of the buildings', the visiting governors were 'highly satisfied with the appearance of the farms' and buildings, one stating that 'the farms and cattle had never looked in better condition'.¹¹⁴

In December 1902 a new resident described the farms close to the village:

The country round here is looking very nice just now. There is not much land under crop, it is nearly all pasture. The farmers send their milk to the factory a few miles away. On Sunday afternoon [William] Redshaw¹¹⁵ and I took a stroll just outside the village and saw one mob of cows being driven in to milk.... There were close on 40 cows and a bull. They were driven to a house in the village & belong to an Irish man.... His opposite neighbour milks about the same number.... There are some fine flocks of geese roaming about the vacant allotments.... I don't see a very good assortment of fowls anywhere & eggs seem to be dear for the time of the year.... New potatoes are only just coming in and I see our peas and beans nearly ready for gathering.... I fancy it is a good

¹¹² Thames High School Board of Governors, Minutes of Meeting of 13 March 1885, High School Archives, Thames.

¹¹³ *Te Aroha News*, 29 May 1886, p. 2.

¹¹⁴ *Thames Star*, 9 March 1897, p. 2; *Thames Advertiser*, 10 March 1897, p. 1.

¹¹⁵ See Te Aroha Warden's Court, Mining Applications 1901, 19, 24/1901, BBAV 11289/16a, ANZ-A.

country for fruit but this season does not promise well. I saw a good show of plums and pears yesterday in one orchard but the cold winds & rain have played up with the peaches.¹¹⁶

By the early twentieth century, portions of the endowment were covered with ragwort, sweet briar, and blackberry; required by the Inspector of Noxious Weeds to clear these, the board responded that this was the tenants' duty, and instructed them accordingly.¹¹⁷ In June 1906 it refused to receive 'an anonymous letter with reference to ragwort'.¹¹⁸ However, it was obliged meet some of the cost of eradicating noxious weeds, although some contractors did poor work.¹¹⁹ In early 1916, after inspecting the farms the chairman reported that 'the blackberry nuisance' on one 'was causing serious trouble to the adjoining properties'.¹²⁰ Weeds, now including gorse, became a serious problem on unoccupied land, and tenants continued to struggle with the problem on their own sections throughout the endowment's existence.¹²¹ In 1943, over 200 acres was infested with gorse.¹²²

The small tenant farmers were under-capitalized and often only marginally successful: one who asked not to be required to pay rent claimed

¹¹⁶ Thomas Franz Holt to Eliza Helen (Nell) Holt, 10 December 1900, Holt Papers, Te Aroha Museum.

¹¹⁷ *Thames Star*, 8 April 1902, p. 1, 2 March 1905, p. 2; Thames High School Board of Governors, Minutes of Meeting of 1 March 1905, High School Archives, Thames.

¹¹⁸ Thames High School Board of Governors, Minutes of Meeting of 5 June 1906, High School Archives, Thames.

¹¹⁹ Thames High School Board of Governors, Minutes of Meetings of 5 April 1905, 6 November 1906, 4 December 1906, 7 May 1907, 6 July 1909, 1 February 1910, 1 March 1910, 7 February 1911, 5 December 1911, 4 March 1913, High School Archives, Thames.

¹²⁰ Thames High School Board of Governors, Minutes of Meeting of 1 February 1916, High School Archives, Thames.

¹²¹ Thames High School Board of Governors, Minutes of Meetings of 6 September 1910, 7 November 1911, 6 February 1912, 5 November 1913, 9 February 1915, 15 May 1918, 21 August 1918, 16 June 1920, 28 March 1923, 28 April 1936, 27 October 1936, 23 March 1937, 22 February 1938, 22 March 1938, 22 October 1940, 22 February 1949, High School Archives, Thames.

¹²² *Te Aroha News*, 24 June 1943, p. 2.

‘he had not received any benefit from his occupancy’.¹²³ Another, a part-time miner, who claimed that ‘the amount of the rent could not be made out of his section’, successfully asked that his rent be reduced by half.¹²⁴ In 1908, after a meeting of tenants asked for a rebate of rents because of ‘bad seasons’, the board agreed to discuss this with them ‘individually on its visit’.¹²⁵ Two years previously, when one settler asked for assistance with drainage, he was told the board had ‘no power to expend money on land leased to its tenants’. Another tenant who asked for material to repair his fences and roof had his attention drawn to the clause in his lease whereby he was required to keep these in a thorough state of repair.¹²⁶ Three years later, when he asked the board to renew his roof, he was told ‘that if he had kept the premises in a fair state of repair, a new roof would not be required’.¹²⁷ Another who sought assistance to build a barn was ignored.¹²⁸ But the board was required to fill in the old and dangerous Alameda shaft near the township.¹²⁹ In 1911, an inspection revealed sections being improved, one so markedly that the board allowed a rebate of six months’ rent.¹³⁰ Three governors who visited in April 1913 reported ‘a general improvement’ on most farms.¹³¹ By the 1930s, although most farms were more successful, some adjustments to rents owing were arranged for some

¹²³ Thames High School Board of Governors, Minutes of Meeting of 3 December 1907, High School Archives, Thames.

