

THE TE AROHA HOT SPRINGS
(MAINLY IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY)

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Abstract: *Unique amongst New Zealand mining districts, the hot springs sited at the base of the mountain were popular with miners, residents, and an increasing number of visitors. Highly valued by Maori for their medicinal qualities, Pakeha visited them well before gold was discovered. Acquired by the Crown as part of the purchase of the Aroha Block, contention arose over whether the springs had been gifted to the Crown and whether Maori should be charged for using them. The provision of a small but free bath to Ngati Rahiri did not satisfy them.*

After Pakeha settled, the springs were developed and the surrounding domain was landscaped. Analysis of the water by experts produced claims about its curative qualities and many miracle cures were claimed, and the water was bottled until more recent analyses traced the existence of arsenic. Men reputedly skilled in hydropony and similar 'sciences' were appointed to assist those suffering from rheumatism and the like. A local board beautified the area until the domain was taken over by the Tourist Department. Many tourists from throughout New Zealand and abroad were attracted by the facilities, which included a library, but some noticed a lack of cleanliness and were annoyed by larrikins. Despite such problems, as mining faded Te Aroha profited from becoming a tourist destination and sanatorium.

A UNIQUE FEATURE

A unique feature of the Te Aroha Mining District was its hot springs. The first detailed geological survey explained that these were situated on the 'great fault scarp' on the mountain. 'Through the crushed rock due to this fault-zone arise the springs which occur over an area about 25 chains [589 metres] in length, in the northern portion of which the springs are warm, in the southern cold'.¹

A man who participated in the 1880 rush recalled 'a few shrewd men' predicting the springs would be 'a good thing, a "claim" which was more to

¹ John Henderson and John Bartrum, *The Geology of the Aroha Subdivision, Hauraki, Auckland*, Geological Survey, Bulletin no. 16, New Series (Wellington, 1913), p. 30. For siting of the springs, see map facing p. 31. For diagram of the 'flow paths of groundwater' under the springs, see Waitangi Tribunal, *The Hauraki Report* (Wellington, 2006), vol. 3, p. 906.

be relied upon than anything in the gold mining way. I remember when the gold mining boom was still on, hearing one man say that perhaps the hot springs would do more for the Te Aroha township than the gold'.² In a realistic assessment made in 1889 by Thomas Gavin,³ a leading mine manager who chaired the Hot Springs Domain Board for many years, the baths developed from the springs were 'the main stay of Te Aroha, and ... of more importance ... than the mining industry'.⁴ With his encouragement, land adjacent to the domain was excluded from the goldfield in 1897.⁵

A local correspondent had expressed the same view in 1886:

The great centre of attraction at Te Aroha is unquestionably the natural baths. They will always prove a source of wealth for the place; in fact, they are the main-spring (no pun intended) of its prosperity and future progress. The quartz-mining industry is so much accompanied by risk and unremunerative in proportion to the immense expenditure of capital it entails, that all too often failure and ruin follow in its train. The field may become exhausted or languish with fluctuations that operate seriously on the business portion of the community. On the other hand the springs and medicinal waters are a perennial mine of wealth to them, and it is upon that sure foundation that Te Aroha will build itself. The more their fame becomes widespread, the greater will become the material growth of the town. Although there is not the magnificent sights and wonders at Rotorua, Rotomahana, or Taupo, yet we invariably hear tourists, particularly invalids, declare an emphatic preference for Te Aroha on account of its moderate charges, excellent accommodation, pleasant situation, and the easy access to the baths.⁶

The springs gave an early boost to the local economy, provided a steady income to residents who attended to the needs of visitors, and enabled miners to socialize with a wider range of people than was usual in mining communities.

² 'Maratuahu', 'Te Aroha: Past and Present', *New Zealand Herald*, 21 April 1900, Supplement, p. 1.

³ See paper on his life.

⁴ *Waikato Times*, 12 February 1889, p. 2.

⁵ Thomas Gavin to A.J. Cadman (Minister of Mines), 12 October 1896; R.S. Bush (Warden) to A.J. Cadman, 3 November 1896, 22 February 1897, with appended maps, Mines Department, MD 1, 97/520, ANZ-W.

⁶ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 3 June 1886, p. 2.

THE SPRINGS BEFORE THE TOWNSHIP WAS FOUNDED

For centuries Maori had valued the springs, some coming to bathe from as far away as Coromandel.⁷ Pakeha soon discovered them, as when a man travelling up the Waihou River in about 1852 noted ‘some hot springs at the foot of the “Aroha, Love Mountain” ’.⁸ When Sir George Grey and his party passed through Te Aroha, in December 1849, their Maori guides took them ‘to see a spring called Te Korokoro o Hura’, which probably translates as ‘the throat of Hura’,⁹ which

the natives declared to be boiling and of a salt taste, and that it came from the sea on the East Coast by a subterraneous passage. It is situated at the foot of Mount Te Aroha.... On approaching it, Whakareho who was our guide, instructed me in a Native ceremony for strangers approaching a boiling spring.... It consists in pulling up some fern or any other weed which may be at hand, and throwing it into the spring, at the same time repeating the words of a karakia of which the following is the translation -

I arrive where an unknown earth is under my feet,
 I arrive where a new sky is above me,
 I arrive at this land,
 A resting place for me,
 Oh spirit of the earth the stranger humbly offers his heart as
 food for thee.

The above ceremony which is called “Tupuna Whenua” is used by persons on their first arrival at a strange place, for the purpose of appeasing the spirit of the earth, who would otherwise be angry at the intrusion. On examining the spring we found that the water was not hot, and could hardly be called tepid, although it was not quite cold. Neither is it salt at all, but has a strong chalybeate taste,¹⁰ and is highly odoriferous of rotten eggs. We found a small quantity of sulphurous deposit in the mud through which the water wells up. The quantity of water emitted is very

⁷ *Te Aroha and the Fortunate Valley: Pioneers in the Thames Valley, 1867-1930*, ed. F.W. Wild (Te Aroha, 1930), pp. 273, 303, 305.

⁸ W.M. Baines, *The Narrative of Edward Crewe: Or, life in New Zealand* (London, 1874), p. 96.

⁹ Translation provided by Tom Roa.

¹⁰ Chalyteate=‘impregnated with iron’: *Concise Oxford Dictionary* (5 ed., Oxford, 1964), p. 197.

small, and the place on the whole hardly repays one for the trouble of visiting it, to do which it is necessary to traverse about quarter of a mile of very broken ground, the greater part of which is a deep quagmire.¹¹

Unless the springs changed markedly in following years, either Whakareho, who did not live at Te Aroha, did not know the location of the better springs, or did not choose to reveal them, as was assumed when this visit was recalled in 1930.¹² The Waitangi Tribunal surmised that he had been ‘shown one of the smaller springs, and the “quagmire” discouraged him from exploring further. The area did not appear to be occupied at this time’,¹³ which meant that nobody could lead the visitors to the best springs.

The belief that the springs were linked to the sea was noted three years later, when one Rawiri informed a traveller that ‘they ebbed and flowed in perfect unison with the tide at Tauranga.... However that may be, it was low water with the hot springs during the time of our visit’.¹⁴ In 1880, a visitor from Tauranga saw ‘a peculiar spring’ about 30 feet from the soda water spring. ‘Maori tradition’ had it

that the boiling water in it rises and falls with the tide at Tauranga, and those well acquainted with Maori lore can, by looking into it, tell at once the state of the tide at Tauranga. However that may be, the water in the spring is ascertained beyond all doubt to rise and fall regularly every six hours.¹⁵

An Auckland journalist recorded a variant, linking it to the ‘celebrated soda spring’ and a different part of the coast:

One peculiarity about this spring is the fact that when the tide is out at Grahamstown the mud at the bottom of the spring, which is shallow, falls down and the hole is deeper. When the tide at Grahamstown rises, the bottom of the spring rises. It is said that the natives, when about to start in their canoes for the Thames,

¹¹ George Sisson Cooper, *Journal of an Expedition Overland from Auckland to Taranaki by way of Rotorua, Taupo, and the West Coast: Undertaken in the summer of 1849-50, by His Excellency the Governor-in-Chief of New Zealand* (Auckland, 1851), pp. 40, 42.

¹² *Te Aroha and the Fortunate Valley*, p. 273.

¹³ Waitangi Tribunal, *Hauraki Report*, vol. 3, p. 908.

¹⁴ Baines, p. 96.

¹⁵ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Bay of Plenty Times*, 25 November 1880, p. 2.

used always to time their departure by the depth of the spring, thus knowing the time of high water in the Hauraki Gulf.¹⁶

Following on from these claimed links, in 1886 it was rumoured that the Tarawera eruption had affected the springs. Upon investigation 'no foundation' for this report could be found, the temperature and the flow of water being unchanged 'in the slightest degree'.¹⁷

In 1878 a visitor was told that Maori considered the springs 'to be of marvellous efficacy'.¹⁸ Two years later, another visitor recorded that they were 'largely used' by Maori 'for medicinal purposes', and during his 'short visit' several Maori with skin diseases 'came and bathed'.¹⁹ It was believed at Thames that the pools had 'remarkable healing properties, and have for years given relief to the natives in various complaints and diseases'.²⁰ According to Alfred Jerome Cadman, a leading politician who lived for many years on the Coromandel Peninsula, 'history proved that the Maoris had repaired to Te Aroha after they had fought their battles, and there the wounded and sick had found great relief by washing in the muddy springs of those days'.²¹ During the Waikato War many wounded Maori 'availed themselves of the use of the waters for their healing properties, and numbers of them were recruited in health'.²² After Pakeha settlement, Maori 'suffering from the tortures of rheumatism' were 'brought many miles on a sort of sleigh, or cart without wheels, by their friends to receive the benefits'.²³ The largest of some cold springs slightly to the southeast of the future Hot Springs Domain was 'used for diseases of the eyes, for which purpose it was considered highly beneficial'.²⁴

¹⁶ *Brett's Auckland Almanac, Provincial Handbook, and Strangers' Vade Mecum for 1881* (Auckland, 1881), p. 100; reprinted from Own Correspondent, *Auckland Star*, 23 November 1880, p. 3.

¹⁷ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 19 June 1886, p. 3.

¹⁸ S[amuel] Stephenson, 'A Visit to Te Aroha Hot Springs', *Thames Advertiser*, 4 December 1878, p. 3.

¹⁹ *Thames Star*, 25 October 1880, p. 2.

²⁰ *Thames Advertiser*, 30 December 1874, p. 3.

²¹ A.J. Cadman, speech at opening of Cadman Bathhouse, *Auckland Weekly News*, 28 May 1898, p. 36.

²² *Thames Advertiser*, 7 October 1899, p. 2.

²³ C. Voice-Hawkings, 'My Visit to Te Aroha', *Observer*, 30 May 1885, p. 3.

²⁴ *Thames Star*, 4 November 1901, p. 4.

In 1878, when James Mackay divided the Aroha Block amongst Ngati Rahiri,²⁵ the mayor of Thames, along with the first Te Aroha storekeeper, George Stewart O'Halloran,²⁶ and one of the earliest farmers, Frederick Strange,²⁷ asked the government to reserve the springs as public property rather than return them to Ngati Rahiri.²⁸ Mackay arranged that the springs and 20 acres surrounding them were 'given by the native owners to the general public for a sanatorium'.²⁹ Henry Dunbar Johnson, a Pakeha Maori who became a judge of the land court and a farmer at Te Aroha West,³⁰ claimed that at the 1878 court hearing at Thames there was a 'big fight' to get the springs made into a reserve.³¹ Any such fight took place outside the court, which did not discuss the issue.³² The domain was placed under the provisions of the Public Domains Act in December 1882 and a board, which included George Lipsey,³³ Mokena's son-in-law, was appointed to administer it.³⁴

Descendants of Mokena Hou and other Maori resident in Te Aroha insisted, in their evidence to the Waitangi Tribunal, that the springs were either gifted by Mokena to the Crown or simply confiscated.³⁵ The tribunal decided that 'in Maori terms, Te Mokena Hou's "gift" consisted of his allowing the Crown to include the hot springs in their initial purchase', and Crown representatives had 'conceded that the weight of evidence' supported the concept of a gift.³⁶ It noted that, because the springs were part of the land sold to the Crown, 'there was legally no need for Te Mokena Hou to "give" the land to the Crown. He had already "given" it in allowing the

²⁵ See papers on the Aroha Block.

²⁶ See paper on his life.

²⁷ See *Te Aroha News*, 29 October 1917, p. 2, 12 October 1927, Supplement, p. 1.

²⁸ *Thames Advertiser*, 15 August 1878, p. 2, 17 August 1878, p. 3; *Te Aroha News*, 29 October 1917, p. 2, 12 October 1927, Supplement, p. 1.

²⁹ *Thames Advertiser*, 1 November 1880, p. 3; James Mackay, 'Te Aroha: A Historical Retrospect', *Auckland Weekly News*, 4 June 1898, p. 8.

³⁰ See paper on Lavinia and Henry Dunbar Johnson.

³¹ *Thames Advertiser*, 23 February 1911, p. 2.

³² Maori Land Court, Hauraki Minute Book no. 10, pp. 376-415, 422-479.

³³ See paper on his life.

³⁴ *New Zealand Gazette*, 14 December 1882, pp. 1860-1861.

³⁵ Waitangi Tribunal, *Hauraki Report*, vol. 3, pp. 914-915.

³⁶ Waitangi Tribunal, *Hauraki Report*, vol. 3, p. 916.

initial purchase to include the hot springs'.³⁷ The tribunal determined that, although there was no gift in legal terms, Maori should have been involved in the running of the domain.³⁸

Whilst in Ngati Rahiri ownership, only small alterations had been made to the springs and their surroundings. A visitor in the early 1870s had to 'scramble about amongst the tea-tree' to find them.³⁹ Another man who visited in December 1872 gave the first detailed description of what he called the Waipuia springs. As this meant 'hot water spring' or 'Volcanic waters', it may merely have been the word used to show Pakeha where to find them.⁴⁰ A sketch map of 'Native names of Creeks at Te Aroha', drawn in 1880, showed a small 'Waipuia Stream passing through or coming from the springs'.⁴¹

The springs are to be found close under the precipitous ferny spurs which form this part of the mountain base. Numerous irregular bald patches of exposed clay and gravel look down upon you, indicative of water-action during winter. Under these the bottom of several little gullies is incrustated with calcareous⁴² tufa,⁴³ over which trickles a warm stream, peopled abundantly, strange to say, with a minute turbinate shell. But we found three springs only where the water was fairly hot. One, the most utilized, and apparently the best, rises up unto a basin 15 to 20 feet long, whose clay walls have been built by Maories. A cold stream also trickles into this, and may be dammed back with the greatest ease if the bather wishes to increase the heat of the bath. It may be guessed that the advance of the evening found us all immersed to the necks in this bath, its size being such as to allow us, four in all, to bathe together without the least inconvenience....

³⁷ Waitangi Tribunal, *Hauraki Report*, vol. 3, p. 918.

³⁸ Waitangi Tribunal, *The Hauraki Report* (Wellington, 2006), vol. 1, p. xl.

³⁹ 'Maratuahu', 'Te Aroha: Past and Present', *New Zealand Herald*, 14 April 1900, Supplement, p. 1.

⁴⁰ See H.W. Williams, *A Dictionary of the Maori Language*, 7 ed., (Wellington, 1971), pp. 305 (Puia), 476 (Waipuna); Tom Roa translates waipuia as 'volcanic waters'.

⁴¹ 'Native names of Creeks at Te Aroha', sketch map drawn on 29 November 1880, Mines Department, MD 1, 12/353, ANZ-W.

⁴² Containing carbonate of lime or limestone: *Concise Oxford Dictionary*, p. 168.

⁴³ 'Rock of rough or cellular texture of volcanic or other origin': *Concise Oxford Dictionary*, p. 1400.

It was most luxurious....⁴⁴

In 1898 he recalled that ‘the only bathing place was a hole about ten feet in diameter, since called No. 2’.⁴⁵ An equally unromantic description, that the spring was ‘only a small one, and the heat of it not above, say, 100°F’,⁴⁶ was given in December 1873.⁴⁷

Those who travelled on the first steam launch to reach Te Aroha, in December 1874, found ‘artificial baths, made by the damming up of the water, one being about 3 feet deep and the other about 6 inches deep’. As the water was too hot for comfortable immersion, water from an adjacent icy cold spring was utilized: ‘A little Maori boy who guided us to the springs, before we commenced to bathe, turned on the cold water to one bath by removing two or three stones, and in the second bath, where the temperature was not so high, he took a short stick and cleared out a hole to let in more hot water’.⁴⁸

In 1877, a visitor found ‘a number of springs of hot water all surrounded by clumps of raupu’. Several ‘had been cleaned out and used for bathing’.⁴⁹ The soda springs were in a flax swamp below the hot pools; in 1878 the water was described as ‘of excellent quality, but rather muddy’.⁵⁰

PRAISING THE SPRINGS

Pakeha visitors spread the fame of the pools. A correspondent who visited in 1871 reported ‘some fine hot springs, and a small volcano which puffs away very like the high-pressure engine of the Lalla Rookh’,⁵¹ a river

⁴⁴ Albert J. Allom, *A Holiday Trip to Maungatautari, Being the Journal of a Tour to the Waikato, via Ohinemuri and the Upper Thames* (Thames, 1873), pp. 9-10.