¹²⁴ Thames High School Board of Governors, Minutes of Meeting of 4 July 1916, High School Archives, Thames.

¹²⁵ Thames High School Board of Governors, Minutes of Meeting of 7 April 1908, High School Archives, Thames.

¹²⁶ Thames High School Board of Governors, Minutes of Meeting of 3 July 1906, High School Archives, Thames.

¹²⁷ Thames High School Board of Governors, Minutes of Meeting of 6 April 1909, High School Archives, Thames.

¹²⁸ Thames High School Board of Governors, Minutes of Meeting of 1 October 1907, High School Archives, Thames.

¹²⁹ Thames High School Board of Governors, Minutes of Meetings of 5 September 1906, 2 October 1906, High School Archives, Thames.

¹³⁰ *Te Aroha News*, 6 May 1911, p. 3.

¹³¹ Thames High School Board of Governors, Minutes of Meeting of 6 May 1913, High School Archives, Thames.

tenants struggling with noxious weeds, undrained swamps, and poor seasons.¹³²

For six years in the 1920s, a quarry on part of the hillside provided the board with a small income.¹³³ After it closed, this area provided an even smaller income from grazing.¹³⁴ Some unprofitable timber cutting brought in even less.¹³⁵ The board encouraged the planting pines on the hillside, both to provide revenue and to control ragwort and gorse, but this did not happen because the board lacked the capacity to organize afforestation itself.¹³⁶

COMPLAINTS ABOUT THE MANAGEMENT OF THE ENDOWMENT

In July 1882, the board was informed that the road to Waiorongomai across the endowment was so bad that those carting timber and mining requisites were crossing farmland instead. As the owners of two sections offered to sell their interests for £300 to enable a road to be constructed, it decided to consult with Kenrick.¹³⁷ The *Thames Star* sympathized with the residents, for ‘the landing and road laid off by Government some years ago’ had been ‘found to be utterly unsuitable owing to the precipitous state of the river bank at that place’. As the lessees who had permitted their land to

¹³² Thames High School Board of Governors, Minutes of Meetings of 26 July 1932, 27 March 1934, 27 August 1935, 28 April 1936, 23 March 1937, 22 March 1938, 22 October 1940, High School Archives, Thames.

¹³³ Thames High School Board of Governors, Minutes of Meetings of 18 April 1917, 17 July 1918, 21 August 1918, 23 March 1921, 23 June 1925, 28 June 1927, 27 September 1927, 27 October 1927, 27 March 1928, High School Archives, Thames.

¹³⁴ Thames High School Board of Governors, Minutes of Meeting of 22 July 1930, High School Archives, Thames.

¹³⁵ Thames High School Board of Governors, Minutes of Meetings of 7 November 1916, 27 October 1931, 28 June 1932, 25 July 1933, 27 March 1934, High School Archives, Thames.

¹³⁶ Thames High School Board of Governors, Minutes of Meetings of 22 March 1938, 26 April 1938, 26 June 1938, 26 April 1939, 22 October 1940, 25 February 1941, 27 May 1941, 24 August 1943, 28 March 1944, 25 September 1945, 23 October 1945, 4 December 1945, 27 February 1946, 22 April 1947, High School Archives, Thames.

¹³⁷ Thames High School Board of Governors, Minutes of Meeting, n.d. [17 July 1882], High School Archives, Thames; High School Board, *Thames Star*, 17 July 1882, p. 2.

be used for roads were erecting fences and starting to farm, direct access to the landing had been cut off.¹³⁸

In November, in response to requests for a new access road to the township, new roads within it, and a cemetery, the board stated that road making was not one of its functions, nor did the law permit it to set aside land for a cemetery.¹³⁹ Subsequently, a resident complained that settlers were being systematically neglected and buildings could not be erected because there was no road to the river. Permission granted to cross private land was about to be revoked, as its owners considered they had done enough by letting the Battery Company cart material. The 'Board of Incapables' was doing nothing, having resolved that there was 'no urgent necessity for a road, and that those who wanted to go to the township would have to find roads for themselves'. He considered the endowment was 'grossly mismanaged', and suggested a petition to explain to the government how Waiorongomai was 'willfully ignored' whereas large sums were spent on Te Aroha.¹⁴⁰

Despite the need for a new road to replace a track crossing a ploughed field, the council and the board could not agree about meeting the cost.¹⁴¹ Not till the following March did the board agreed to contribute.¹⁴² But in November it rejected the council's request to provide two-thirds of the cost and refused to contribute anything.¹⁴³ In March 1885 it refused to allow the council to make this road. When 40 residents urged the council to make this much shorter road to the landing, it decided to ask the warden to proclaim this route a road under the Goldfields or Public Works Acts, and the land was taken under the latter Act.¹⁴⁴

In July 1884, a large meeting at Waiorongomai asked the government to resume the endowment. One speaker 'threw some curious light upon the doings of the Board' and its relations with the government, which had not

¹³⁸ *Thames Star*, 30 September 1882, p. 2.