⁴⁵ Letter from Albert J. Allom, *Te Aroha News*, 26 April 1898, p. 2, incorrectly giving his visit as being in 1871; see first extract of his account published in *Thames Advertiser*, 10 January 1873, p. 3.

⁴⁶ All temperatures are in Fahrenheit.

⁴⁷ ‘A Holiday Trip to the Lakes’, *Thames Advertiser*, 9 January 1874, p. 3.

⁴⁸ Own Correspondent, ‘Navigating the Thames River’, *Thames Advertiser*, 30 December 1874, p. 3.

⁴⁹ ‘Te Aroha District in 1877: A Retrospect’, *Te Aroha News*, 15 February 1923, p. 4.

⁵⁰ Special Commissioner, *Thames Advertiser*, 15 April 1878, p. 3.

⁵¹ Special Correspondent, ‘The Opening of Ohinemuri’, *New Zealand Herald*, 13 May 1871, p. 3.

steamer. There were no further references to this ‘miniature volcano’, but the springs and a ‘natural soda water machine’ remained.⁵² This ‘celebrated soda spring’, a short distance from the baths, was described in November 1880 as ‘a little muddy spring’ bubbling up ‘amongst the tangled fern’.⁵³ More romantically, in the following month it was described as ‘a natural fountain of soda water’.⁵⁴ Steam launches brought passengers to the springs either for pleasure or to be cured.⁵⁵ In 1877, a Pakeha who spent a week in the pools found his rheumatism to be ‘much better’ after a few days, but then the pain returned fully. A correspondent was ‘inclined to think he might have derived permanent benefit had he persevered’.⁵⁶

Drinking from the soda water fountain seems to have been free, but Ngati Rahiri charged each bather one shilling for soaking in their pools.⁵⁷ By February 1879 an unrecorded person had analyzed the water and had reported that ‘the curative and medicinal properties’ were ‘superior to any other hot springs in the country’.⁵⁸ Shortly before the proclamation of the goldfield, a journalist wrote that ‘for yards around the springs hot water bubbles from the spongy soil - in places so hot as almost to scald the hand... The effects of a dip in these springs is wonderful - the body being greatly refreshed, while the whole system appears to be rejuvenated for the time being’.⁵⁹ Another journalist described the water as ‘very efficacious of rheumatism and like complaints’, having ‘performed some remarkable cures. If the bather stays in any length of time it generally causes a headache and a feeling of weakness – being like any other good thing, injurious when used to excess’.⁶⁰

⁵² Special Commissioner, ‘The Ohinemuri Country’, *New Zealand Herald*, 20 May 1871, p. 5.

⁵³ *Auckland Star*, 23 November 1880, p. 3.

⁵⁴ Charles Brunn to James Grieve, n.d. [late December 1880], printed in *Inangahua Times*, 7 January 1881, p. 2.

⁵⁵ *Thames Advertiser*, 20 January 1875, p. 3, Ohinemuri Correspondent, 8 November 1875, p. 3, Police Court, 16 May 1876, p. 3, 16 January 1877, p. 3, 25 August 1877, p. 3, 4 September 1877, p. 3, Ohinemuri Correspondent, 27 November 1877, p. 3, 15 January 1878, p. 3, 12 April 1879, p. 2; advertisement *Thames Star*, 14 January 1880, p. 2.

⁵⁶ Ohinemuri Correspondent, *Thames Advertiser*, 19 October 1877, p. 3.

⁵⁷ *Thames Advertiser*, 16 January 1877, p. 3.

⁵⁸ *Thames Advertiser*, 4 February 1879, p. 3.

⁵⁹ Special Reporter, *Thames Star*, 25 October 1880, p. 2.

⁶⁰ *Auckland Star*, 23 November 1880, p. 3.

In 1880, a local correspondent considered 'the great feature' of the new settlement to be 'the hot springs, there being 2 excellent hot baths just about 100 yards behind the hotel, whose curative properties are highly spoken of, along with 'a celebrated soda water spring of excellent quality'. His enthusiastic report concluded with the 'singular fact' that, 'standing in a certain place close to the main spring, a person can lean down and by stretching his arms out in opposite directions place one hand in a cold and the other in a hot water spring'.⁶¹ In 1881, a journalist wrote that the water in the three pools

has not, at first glance, a very enticing appearance, being thickly impregnated with decaying mineral and vegetable substances, with a strong sulphurous smell and taste. But, after a little familiarity, it is not offensive to either of the senses. In the way of bathing it is not easy to conceive anything more delightful. For certain diseases - rheumatism especially - there can be no doubt respecting its value as a remedial agent. Many a poor, suffering specimen of humanity whose case had been pronounced hopeless by the medical faculty, has found relief, and in many instances perfect cure, at this modern Siloam.⁶²

Two years later, in praising the baths a visitor mentioned another aspect, for having 'indulged in a hot mineral spring bath, and felt a wonderful lightness and freshness after it ... for the rest of the day a bouquet of sulphur, lucifer matches, and bad eggs pervaded my senses'.⁶³

ANALYSING THE CURATIVE WATERS

A visiting journalist noted in mid-1886 that an octagonal building had been 'erected over one of the springs, which is solely used for drinking purposes. Drinking the hot water is recommended by medical men and cups are provided at each tap and drinking spring'.⁶⁴ Not until the previous year was an analysis of the water published, by James Alexander Pond, Colonial Analyst.⁶⁵ He had been asked to conduct tests to determine 'the special properties of each bath' and so assist those wanting to know which spring

⁶¹ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Bay of Plenty Times*, 25 November 1880, p. 2.

⁶² 'A Correspondent at Te Aroha', *Thames Advertiser*, 21 February 1881, p. 3.

⁶³ *Star* (Christchurch), 24 October 1883, p. 3.

⁶⁴ Special Correspondent, 'Notes of a Trip to Te Aroha', *Thames Star*, 24 June 1886, p. 2.

⁶⁵ See paper on his life.

was ‘most suitable for their particular ailment’.⁶⁶ After sampling two baths and the hot spring used for drinking, he reported that ‘the waters were all feebly alkaline, and strongly charged with carbonic acid gas’, otherwise carbon dioxide. All the springs were very similar in composition, and

exceedingly interesting, and will prove of great value medicinally. They closely resemble some of the European mineral springs, so justly celebrated; more especially those of Vichy, Ems, and Fachingen. Their curative value will be greatest in rheumatic and arthritic diseases, calculus, affections of the kidneys, and dyspepsia.

He had detected 13 minerals in varying quantities, which, the *Te Aroha News* pointed out, made ‘the amount of solids ... unequalled in any of the famous European springs, and the presence of lithia makes the water specially efficacious in the treatment of rheumatic affections. The water contains so large a percentage of soda that the springs are strictly soda springs’.⁶⁷ Professor James Black of Otago University College, who examined the local geology later that year,⁶⁸ confirmed that the water ‘would prove invaluable for rheumatism, sciatica, liver complaint, dyspepsia, etc’.⁶⁹ In January 1887, James Hector⁷⁰ analyzed 18 mineral springs and produced an equally enthusiastic report. In general, the springs were ‘remarkably similar to each other’, all bar two being ‘decidedly alkaline’ and ‘heavily charged with carbonate of soda’. They were ‘similar to the waters of Vichy and Chandesaignes, in France; Bilia, Bohemia; Ems, Nassay, and are besides quite equal to them in strength’.⁷¹ A tourist guide published that year described the waters as ‘quite equal in potency to those

⁶⁶ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 10 February 1885, p. 3.

⁶⁷ *Te Aroha News*, 30 May 1885, p. 3; correction concerning chloride of sodium on p. 2.

⁶⁸ See paper on the geology of the Te Aroha Mining District.

⁶⁹ *Waikato Times*, 15 December 1885, p. 2.

⁷⁰ See *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 1, pp. 176-177.

⁷¹ *Te Aroha News*, 15 January 1887, p. 2, 22 January 1887, Supplement, p. 5; see also James Hector, ‘The Mineral Waters of New Zealand’, *New Zealand Official Year-Book, 1896* (Wellington, 1896), pp. 424, 427-428.

of Rotorua and the other health resorts'.⁷² By 1895, seven of the springs were used as baths, two had drinking fountains, and nine were unused.⁷³

In 1907, the government balneologist produced a detailed account of the medicinal properties of the water,

The thermal waters may be classed as muriated alkaline.... The amount of salts in solution is very considerable; and the waters, being free from that fault of so many New Zealand springs, a large excess of silica, are fully equal to, and, indeed, in many respects surpass, the most celebrated of the alkaline waters of Europe.

In addition to the very large quantities of bicarbonate of sodium, the presence of considerable amounts of the chloride and sulphate gives these springs additional therapeutic properties of considerable value, and brings them into closer relationship with their European prototypes.... At Vichy, Ems, Vals, and Royat – to take four famous examples – certain of the springs contain an appreciable quantity of chloride of lithium; and in the recently opened-up Spring No. 22 the same salts have been found in closely similar amounts.