¹³⁹ Thames High School Board of Governors, Minutes of Meetings of 6 November 1882, 3 December 1882, High School Archives, Thames.

¹⁴⁰ Letter from 'Waiorongomai No. 2', *Thames Advertiser*, 18 September 1882, p. 3.

¹⁴¹ *Thames Advertiser*, 7 November 1882, p. 3.

¹⁴² Thames High School Board of Governors, Minutes of Meeting of 6 March 1883, High School Archives, Thames.

¹⁴³ Piako County Council, *Waikato Times*, 29 November 1883, p. 2.

¹⁴⁴ Piako County Council, *Waikato Times*, 12 March 1885, p. 2, 30 May 1885, p. 3; *Thames Advertiser*, 14 March 1885, p. 2.

given a Crown Grant and was considering whether to do so. As it had not been consulted about the conditions of the leases, the government did not 'hold itself in any way responsible' for these.¹⁴⁵ In November the following year, a delegation of settlers complained to the Minister of Lands that they received no return in the way of roads or improvements for their high rents.¹⁴⁶ Soon afterwards, the Te Aroha Improvements Committee asked that a representative of the district be added to the board. 'The board receives large revenues from this district and does nothing whatever to promote its welfare. The people of Waiorongomai have especial cause for complaint', a correspondent considered.¹⁴⁷

In May 1888, the *Te Aroha News* asked: 'What has the Board ever done themselves to assist the district from which they derive a very considerable income? Talk of the evils of absentee landlordism, we need not go so far away as Ireland to see that'.¹⁴⁸ Later, some lessees told a visiting reporter that 'the Act relating to this endowment provided for a certain proportion of the rents being spent in road making and repairs, but the lessors had entirely ignored the matter'.¹⁴⁹

A particular complaint during that year was that the board would not permit the development on the usual terms of the Alameda claim, on the flat adjacent to the township. A meeting asked the warden to approve its development, and asked the government to take over the endowment, for its being run solely by the high school was 'detrimental to the advancement of the mining industry, and has tended to retard the prosperity of the district'.¹⁵⁰ At a subsequent meeting, a resident claimed the board 'took everything and gave back nothing. If the people had a chance of their freeholds, they would have some heart to go to work and improve their holdings; as they were now situated, they had no heart to do so'. A hotelkeeper said the board was trying to kill the goose that laid the golden eggs, because developing the Alameda 'might mean great things' for it. A mine manager wanted the endowment taken over by the government, with the school granted land elsewhere in compensation. He claimed that 'years ago' he had asked the board 'to assist the place, but they would almost

¹⁴⁵ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 15 July 1884, p. 4.

¹⁴⁶ *Te Aroha News*, 14 November 1885, p. 7.

¹⁴⁷ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 5 January 1886, p. 2.

¹⁴⁸ Editorial, *Te Aroha News*, 16 May 1888, p. 2.

¹⁴⁹ Special Reporter, *Waikato Times*, 11 October 1888, p. 3.

¹⁵⁰ *Te Aroha News*, 19 May 1888, p. 2.

insult you'; one member 'simply turned a deaf ear, and laughed at you. He thought they had assisted with their hard earnings to educate the few children at Thames who benefited by the High School long enough'.¹⁵¹ However, James McCosh Clark, a director of the Battery Company,¹⁵² considered that the board was 'fair and liberal' in the terms finally agreed to for the Alameda.¹⁵³

In 1893, a meeting of lessees resolved that the Crown be asked to take over the endowment, the school to be given either cash or equivalent land elsewhere, and a deputation was formed to discuss this with the Minister of Lands.¹⁵⁴ Not receiving satisfaction through this tactic, in September some lessees petitioned that their rents were 'excessive, and the terms of their leases not of sufficient duration to warrant improvements being made'. The unsympathetic Waste Lands Committee made no recommendation to the government.¹⁵⁵

VALUE OF THE ENDOWMENT TO THE HIGH SCHOOL

Had the endowment been of significant financial benefit to the high school? Before the first farms were auctioned, it was 'calculated that at least £400 per annum' would be obtained.¹⁵⁶ John McCombie, writing in December 1880, had 'little doubt that merely from an agricultural point of view' it would in a few years become 'really valuable'; coupled with its probably having 'the heart of the Te Aroha goldfield' along its northern and north-eastern boundaries, it would be 'difficult to surpass it in the colony'.¹⁵⁷ After the second auction, in May 1882, the board's secretary noted that these would produce an annual rental of £144. Combined with 'some £130 odd obtained as rental from a former sale' plus the goldfields

¹⁵¹ *Te Aroha News*, 23 May 1888, p. 2.