It is probable that this trace of lithium may have some definite therapeutic properties, rendering the waters all the more suitable in gouty cases. The iron, though only present in small quantities, is yet in the easily assimilable form of ferrous bicarbonate; and certain springs, such as Nos. 20 and 22, should be valuable in cases of anaemia associated with feeble digestion....

Though the waters are certainly not purgative in the ordinary sense of the word, yet the sodium-sulphate in solution tends to help their general laxative effect in certain individuals, and assists the action of the other salts....

In addition to the thermal springs, there are two cold ones deserving of more than a passing mention; these are No. 20, known as the "Iron Spring," and No. 21, the "Magnesia Spring," both used for drinking purposes. No. 20 is a small spring ... constituting an ideal water for mild cases of anaemia.... The waters of No. 21 are ... invaluable in many cases of dyspepsia, especially when stronger waters are ... not well tolerated. The

⁷² H.H. Hayr and Co., *Hayr's Tourist Guide to the Hot Lakes of New Zealand, Wairakei Geysers, Waitakerei and Huka Falls, and Te Aroha and Waiwera Hot Springs, Wangerei Caves, Etc* (Auckland, 1887), p. 47.

⁷³ Prize-winning essay by Bertha Wild, aged 13, printed in *Te Aroha News*, 16 November 1895, p. 2.

only drawback of the water is the somewhat high percentage of silica present.⁷⁴

In 1911, radioactivity was tested, the cold springs proving to have much more than the hot ones.⁷⁵ The 1913 geological survey provided several tables listing the composition of each spring.⁷⁶ The geologists noted the very considerable differences in the chemistry of the cold springs, all 'the more remarkable when the contiguity of some of the springs is considered'. These springs were 'influenced by the rainfall, and their temperatures vary with the season'. In contrast, the warm springs 'closely resemble each other in the percentage composition of their salts'.⁷⁷ The geologists confidently assumed that 'all the warm springs' were 'fed from a common source' with 'a constant composition'.⁷⁸

There are two systems of springs at Te Aroha. The cold springs are of more superficial origin than the hot, and probably derive their waters from the zone of weathering. The waters of the hot springs at Te Aroha, on the other hand, are derived from a deeper and more extensive drainage-system, the waters of which have great masses of rock to leach, and the springs are thus able to maintain a constant flow, temperature, and saline-content for relatively long periods.⁷⁹

In 1914, the government balneologist, in publishing further details, commented that while Rotorua was 'essentially a bathing-resort, Te Aroha' was 'especially a place for drinking the waters'.⁸⁰ He provided suggestions about which springs were suitable for which complaint,⁸¹ warning that

⁷⁴ Herbert A. Stanley and A.S. Wohlmann, *The Mineral Waters and Health Resorts of New Zealand* (Wellington, 1907), pp. 60-61.

⁷⁵ Henderson and Bartrum, pp. 30-31.

⁷⁶ Henderson and Bartrum, pp. 32-35, 42-43.

⁷⁷ Henderson and Bartrum, p. 40.

⁷⁸ Henderson and Bartrum, p. 41.

⁷⁹ Henderson and Bartrum, p. 45.

⁸⁰ Arthur S. Wohlmann, *Mineral Waters and Spas of New Zealand* (Wellington, 1914), p. 104.

⁸¹ Wohlmann, pp. 105-108.

‘young, thin, asthenic subjects,⁸² in fact grave cases generally, should not be sent to Te Aroha’.⁸³

In 1930, another government balneologist gave details of the pharmacoecological benefit of these ‘absolutely unrivalled drinking-waters’. The hot sodium bicarbonate springs (Nos. 8 and 15) for which Te Aroha was ‘justly celebrated’ were the ones chiefly used.⁸⁴ He gave ‘essential’ rules for drinking:

- (a) The waters must be taken “on an empty stomach” - i.e., two hours before or after a meal, or, preferably, in the morning, at least an hour before breakfasting.
- (b) To obtain the correct reactions and proper ingestion of the waters, they should be sipped quite slowly, with a five-minute pause between tumblers.
- (c) Not more than three tumblersful – i.e., a pint and a half – should be taken at one time.⁸⁵

In a 1956 leaflet, his descriptions of the waters were repeated word-for-word, but 0.04 parts per 100,000 of arsenic was noted for the first time, but not included in the composition of the drinking water.⁸⁶ In the 1980s closer examination of the drinking water revealed a trace of arsenic, and for a time the drinking fountain was plugged to prevent people drinking from it.

Many had faith in the curative powers of the water. A detailed report written for the Auckland press in 1887 gave details of the benefits to be gained from drinking from the main springs. No. 2 bath was the main one for relieving rheumatism. No. 15 spring was ‘largely used for drinking, and I noticed it being carried away in cans for domestic use’. No. 8 was known as the drinking fountain, being ‘freely used by those suffering from dyspepsia, etc’; it reputedly provided ‘great relief to many’. Water from No. 17, another cold spring, was applied ‘in cases of eye affections’.⁸⁷ In 1888 a visitor was told that the baths were ‘very valuable for remedial purposes’ and the number of cures was ‘very great’. Warm soda water from one spring

⁸² Asthenia = ‘loss of strength, debility’: *Concise Oxford Dictionary* (Oxford, 5 ed., 1964), p. 70.

⁸³ Wohlmann, p. 108.

⁸⁴ Dr J.D.C. Duncan, ‘The Te Aroha Spa’, *Te Aroha and the Fortunate Valley*, p. 219.

⁸⁵ *Te Aroha Spa: Famous health resort* (Te Aroha, c.1937), [p. 12].

⁸⁶ ‘Te Aroha’s Mineral Drinking Waters’, 28 August 1956, Te Aroha Library.

⁸⁷ Special Reporter, *Auckland Weekly News*, 30 July 1887, p. 29.

was ‘much prized for its curative properties’.⁸⁸ No. 8 spring was regarded as the best hot soda water in New Zealand and in 1894 a visitor noted that ‘everyone’ says it was ‘good for you. In fact some enthusiast or other has labelled the pump in characters now fast fading, “the Doctors’ Enemy” ’.⁸⁹ As an example of this belief, engineer Alfred Price of Thames, a quiet Scotsman not normally given to extravagance,⁹⁰ when on a trip to England in 1903 took ‘a hundred dozen of Te Aroha waters. Such is faith’.⁹¹ A visitor in 1885 wrote that ‘the hot water fountain, the medicinal properties of which are said to be infallible in removing dyspepsia, indigestion and such-like complaints, is one of the striking features of the place. The water of this miraculous spring is imbibed in large quantities by visitors’.⁹² The two drinking springs, Nos. 8 and 15, reportedly differing as much as 30 degrees in temperature, cured different ailments, and whereas No. 8 relaxed the bowels, No. 15 confined them.⁹³ Some people visited ‘solely for the purpose of imbibing the health giving waters’.⁹⁴

By the 1950s, further investigation had determined that the alkaline water from Nos. 8 and 15 should be drunk for gastric catarrh and hyperacidity, gallstones, nasal and pharyngeal catarrh, and ‘after certain internal operations’. The magnesium water from No. 21 was for dyspepsia, chronic gout, mild types of anaemia, and general debility. The alkaline water from No. 1 treated indigestion and flatulent dyspepsia, while the chalybeate waters from No. 20 cured anaemic conditions.⁹⁵

At least some doctors recommended the water, usually for bathing. One doctor who visited in 1885 agreed that they cured ‘rheumatism and paralysis’.⁹⁶ An unnamed German professor who tested the springs in 1906

⁸⁸ A.D. Willis, *Geysers and Gagers; Or, a trip through the boiling springs districts of New Zealand, the wonderland of the world* (Wanganui, 1888), pp. 46, 47.

⁸⁹ Own Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 27 November 1902, p. 32; C.A. Wilkins, ‘In Hot Water: A Little Holiday Jaunt’, *Observer*, 13 January 1894, p. 19.

⁹⁰ See *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 2, p. 863; *Observer*, 9 March 1907, p. 5.

⁹¹ *Observer*, 27 June 1903, p. 7.

⁹² ‘A Visitor’, ‘Te Aroha Hot Springs’, *Waikato Times*, 4 June 1885, p. 2.

⁹³ Alfred Wright, *Te Aroha, New Zealand: A guide for invalids and visitors to the thermal springs and baths* (Te Aroha, 1887), pp. 16-17.

⁹⁴ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Thames Star*, 19 February 1902, p. 4.

⁹⁵ ‘Te Aroha’s Mineral Drinking Waters’ (typescript, 28 August 1956), p. 2, Te Aroha Library.

⁹⁶ *Waikato Times*, 9 April 1885, p. 2.

pronounced them as ‘without exception the most efficacious in the world for all rheumatic affections’.⁹⁷

THE TASTE

An Auckland journalist, writing in November 1880, described the taste of the soda spring as ‘quite as good as some soda that I have tasted in Auckland, and only needs aerating to be of the best quality’.⁹⁸ A Tauranga journalist considered it to be ‘exactly similar to flat soda water’.⁹⁹ Another wrote less enthusiastically that it was ‘not unpleasant to the taste’.¹⁰⁰ The spring most commonly used tasted like ‘hot soda-water’.¹⁰¹ In 1884 the *Te Aroha News* reported that water drunk from two or three of the colder springs had ‘in many instances been found exceedingly beneficial and forms after a little use rather a pleasant beverage. Few persons in search of health now omit to use the water internally as well as externally’.¹⁰² The implication was that it was an acquired taste. One visitor wrote that the ‘first trial’ of the hot water drinking fountain was unfavourable, ‘but after one or two trials he gets to like it, and there is a great raid on this spring for drinking purposes’.¹⁰³ Another wrote of ‘really a very palatable and most exhilarating beverage’.¹⁰⁴ Of the two springs of spa water in use in 1887, one was ‘like soda water’ and the other was so warm that it could ‘only be supped’.¹⁰⁵ Another tourist drank ‘two or three glasses of warm water from one of the springs, and found it very pleasant in flavour and causing no feeling of nausea as ordinary warm water would produce’.¹⁰⁶ Yet another visitor wrote that some people consumed ‘vast quantities of this hot soda’, whose taste was ‘probably acquired’.¹⁰⁷ In contrast, the government

⁹⁷ *Thames Star*, 22 February 1906, p. 2.

⁹⁸ Own Correspondent, *Auckland Star*, 23 November 1880, p. 3.

⁹⁹ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Bay of Plenty Times*, 25 November 1880, p. 2.

¹⁰⁰ *Auckland Weekly News*, 4 December 1880, p. 11.

¹⁰¹ *Auckland Weekly News*, 4 April 1885, p. 7.

¹⁰² *Te Aroha News*, 18 October 1884, p. 2.

¹⁰³ ‘Voz’, ‘A Holiday in Te Aroha’, *Auckland Weekly News*, 24 April 1886, p. 6.

¹⁰⁴ ‘A Visitor’, ‘The Te Aroha Hot Springs’, *Waikato Times*, 4 June 1885, p. 2.

¹⁰⁵ Own Correspondent, ‘Impressions of Te Aroha’, *Auckland Weekly News*, 22 January 1887, p. 8.

¹⁰⁶ Willis, pp. 46-47.

¹⁰⁷ C.A. Wilkins, ‘In Hot Water: A Little Holiday Jaunt’, *Observer*, 13 January 1894, p. 19.

balneologist when testing the water in 1911 described the 'Iron Spring' as 'palatable water' and the 'Magnesia Spring' as 'very palatable, with a faint sweet after-taste resembling very weak lemonade'.¹⁰⁸

Some users preferred to improve the flavour with additives. In October 1880 a correspondent wrote that the cold soda-water spring was mentioned in the visitors' book 'as mixing well with "the excellent 'PB' provided by host O'Halloran" ' of the Hot Springs Hotel, a combination pioneered three years previously.¹⁰⁹ When mixed with spirits the water turned 'quite black'.¹¹⁰ The following story, headed 'Alarming Discovery: A Visitor's Experience', revealed other additives:

An amusing story regarding the Te Aroha mineral waters has been circulated recently. It concerns a certain holiday visitor who made a point of sampling the water from all the better known springs. Daily he visited the Domain, carefully comparing the flavours of each spring. Not being satisfied with the recognised waters, he then essayed to discover new springs on his own. Thus day after day the streams and pools were explored, sounded and tasted till at last the perfect drink was discovered. This was situated in a little dell and burbled invitingly from under a rocky ledge. The astonishing part was that this deliciously flavoured stream was not even labelled and analysed. The discoverer jealously guarded the secret and partook of his find daily. He expounded its virtues to his friends and smacked his lips as he stated that he had never felt so well in all his life since he had been drinking it.

The sequel took place when, as a great favour, he showed the spring to a very close friend, who exclaimed in horrified crescendo:

"But - that is the outlet to the tepid baths!"

Collapse of Blank.

The above story is vouched for as being correct in every detail.¹¹¹

Residents also drank the water regularly, as a visiting reporter noted:

What struck me most on arrival was the excessive bibulous propensities of the residents.... "Come and have a drink" can be frequently heard uttered in the dulcet tones of the ladies, as well

¹⁰⁸ Wohlmann, cited in Henderson and Bartrum, p. 31.

¹⁰⁹ Waitoa Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 19 October 1880, p. 2; *Thames Advertiser*, 10 September 1877, p. 3.

¹¹⁰ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Thames Advertiser*, 25 August 1888, p. 2.

¹¹¹ *Te Aroha News*, 8 January 1930, p. 5.

as in the harsher tones of the male sex. The habit is not confined solely to adults, for even little children indulge very freely. One young lady of tender years admitted having taken several glasses at one time without being any the worse for it. Sunday drinking is carried on to a very great extent, and the authorities, so far from trying to prevent it, connive at it, and encourage the habit as much as possible, as it is an indirect source of revenue to them, and no matter how duty-struck a policeman may be when he goes there, he soon becomes lax in this respect, and, giving way, becomes in a short time as fond of indulging as the rest. As I do not desire to convey a bad impression of the hospitable residents, of Te Aroha, it would be as well to state that the drinking mentioned refers only to the health-giving mineral springs.¹¹²

BOTTLING THE WATER

From the 1880s onwards, attempts were made to create a small industry by bottling the water. In 1885, Edward Peel, a local cordial manufacturer, was the first to do so, but within two months he went bankrupt.¹¹³ His bottled water was reportedly 'very palatable, resembling the manufactured soda water in taste'.¹¹⁴ It had other qualities as well: bottles sent by a local chemist, George Robson,¹¹⁵ to the Wellington Exhibition 'created quite a sensation last night in the Exhibition Buildings. The bottles containing the water kept exploding, to the destruction of all the other bottles near them'.¹¹⁶ Robson had intended to market it as a medicine.¹¹⁷ Later a series of Auckland companies bottled the water, one winning third prize for mineral waters at the Melbourne Centennial Exhibition of 1888.¹¹⁸ Despite this encouragement, and attempts by the

¹¹² Special Reporter, 'Te Aroha and Waiorongomai', *Waikato Times*, 4 October 1888, p. 2.

¹¹³ *Thames Advertiser*, 5 February 1885, p. 2, 1 April 1885, p. 2, 17 November 1885, p. 2.

¹¹⁴ *Thames Advertiser*, 5 February 1885, p. 2.

¹¹⁵ See *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 2, p. 829; *Waikato Times*, 19 August 1882, p. 2, Te Aroha Correspondent, 19 June 1883, p. 2, 10 November 1892, p. 2; *Te Aroha News*, 20 November 1886, p. 3, 22 August 1888, p. 2, 1 July 1905, p. 2, 12 March 1907, p. 2; *Waikato Argus*, 7 February 1912, p. 2.

¹¹⁶ Wellington Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 24 October 1885, p. 20; for George Robson's bottling of the water, see *Waikato Times*, 20 August 1885, p. 3, 27 August 1885, p. 2, 8 June 1886, p. 2.

¹¹⁷ *Auckland Star*, 24 May 1886, p. 1.

¹¹⁸ *Te Aroha News*, 9 March 1889, p. 2.

Chamber of Commerce to interest doctors in Auckland,¹¹⁹ it never proved very popular, although it was sold (sometimes with lemon flavouring) by several different firms until the 1980s, when the discovery that 'Wai Aroha' contained arsenic ended its bottling.¹²⁰

INITIAL IMPROVEMENTS

From the township's beginnings, the springs were 'always coupled with the future prosperity of the place, and spoken of as a source of great comfort and a blessing'.¹²¹ From a Pakeha perspective, the springs in their natural state lacked sophistication. When Frederick Strange and his family visited them in 1876, they knew them as 'the mud holes'.¹²² One visitor recalled that, in the 1870s, 'we had to scramble about amongst the tea-tree' to find them.¹²³ What became a domain landscaped like an English park was 'nothing but flax or ti-tree.... There was no dressing shed, the thick scrub serving this purpose quite satisfactorily'.¹²⁴ A shopkeeper recalled the domain as 'simply a piece of rough swamp.... Anything more desolate you could scarcely imagine'.¹²⁵ In early 1880, therefore, George Stewart O'Halloran, licensee of the adjacent Hot Springs Hotel, decided to encourage visitors to stay by developing them. His advertisement stated that the springs were 'being improved and houses built over them' and that he intended 'to make this the sanatorium of the district'.¹²⁶ Three months later, a hotel guest wrote that O'Halloran had, 'at considerable expense, dug out baths, into which the water is allowed to flow, and erected a small shed in which the bather may dress and undress, and a person can now enjoy a

¹¹⁹ For example, *New Zealand Herald*, 29 January 1914, p. 9.