¹⁵² See paper on this company.

¹⁵³ High School Board, *Te Aroha News*, 13 June 1888, p. 2.

¹⁵⁴ *Thames Advertiser*, 23 March 1893, p. 2.

¹⁵⁵ Waste Lands Committee, Petition no. 505, Legislative Department, LE 1, 1893/10, ANZ-W; 'Reports of Waste Lands Committee', *AJHR*, 1893, I-5, p. 8.

¹⁵⁶ *Thames Advertiser*, 23 April 1880, p. 2.

¹⁵⁷ *New Zealand Herald*, n.d., reprinted in *Thames Advertiser*, 3 December 1880, p. 3.

revenue, there would be ‘a revenue in all considerably over £300 per annum, a nice assistance’ for the school.¹⁵⁸

In the 1880s, with farms and a township established,¹⁵⁹ the income meant the school was ‘largely supported’ by the rents.¹⁶⁰ In February 1882, whilst it expected to receive much income from rents and goldfields revenue, the secretary warned that, as the school was ‘still far from paying its way’, continued government assistance was required.¹⁶¹ In the 1881 calendar year, £85 9s 6d was received from rents and £31 10s from goldfields revenue.¹⁶² Officials estimated that mining would produce an annual income of £150.¹⁶³ With the first flourishing of mining, considerable income from this source promised to be ‘an item of great importance’, the chairman expected, and should the field become permanent, the school would soon be self-supporting. As all land ‘suitable for agricultural purposes’ had been let for an expected annual rental of £285 14s 11d, revenue from mining was the only way to increase income significantly.¹⁶⁴ When the Board of Education asked the board to surrender the right to minerals and to mine, the governors declined,¹⁶⁵ no doubt wanting to retain the revenue themselves. As an example of how mining could benefit it, its October 1882 meeting was told that during August it had received £117 17s 4d from this source, the largest sum to date.¹⁶⁶ For the 1882 calendar year, whereas rents were £267 19s 5d, goldfields revenue was £586 11s 11d.¹⁶⁷ In the following year, rents declined by £19 5s 1d, but goldfields revenue reached its highest amount ever: £745 17s.¹⁶⁸

¹⁵⁸ Memorandum by Secretary, Thames High School Board of Governors, 11 May 1882, Minute Book no. 3, High School Archives, Thames.

¹⁵⁹ See paper on Waiorongomai township.

¹⁶⁰ *Thames Directory for 1886* (Thames, 1886), p. 185.

¹⁶¹ ‘Education: Reports of Secondary Schools’, *AJHR*, 1882, E-8, p. 5.

¹⁶² ‘Education: Reports of Secondary Schools’, *AJHR*, 1882, E-8, p. 6.

¹⁶³ ‘Reserves for Secondary or University Education in the North Island, Nelson, and Westland’, *AJHR*, 1883, E-10, p. 2.

¹⁶⁴ Report by Chairman, Board of Governors, n.d., ‘Education: Secondary Schools’, *AJHR*, 1883, E-8, p. 3.

¹⁶⁵ High School Board, *Thames Advertiser*, 4 March 1884, p. 2.

¹⁶⁶ High School Board, *Thames Advertiser*, 10 October 1882, p. 3.

¹⁶⁷ ‘Education: Secondary Schools’, *AJHR*, 1883, E-8, p. 4.

¹⁶⁸ ‘Education: Reports of Secondary Schools’, *AJHR*, 1884, Session 1, E-9, p. 9.

The chairman confidently informed the Minister of Education in May 1885 that the school's finances were 'most satisfactory', a big boost being provided by the sale of the township extension, which provided £908 8s 4d. For the first time, no money was required from the government, and the governors had been able to enlarge and improve the school grounds and deposit £600 in the bank to earn interest. However, he noted a 'rather serious decrease' in goldfields revenue caused by a 'great depression' in mining, which still existed 'with, perhaps, even greater severity than before'.¹⁶⁹ In 1884, this revenue had declined to £563 2s 7d whereas rents had increased by almost £20.¹⁷⁰

In the following year, rents declined considerably, to £111 9s 4d, while goldfields revenue fell to £231 9s 5d.¹⁷¹ In May 1886, the chairman told the minister that the school was 'not nearly in such a satisfactory position' financially as at the end of 1884 because of the 'most serious decrease' in goldfields revenue, and the governors feared a 'still further diminution of income' because of the collapse of mining. And general depression in the district had resulted in 'considerable difficulty being experienced in collecting the rents'.¹⁷² Although rents increased by £80 1s 11d in 1886, the downward trend in mining produced only £125 9s 10d.¹⁷³ Rents fell by £48 0s 5d in the following year, with goldfields revenue making a mild recovery to £187.¹⁷⁴ With a mining revival in 1888, £432 17s was received from this source in that year, and rents also rose, to £268 3s 10d.¹⁷⁵ Rents fell by almost £100 in the following year, but goldfields revenue remained almost constant, with a slight rise of £12 0s 9d.¹⁷⁶ From 1888 onwards, increasing amounts of subsidy from the School Commissioners and the government were required.¹⁷⁷

¹⁶⁹ Chairman, Board of Governors, to Minister of Education, 24 April 1885, 'Education: Reports of Secondary Schools', *AJHR*, 1885, E-9, p. 15.

¹⁷⁰ 'Education: Reports of Secondary Schools', *AJHR*, 1885, E-9, p. 17.

¹⁷¹ 'Education: Reports of Secondary Schools', *AJHR*, 1886, E-9, p. 23.

¹⁷² Chairman, Board of Governors, to Minister of Education, 6 May 1886, 'Education: Reports of Secondary Schools', *AJHR*, 1886, E-9, p. 23.

¹⁷³ 'Education: Reports of Secondary Schools', *AJHR*, 1887, Session 1, E-9, p. 14.

¹⁷⁴ 'Education: Reports of Secondary Schools', *AJHR*, 1888, E-9, p. 8.

¹⁷⁵ 'Education: Reports of Secondary Schools', *AJHR*, 1889, E-9, p. 7.

¹⁷⁶ 'Education: Reports of Secondary Schools', *AJHR*, 1890, E-9, p. 7.

¹⁷⁷ For the first contribution of the School Commissioners, see 'Education: Reports of Secondary Schools', *AJHR*, 1888, E-9, p. 8.

The secretary reported in May 1890 that the school's financial position was poor because of the fall in mining revenue. 'For some time past the school had mainly existed on gold duty, the ordinary source of revenue being wholly insufficient'.¹⁷⁸ For that year, goldfields revenue had fallen to only £155 15s, although rents increased by £83 14s 6d to £262 6s 4d.¹⁷⁹ From 1891 to 1895, rents were £239 9s 4d, £155 16s 9d, £364 14s 9d, £371 8s 7d, and then only £227 1s 6d in the latter year. By contrast, mining brought in £230 6s 6d in 1891, but then only £122 1s in 1892, £34 in 1893, £74 in 1894, and £86 10s in 1895.¹⁸⁰ Despite now receiving money from the School Commissioners, the board had to apply to the government for financial assistance in 1892, unsuccessfully.¹⁸¹ One consequence of the fall in mining revenue was the dismissal of a teacher.¹⁸²

In 1895, the board noted, when receiving £125 from the Auckland School Reserves Commissioners, that 'at last an improvement had taken place at Waiorongomai, so that at an early date the revenue should increase'.¹⁸³ Commenting on the board's visit in May the following year, a Paeroa newspaper commented that, although 'hitherto' the endowment had not produced 'much revenue', it was 'expected that with the coming revival in mining in Waiorongomai, and the wholesale pegging out that took place only last week', it would prove more valuable.¹⁸⁴ There certainly was a short-term increase, for although the mining boom proved a short-lived bubble,¹⁸⁵ it was some time before mining licenses were abandoned. Income from this source was £239 10s 4d in 1896, £324 4s 11d in 1897, £316 4s 2d in 1898, and £125 17s 1d in 1899.¹⁸⁶ In 1900 it fell to £55 7s 3d, and only twice in the next ten years were the pounds in three figures: £141 6s 4d in

¹⁷⁸ High School Board, *Thames Advertiser*, 6 May 1890, p. 2.

¹⁷⁹ 'Education: Reports of Secondary Schools', *AJHR*, 1891, E-9, p. 6.

¹⁸⁰ 'Education: Reports of Secondary Schools', *AJHR*, 1892, E-9, p. 7; 1893, E-9, p. 7; 1894, E-9, p. 10; 1895, E-9, p. 7; 1896, E-9, p. 7.

¹⁸¹ 'Education: Reports of Secondary Schools', *AJHR*, 1893, E-9, p. 6.

¹⁸² 'Education: Reports of Secondary Schools', *AJHR*, 1895, E-9, p. 7.

¹⁸³ High School Board, *Thames Advertiser*, 5 November 1895, p. 2.

¹⁸⁴ *Ohinemuri Gazette*, 27 May 1896, p. 2.

¹⁸⁵ See paper on the mining boom of the 1890s.

¹⁸⁶ 'Education: Reports of Secondary Schools', *AJHR*, 1897, E-9, p. 7; 1898, E-11, p. 7; 1899, E-12, p. 7; 1900, E-12, p. 7.