¹²⁰ *Waikato Times*, 8 June 1886, p. 2; *Te Aroha News*, 10 March 1888, p. 2, Domain Board, 11 December 1889, p. 2; Te Aroha Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 23 June 1894, p. 9, 12 April 1901, p. 26, 15 May 1902, p. 3; advertisement for 'Wai Aroha' in *Observer*, 25 May 1912, p. 18; *Te Aroha News*, 20 September 1979, p. 5; *Observer*, 28 March 1914, p. 9; Murray R. Frost, *Temperance Waters: The story of the aerated water and mineral water factories of Cambridge, Te Awamutu, Te Aroha, and Hamilton* (Hamilton, 1993), p. 23.

¹²¹ *Waikato Times*, 1 March 1883, p. 3.

¹²² *Te Aroha News*, 12 October 1927, Supplement, p. 1.

¹²³ 'Maratuahu', 'Te Aroha: Past and Present', *Auckland Weekly News*, 24 April 1900, p. 45.

¹²⁴ *Te Aroha News*, 14 June 1926, p. 4.

¹²⁵ Letter from John Williams, *Te Aroha News*, 16 May 1911, p. 3.

¹²⁶ *Thames Star*, 29 March 1880, p. 2.

luxurious bath in any weather'.¹²⁷ It was very basic: in October 'primitive structures' had been 'erected over the principal pools'.¹²⁸ The first building was recalled as being a 'rude shed'.¹²⁹ A Waitoa correspondent wrote that, in place of the 'few streamlets of the hot bubbling waters oozing out through the swampy mud, etc', O'Halloran had made

three nice baths in any one of which a most comfortable bath can be had, and water may be brought to any temperature desired by means of letting in or turning off a stream of pure cold water which runs down alongside the warm ones. Over one bath a neat whare has been built, nicely floored, and with seats round it, in which ladies could bathe with comfort and extreme privacy, and other improvements have now been carried on for the increased demand.¹³⁰

Less enthusiastically, one Auckland newspaper reduced the number of baths to two, both being 'in a neglected dirty condition'. There was 'no provision for privacy', no controls over 'for how long or in what manner' they could be used, and soon they would 'become too dirty for anyone to care to use them'. One bath was a 'natural muddy hole'; the other, a few metres away, consisted of a large zinc packing case covered by a small raupo whare.¹³¹ As the packing case had contained a piano belonging to O'Halloran's wife, Frances, the bath was known as the Piano Bath.¹³² A miner recalled that 'the principal bathing-place was situated amongst the scrub on and about the spot known as the No. 2 bath, and was confined within the bounds of an ordinary piano-case. The covering was a rough frame thatched with raupo'. The water was hotter than later on.¹³³ It was soon enlarged to 'about' 12 by six feet.¹³⁴ According to a more detailed recollection, two boys who found the spring that supplied the future No. 6 bath 'dug out a large oblong hole, in which they planted a zinc-lined case'.

¹²⁷ Own Reporter, *Thames Advertiser*, 22 June 1880, p. 3.

¹²⁸ Special Reporter, *Thames Star*, 25 October 1880, p. 2.

¹²⁹ Letter from 'A.B.', *Te Aroha News*, 23 May 1908, p. 2.

¹³⁰ Waitoa Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 19 October 1880, p. 2.

¹³¹ Own Correspondents, 'The Hot Springs at Te Aroha', *New Zealand Herald*, 4 December 1880, p. 5.

¹³² *Te Aroha and the Fortunate Valley*, p. 275.

¹³³ John McCombie, 'Early Days of Te Aroha', *New Zealand Herald*, 2 December 1910, p. 7.

¹³⁴ Recollections of H. Crupp, *Te Aroha News*, 6 December 1937, p. 5.

As the water, 'as it came neat from the spring was too hot to bathe in', they 'reduced it to an agreeable temperature by leading into it a runnel of cold water from a near-by streamlet. The young contractors and their friends spent many a pleasant hour in their improvised bathing-box'.¹³⁵

To prevent the springs being injured by mining, in November 1880 officials excluded the 20-acre reserve from the goldfield.¹³⁶ In late November, an Auckland journalist praised them for providing free baths:

One of the luxuries to be obtained at Te Aroha is to have a warm sulphur bath, and not less to be thought of because it is free gratis, the Government having, with commendable forethought, reserved the springs for public use. There are two baths cut out of the sandstone rock. One is covered in and the other open. The one covered is the warmest, and is occasionally so hot that it would almost scald a pig. The other is cooler, and affords at all times a most refreshing dip.¹³⁷

In December, the *Te Aroha Miner* argued that

a new source of wealth would accrue to the place were steps taken to have the springs properly looked after. The reserve ... might be let to some person who would erect buildings for the convenience of invalids, recouping himself by a small charge.... We do not see the slightest reason in the world why Te Aroha should not be a great sanatorium, as well as a great goldfield.¹³⁸

O'Halloran, it was reported in May 1881, had 'applied over and over again for a lease' to enable him to erect a proper bath-house, but 'red tape' had 'turned up its clerkly nose at him and that good thing amongst others has been choked'.¹³⁹ O'Halloran's own account, written in July, was that when he first arrived in Te Aroha he

¹³⁵ Recollections of Fred Devey, 1930, *Te Aroha and the Fortunate Valley*, p. 275.

¹³⁶ Under-Secretary for Goldfields to Warden, 11 November 1880; Warden to Under-Secretary for Gold Fields, 11 November 1880 (telegrams), Mines Department, MD 1, 12/353, ANZ-W.

¹³⁷ *Auckland Star*, 23 November 1880, p. 3.

¹³⁸ *Te Aroha Miner*, n.d., reprinted in *Waikato Times*, 9 December 1880, p. 2.

¹³⁹ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 21 May 1881, p. 3; see also *Waikato Times*, 14 June 1881, p. 3.

at once saw something could and ought to be done to make this a sanatorium, and offered the Government £50 per annum for the lease of the ground on which the springs were situated, leaving them, if they pleased, to fix a scale of charges for the use of them. Had my offer been accepted I would have laid out the grounds surrounding them in pleasure grounds, and built comfortable bathing rooms.

After a long delay, he was told that the prerequisite for a lease was to erect a large hotel and buildings costing £2,000, a financial impossibility. He sought public support against ‘the noble army of red-tapists’ whom he expected would rob him of his suggestions.¹⁴⁰ As he feared, the Auckland Crown Lands Board declined his application to lease the reserve for £25 a year or to ‘act as curator for the use of the paddocks and one bath’.¹⁴¹ After inviting tenders in March 1882 to lease the reserve for 14 years, the government decided in April to decline all tenders,¹⁴² and instead its development remained a responsibility of government, central or local. On 12 December it was brought within the provisions of the Public Domains Act and members of the Te Aroha Hot Springs Domain Board were appointed; they were all prominent settlers.¹⁴³

Goldfield officials sympathized with the desire to develop the springs, and when in August 1881 the residents subscribed sufficient funds to erect a shed over one spring, the warden, Harry Kenrick, provided the timber previously used as the frame for the ‘government tent’.¹⁴⁴ George Wilson, Inspector of Mines, was to be a member of the domain board from 1884 to 1891, part of the time as its chairman.¹⁴⁵

IMPROVEMENTS IN THE EARLY 1880s

In March 1882, a visitor wrote that ‘the most notable change since my last visit’ was ‘the condition of the baths’. The spring had been covered over, a grating placed on the bottom, and chairs and ‘every possible convenience’

¹⁴⁰ Letter from G.S. O’Halloran, *Thames Advertiser*, 4 July 1881, p. 3.

¹⁴¹ *Waikato Times*, 26 November 1881, p. 2.

¹⁴² *New Zealand Gazette*, 3 March 1882, p. 289; *Thames Advertiser*, 21 March 1882, p. 2, 27 April 1882, p. 3.

¹⁴³ *New Zealand Gazette*, 14 December 1882, pp. 1860-1861, 20 September 1883, p. 1324.

¹⁴⁴ *Thames Advertiser*, 11 August 1881, p. 3.