1901 and £121 16s 9d in 1907.¹⁸⁷ 1911 produced £144 12s 6d,¹⁸⁸ but from then on all the amounts were small. Until combined in 1926 with other minor sources of income into the category of 'Interest, &c', which totalled £140, the largest amount was £91 11s 10d in 1914, the smallest £8, in 1915.¹⁸⁹

From the late 1890s onwards income from the farms fluctuated, and was never sufficient. In its 1903 report the board noted that the school had 'always severely felt the want of sufficient funds' and was unable to provide more than two teachers in the first term of that year.¹⁹⁰ In February 1904 the council valued the capital value as £12,837. The average income for the past three years had been '£234 pa after deducting all endowment expenditure'.¹⁹¹ Between 1896 and that year, the largest amount received from renting the farms was £492 8s 6d, in 1904, the lowest being £178 18s, in 1899.¹⁹² Assistance from the government, both directly and through the School Commissioners, had become the main source of income.¹⁹³ In 1911, after the secretary pointed out 'the large area' of the endowment that was 'unproductive to the Board owing to the land being ceded to the Crown for mining purposes', the board asked the government to cede the 1,300 acres of bush land on the southern side of the stream, not being used for mining, so these could be rented.¹⁹⁴ Rents from farms continued to fluctuate before the Depression commenced in 1929, the highest amount received being £1,282,

¹⁸⁷ 'Education: Reports of Secondary Schools', *AJHR*, 1901, E-12, p. 12; 1902, E-12, p. 7; 'Education: Secondary Education', *AJHR*, 1903, E-12, p. 13; 1904, E-12, p. 11; 1905, E-12, p. 12; 1906, E-12, p. 14; 1907, E-12, p. 16; 1908, E-12, p. 16; 1909, E-6, p. 25; 1910, E-6, p. 27; 1911, E-6, p. 28.

¹⁸⁸ 'Education: Secondary Education', *AJHR*, 1912, E-6, p. 47.

¹⁸⁹ 'Education: Secondary Education', *AJHR*, 1913, E-6, p. 50; 1914, E-6, p. 52; 1915, E-6, p. 57; 1916, E-6, p. 38; 1917, E-6, p. 39; 1918, E-6, p. 40; 1919, p. 36; 1920, E-6, p. 34; 1921, E-6, p. 30; 1922, E-6, p. 29; 1923, E-6, p. 30; 1924, E-6, p. 22; 1925, E-6, p. 22; 1926, E-6, p. 23; 1929, E-6, p. 14.

¹⁹⁰ 'Education: Secondary Education', *AJHR*, 1904, E-12, p. 11.

¹⁹¹ Thames High School Board of Governors, Minutes of Meetings of 29 February 1904, High School Archives, Thames.

¹⁹² 'Education: Reports of Secondary Schools', *AJHR*, 1897, E-9, p. 7; 1898, E-11, p. 7; 1899, E-12, p. 7; 1900, E-12, p. 7; 1901, E-12, p. 12; 1902, E-12, p. 7; 'Education: Secondary Education', *AJHR*, 1903, E-12, p. 13; 1904, E-12, p. 11; 1905, E-12, p. 12.

¹⁹³ For example, 'Education: Secondary Education', *AJHR*, 1908, E-12, p. 16.

¹⁹⁴ High School Board, *Thames Star*, 5 July 1911, p. 2.

in 1927, the only time the pounds attained four figures, and the lowest £341 2s 11d, in 1905.¹⁹⁵ Rent income, £938 in 1929, was only £618 ten years later.¹⁹⁶

In 1918, 'Royalty on metal' was first recorded in the accounts for the previous year: £7 0s 3d, from the quarry.¹⁹⁷ Not until 1922 was more income received from this source, £155 2s 6d.¹⁹⁸ This income was listed for only another three years, £88 5s 9d, £183 16s 9d, and £217 0s 9d, after which any further income from it was subsumed under 'Interest, &c'.¹⁹⁹

CONCLUSION

It is clear that, although rents received both from farms and the goldfield produced a considerable, if fluctuating, income, it was insufficient for the school's needs, which required continual government assistance. When the government decided to abolish all endowments and fund schools directly it relieved the school of the responsibility of supervising the farming of this land.

Appendix

Figure 1: D.H. Bayldon, Subdivision of Thames High School Endowment, Block XII, Aroha SD, 22 March 1881, SO 1912B, University of Waikato Map Library.

Figure 2: D.H. Bayldon, Plan showing subdivision of part of Thames High School Endowment, Te Aroha Survey District, 14 February 1883, DP 154, University of Waikato Map Library.

¹⁹⁵ 'Education: Secondary Education', *AJHR*, 1906, E-12, p. 14; 1907, E-12, p. 16; 1908, E-12, p. 16; 1909, E-6, p. 25; 1910, E-6, p. 27; 1911, E-6, p. 28; 1912, E-6, p. 47; 1913, E-6, p. 50; 1914, E-6, p. 52; 1915, E-6, p. 57; 1916, E-6, p. 38; 1917, E-6, p. 39; 1918, E-6, p. 40; 1919, E-6, p. 36; 1920, E-6, p. 34; 1921, E-6, p. 30; 1922, E-6, p. 29; 1923, E-6, p. 30; 1924, E-6, p. 22; 1925, E-6, p. 22; 1926, E-6, p. 23; 1927, E-6, p. 14; 1928, E-6, p. 14; 1929, E-6, p. 15; 1930, E-6, p. 8.

¹⁹⁶ 'Education: Secondary Education', *AJHR*, 1930, E-6, p. 8; 1940, E-2, p. 35.

¹⁹⁷ 'Education: Secondary Education', *AJHR*, 1918, E-6, p. 40.

¹⁹⁸ 'Education: Secondary Education', *AJHR*, 1923, E-6, p. 30.

¹⁹⁹ 'Education: Secondary Education', *AJHR*, 1924, E-6, p. 22; 1925, E-6, p. 22; 1926, E-6, p. 23; 1927, E-6, p. 14.

Figure 3: J. Mackay, Plan of portion of Section 1 Block XII Aroha SD, being portion of Thames High School Endowment, March 1914, DP 9291, University of Waikato Map Library.

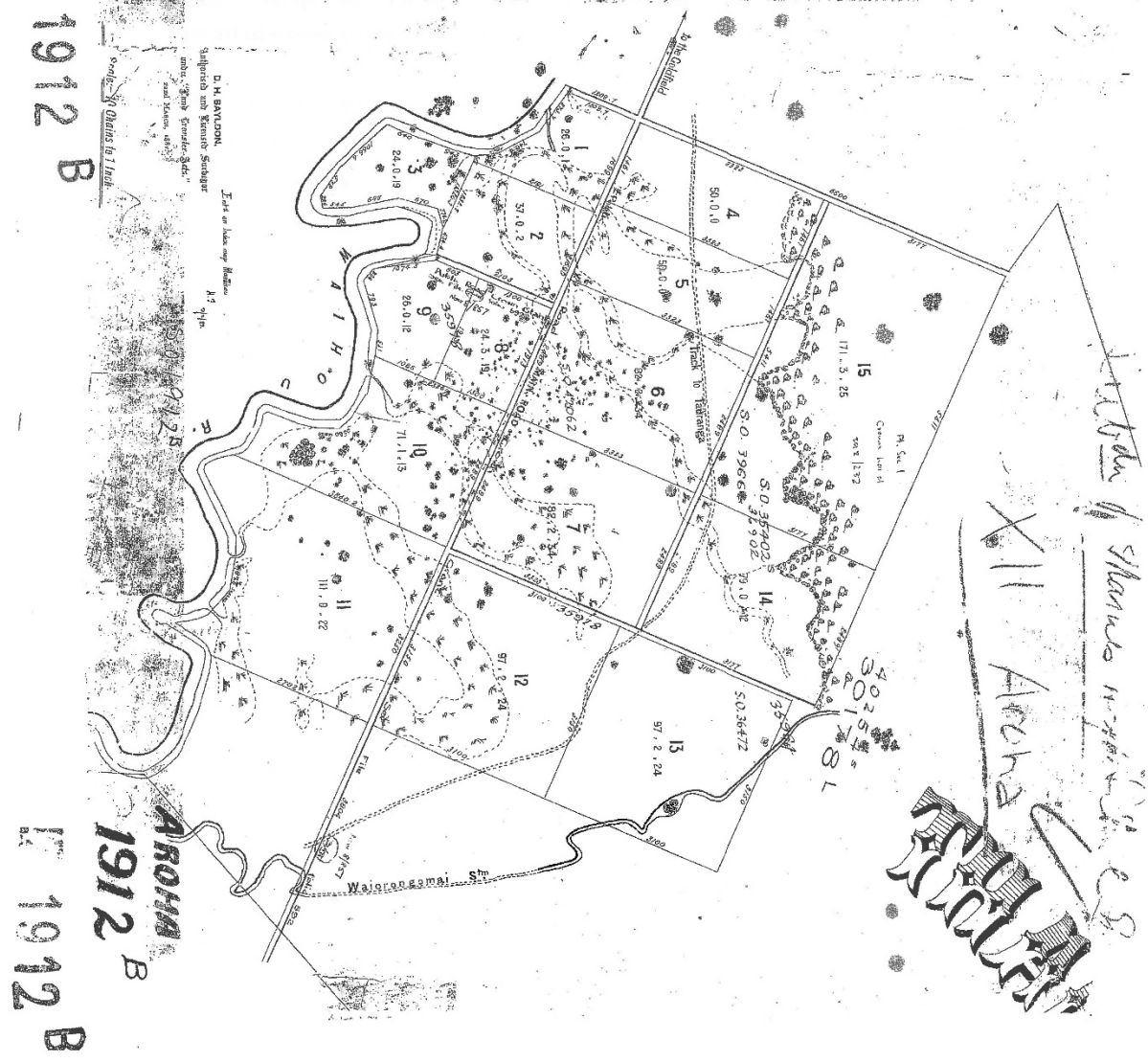


Figure 1: D.H. Bayldon, Subdivision of Thames High School Endowment, Block XII, Aroha SD, 22 March 1881, SO 1912B, University of Waikato Map Library.