¹⁴⁵ See paper on his life.

provided.¹⁴⁶ But much remained to be done, especially for women. In January 1883 ‘a lady visitor from Te Aroha’ complained to an Auckland newspaper that the baths were ‘not utilized as they might be’ because there was no building solely for women.¹⁴⁷ Early in 1883 the government gave its first grant, of £500.¹⁴⁸ An enclosed bath was constructed, dressing rooms added, ‘and every comfort provided for the public’. The *Te Aroha News* anticipated that when the whole plan was carried out, visitors would be ‘attracted from many parts of the colony’.¹⁴⁹ There were small charges for private baths, and special hours allotted ‘to accommodate ladies’. The existing covered-in bath remained free.¹⁵⁰ Known as the No. 2 bathhouse, it was the hottest and largest. Often ‘no fewer than eighteen miners disported themselves in it together’.¹⁵¹ Judging from local paper, the residents preferred their baths hot: ‘Why are the Te Aroha people the most unselfish in the world? Because they think more of No. 2 (bath) than of No. 1’.¹⁵²

Also during 1883, the domain was fenced on the township side, a landscape gardener laid off the grounds, and trees and shrubs were planted.¹⁵³ A Thames reporter wrote in December that it was ‘about time ... the authorities saw to the building of a comfortable bathing house’, the structure over the best spring being ‘anything but creditable’.¹⁵⁴ From that year onwards there were regular government grants for improvements, with the conscious intention of attracting tourists and, especially, invalids. In May 1884, when one bathhouse was ‘fitted up extensively for the use of ladies’, there were ‘three separate and distinct bath-houses, which will give sufficient accommodation for many years to come’.¹⁵⁵ ‘A commodious galvanised iron building with all the conveniences for a comfortable dip’ was erected at the northern bath, and an empty weatherboard cottage near the centre of the reserve had hot and cold water piped to it from reservoirs for private baths:

¹⁴⁶ *Thames Advertiser*, 29 March 1882, p. 3.

¹⁴⁷ *Auckland Weekly News*, 13 January 1883, p. 20.

¹⁴⁸ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 15 February 1883, p. 2.

¹⁴⁹ *Te Aroha News*, 28 July 1883, p. 2.

¹⁵⁰ *Waikato Times*, 1 March 1883, p. 3.

¹⁵¹ *Waikato Times*, 5 December 1885, p. 2.

¹⁵² *Te Aroha News*, 11 July 1885, p. 2.

¹⁵³ *Waikato Times*, 10 April 1883, p. 2, 19 June 1883, p. 2.

¹⁵⁴ Special Reporter, ‘A Trip to Te Aroha Goldfield’, *Thames Star*, 10 December 1883, p. 2.

¹⁵⁵ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 17 May 1884, p. 22.

The interior arrangements of the building are of a very complete description. A caretaker has been appointed to keep the baths clean and in order, and a small charge is now made for admission, but no one who prizes comfort and privacy will grudge the trifling fee.¹⁵⁶

In a long article in August 1884 lauding the delights that awaited tourists, the *Te Aroha News* gave full details of the baths:

Every convenience and privacy is now provided for either ladies and gentlemen making use of them. There are three separate bath houses.... No. 1 consists of a plunge bath 10ft by 7ft, by 4ft deep, having a wooden grating on the bottom, and a seat all round with steps at the corners, and is also provided with four recesses partitioned off for dressing, with comfortable raised platform grating in each. A cold shower and bath are also erected in one corner. The building, which is made of corrugated iron, is well ventilated to let out the steam. The temperature of the water in this bath ranges from 90 deg. to 105 deg., a change in the weather or some other cause varies the amount of heat in the springs which supply same. There are two principal springs in this bath which emit a considerable quantity of gas oozing through the apertures of a reef, causing the water to have the appearance of boiling rapidly. This bath is chiefly used by persons who require a dip as a luxury. The other baths having a higher temperature, are used by those troubled with rheumatic complaints.... No. 2 bath house is situated near the southern boundary of the Domain, and contains a plunge bath 10ft x 7ft, and is the same depth as the No. 1 bath. There are four recesses for dressing, and a cold shower is placed in a corner of the building which is not entirely roofed in. The space immediately over the bath itself being covered with wooden bars a few inches apart, the remainder and the dressing boxes are covered with corrugated iron. The temperature of the water in this bath is from 110 deg. to 116 deg., and is found to be most effectual in relieving rheumatic pains when regularly used. No. 3 bath house is the building nearest the main entrance to the Domain, and contains two hot baths in separate rooms and a cold plunge bath and shower in another room. There is also a waiting room near the entrance.... There is also a cold water tap at each bath so that parties using them may reduce the temperature to suit their comfort.... This bath is known as the private baths, and a higher charge is made for admission to it than to the other two. Ladies

¹⁵⁶ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 21 June 1884, p. 3; see also Te Aroha Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 14 June 1884, p. 21.

especially are greatly pleased with the comfort and privacy obtained here.... The charges made for admission into the baths are such as to render them within the reach of every one. Tickets for the plunge baths are sold at 3s per dozen, and for the private baths at 6s per dozen. Family tickets may be procured for £2 2s per annum giving admission into any of the baths, while annual tickets for one person only cost £1 1s.¹⁵⁷

To make them as accessible as possible, baths were open from six o'clock in the morning till ten at night.¹⁵⁸ For those using them in the evening, a resident who arrived in 1883 recalled that 'no lights were provided; it was a case of taking your own candle'.¹⁵⁹ This form of lighting continued for years, and 'streaks of black carbon deposit on the walls bore testimony to the many bathers'.¹⁶⁰

NEW FACILITIES AND INCREASED POPULARITY

The new facilities attracted more visitors, especially during summer; in 1884 1,200 people came from all over the world.¹⁶¹ In January 1885 the domain board resolved to enlarge No. 3 bathhouse to provide five or six additional private baths and to construct another plunge bath, 'much wanted' as Nos. 1 and 2 were 'frequently so thronged that considerable delay' resulted.¹⁶² This plunge bath, for women, had 'a substantial house' erected over it providing comfort and 'perfect privacy'.¹⁶³ Women were not restricted to No. 1 bathhouse; 'at certain prescribed hours' they could use others.¹⁶⁴

In June, 'A Visitor' wrote of their reputation:

Few places of public resort in New Zealand - in the Australian colonies I might say - have sprung into notice and importance, and have proved themselves so deservedly attractive and inviting

¹⁵⁷ *Te Aroha News*, 2 August 1884, p. 2.

¹⁵⁸ *Waikato Times*, 20 April 1886, p. 2, 3 June 1886, p. 2.

¹⁵⁹ T.J. Maingay, 'Local Press', *Te Aroha News*, 14 April 1930, p. 5.

¹⁶⁰ C.T. Harris, 'The Upper Thames Valley', *Te Aroha News*, 15 July 1936, p. 8.

¹⁶¹ Figure given by George Wilson when deputation met the Minister of Lands: *Waikato Times*, 28 May 1885, p. 2.

¹⁶² Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 17 January 1885, p. 2.

¹⁶³ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 21 May 1885, p. 2.

¹⁶⁴ *Auckland Weekly News*, 30 July 1887, p. 29.

in the same brief space of time as the sanatorium which within the past twelve months has sprung into existence at Te Aroha. Two years ago and the Aroha springs were known to very few outside the district in which they were located. They were then looked upon merely as hot water baths by the local public, their valuable curative properties were little known, while Rotorua and Waiwera attracted crowds of people from all parts of the world.... Last summer may be termed the opening season of the Aroha sanatorium, and if the patronage of the past six months may be taken as a criterion of future success, a very short time will suffice to give Te Aroha a widespread reputation. Though at present there is a want of picturesqueness in the vicinity, particularly during wet or breezy weather, when the surroundings are of a character decidedly bleak ... time and expenditure of a few hundreds of pounds will convert the Hot Springs Reserve into one of the most fascinating retreats which the province will afford. The money which the Domain Board gets from the Government has been judiciously spent in the construction of baths, &c, and as the amount has not been very large, the work of ornamentation, such as laying off the grounds, planting and path-forming has been somewhat limited.... The income from the baths last season was very considerable, the return of one week amounting to as much as £13.¹⁶⁵

Two months later, a Te Aroha meeting resolved to form a company with a capital of £5,000 to establish a sanatorium. A provisional committee was appointed, but cannot have found many takers for its £1 shares,¹⁶⁶ for no more was heard of this venture.

To provide the 'picturesqueness' thought to be lacking, in 1885 trees were planted, walks improved, and 'the lower slopes' cleared of fern, ploughed, and laid down in grass. The flat ground was smoothed to create 'a lawn suitable for croquet, tennis and other games', and a carriage drive made from the main entrance. Before summer, 'the former wilderness of fern and ti-tree will have begun to assume the appearance of a smiling garden'.¹⁶⁷

From the start of the year to May, over 1,000 visitors were recorded, and each day from 50 to 60 used the baths.¹⁶⁸ They were enticed by

¹⁶⁵ 'A Visitor', 'The Aroha Hot Springs', *Waikato Times*, 4 June 1885, p. 2.

¹⁶⁶ *Te Aroha News*, 20 August 1887, p. 3.

¹⁶⁷ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 18 July 1885, p. 3.

¹⁶⁸ *Te Aroha News*, 2 May 1885, p. 2.

advertisements and enthusiastic reports in metropolitan newspapers.¹⁶⁹ As an example of how improvements were extolled, in June 1886 a Te Aroha correspondent described the success of the domain board during its two years of existence:

Land has been cleared, sub-soiled, and laid down in grass. Trees and shrubs have been planted, and an ornamental picket fence has been erected along the street boundary. There is a fine lawn-tennis court laid out.... Paths have been formed, and extend their tortuous lengths over the hill-sides through romantic bits of vegetation. A reservoir fed by a water-race has been made at a good elevation, and supplies cold water for the shower-baths in the several bath-houses....

Up to the present time six bath-houses have been erected in different parts of the Domain. Many other springs have been found, where additional bathing places will in time be formed. At the entrance to the ground stands the caretaker's office, where tickets and towels for the baths are procured. No. 1 Bath, by a path to the left, stands a little way up the hill. It is set aside exclusively for ladies, is a clear bubbling pool about 8ft square by 4ft deep, and has a temperature of 104°. A little higher up is the No. 6 bath, a spacious pool, just large enough for a couple of strokes. The temperature is about 108°; the soft influences of the water is very delightful, and after the cooling finish of the cold shower the body feels the effects of the ablutions for hours after. Close to these two baths, a pavilion has just been erected over a spring which supplies a drinking fount, where dyspeptics and others can taste the mineral water.... To the right of the caretaker's office, the path leads to the other baths, the first of which is No. 3, a large building divided by a passage, on each side of which are separate compartments, each with plunge and shower baths. The temperature of No. 3 varies from 100° to 106°. A few yards further up is No. 2 where the temperature is 112°, the highest of all. Two pools have been made in this house, both of which can be used when there are an unusual number of visitors. It is found very efficacious in cases of acute rheumatism and paralysis.... Just above is a spring covered in like a well, which is set aside for drinking purposes. Above this again is No. 4, a square pool of tepid water, its temperature being only between 80° and 90°. No. 5 is situated close to these, and is also a pool with a temperature of 100°, where a delightful bath, followed, as in all the others, by a cool and invigorating shower, may be had. All the baths are opened for use from six in the morning to ten at night, thus enabling anyone who so desires to

¹⁶⁹ For example, advertisement in *New Zealand Herald*, 25 December 1884, p. 3; article by 'Voz' in the same paper reprinted in *Te Aroha News*, 11 April 1885, p. 7.

take a dip two or three times in a day. The quantity of soda and potash with which the baths are all charged impart to the skin a soft, velvety touch. A course of bathing would, and doubtless does improve the complexion, besides removing all impurities from the body.

The conclusion that forces itself upon the mind of an observer is that Te Aroha, in possession of such a valuable inheritance as these springs are, is a very rising place and will become in point of importance to New Zealand and Australia what Baden-Baden, Ems, and Vichy, are to Germany and the Continent of Europe.¹⁷⁰

Later that month, a 'special correspondent' visited the township:

The chief attraction at Te Aroha is the Hot Springs Domain, which is situated near the middle of the town between Whitaker street and the mountain. There are at present six substantial and commodious bath buildings, five of which are built over the hot springs, which are excavated and formed into beautiful baths. The other building, which contains 8 private baths, is not over one spring, but the baths are supplied from a hot water reservoir about 60 or 70 yards distant and higher up on the grounds. The baths have now become famous for their curative properties, many persons afflicted with rheumatism and other complaints receiving relief, and a large number of cures have been effected. The baths are distinguished by numbers – Nos. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6. No. 1 is an iron building, and built over a plunge bath about 10 feet square, the temperature of the water is about 102deg; this bath, which is a favorite, is specially set apart for the use of ladies. No. 2, the hottest plunge bath, is a little larger than No. 1, and the temperature 110degs. This bath is mostly used by persons suffering from rheumatism, and is famous on account of the relief it affords. No. 3, the private bath building, is provided with a waiting room and a cooling room in addition to the eight bath rooms. The temperature of the water is from 100degs up to 115 degs, and cold water taps are provided to each bath, so that any required heat may be obtained; cold showers are also supplied to each bath. No. 4 is a plunge bath, very popular during the summer months, temperature 80 to 90degs. No. 5 is a small plunge bath, and has a temperature of 100degs. No. 6, the largest and best, has a temperature of 104degs, and is the most enjoyable of all the plunge baths. Twelve to twenty individuals may bathe with ease at one time, and private dressing boxes and rooms are now provided. A plentiful supply of cold water is laid on to each of the buildings and furnishes a cold shower to all of them.¹⁷¹

¹⁷⁰ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 3 June 1886, p. 2.

¹⁷¹ Special Correspondent, 'Notes of a Trip to Te Aroha', *Thames Star*, 24 June 1886, p. 2.

In January 1887, James Hector detailed all the springs:

No. 1 Bath is very much used, and is set apart especially for females.

No. 2 Bath is famous for relieving persons suffering from rheumatism; a large building with waiting and dressing rooms attached.

No. 3 is a reservoir of hot water which supplies eight baths in the building 200 feet distant from it. The reservoir contains altogether about 15,000 gallons of water. Three quarters of the water have a temperature of only 90 degrees, but the hot part from which the water is drawn always maintains from 108 to 112 degrees, and is supplied from the outer portion as the hot portion is lowered.

Nos. 4, 5, and 6 are all largely used, and have good buildings erected over the springs.

No. 7 is not much used, although built over,

No. 8 is known as the drinking fountain; the water is freely used by all those suffering from dyspepsia, etc, and affords great relief to many. The fountain is built over the spring, so that the water may be drawn from a tap.

Nos. 9 to 12 are not yet used.

No. 13 spring is run into No. 5 Bath.

Nos. 14 and 15 are run unto the reservoir. No. 15 is largely used for drinking.

No. 17 is a cold spring: the water is used for bathing the eyes.

No. 18 is a cold soda water spring not yet used.

No. 16 is a cold spring with little overflow.¹⁷²

In the year to July about 30,000 baths were taken. As the charges were very moderate (a penny for No. 3, sixpence for No. 2, and fourpence for the other four), residents were, according to an visitor, 'steady devotees' of the baths. 'Go at what hour of the day or evening I liked, ladies and gentlemen were passing to and fro along the paths'.¹⁷³ Residents who paid an annual fee of five shillings had the right to use all the public baths.¹⁷⁴ 'Indigent invalids' including some sent by charitable aid boards, were granted free

¹⁷² *Te Aroha News*, 22 January 1887, Supplement, p. 5.

¹⁷³ Special Reporter, 'A Trip to Te Aroha', *Auckland Weekly News*, 30 July 1887, p. 29.

¹⁷⁴ *Te Aroha and the Fortunate Valley*, p. 275.

baths.¹⁷⁵ When old age pensions were introduced, pensioners could, on application, be admitted for free.¹⁷⁶

A visitor in April 1886 wrote that the domain had

been prettily laid out in walks, etc., a large number of ornamental shrubs, trees, flowers, etc., have been planted out, rustic seats have been placed on suitable hillocks, and in shady nooks all over the grounds; a lawn tennis court has been laid out, is now in good order, and is much used by visitors and others.¹⁷⁷

Hundreds of trees were planted, some during the Queen's Jubilee celebrations in 1887.¹⁷⁸ They included oaks, white spruce, totara and puriri, but a visitor complained that the centre of the grounds was 'thickly planted with pinus insignis', which in a few years would 'effectually obscure the view, thereby depriving the visitors admiring at leisure the magnificent tract of country'.¹⁷⁹ (Seven years later a correspondent reported that felling the pine trees around the bandstand had 'greatly' improved that part of the domain, and recommended that all pines in its lower portion be removed, 'as they are spoiling the shrubs near them, and are splendid shelter for the mosquitoes'.)¹⁸⁰ A reporter gave further details of the domain and its possibilities:

The area at present fenced in is 20 acres, and there is a further reserve up the slopes of the mountain of 45 acres, including the natural forest growth, which is thus preserved from destruction, and forms one of the attractions and beauties of the locality.... A lawn tennis ground is provided, apparatus for maypole dances for the youngsters, while in the summer evenings the Te Aroha Brass Band renders musical selections.... The grounds are yet a little in the rough, but as means are placed at the disposal of the Board they intend to effect further improvements. From their conformation they could be made very beautiful, while the

¹⁷⁵ *Te Aroha News*, 21 September 1889, p. 2; *Auckland Weekly News*, 15 October 1892, p. 23; *Te Aroha Gazette*, 7 December 1888, press cutting in Tourist Department, TO 1, 1891/198, ANZ-W.

¹⁷⁶ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 12 April 1901, p. 26.

¹⁷⁷ 'Voz', 'A Holiday at Te Aroha', *Auckland Weekly News*, 24 April 1886, p. 6.

¹⁷⁸ *Waikato Times*, 27 July 1886, p. 2; *Te