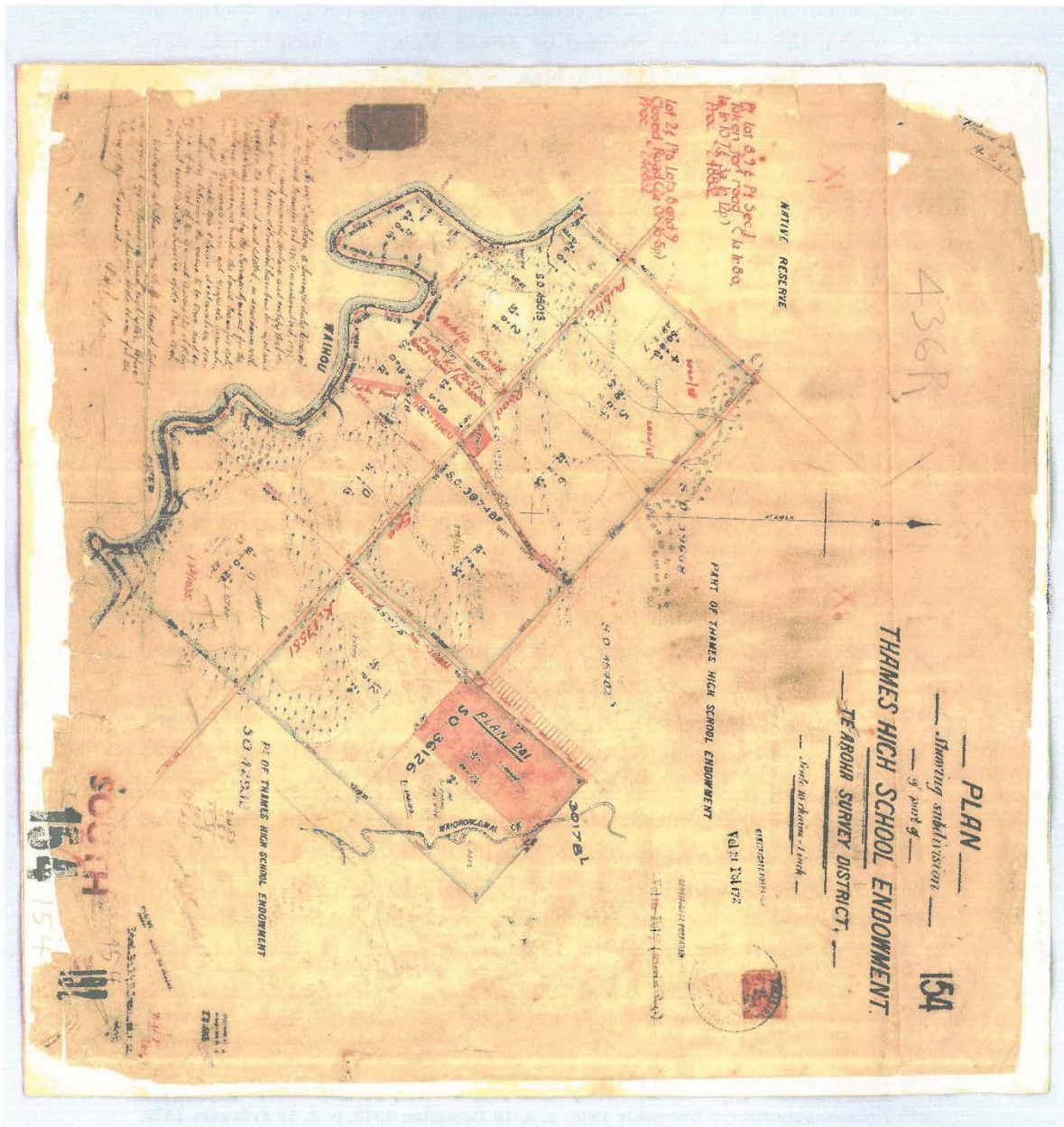


Figure 2: D.H. Bayldon, Plan showing subdivision of part of Thames High School Endowment, Te Aroha Survey District, 14 February 1883, DP 154, University of Waikato Map Library.

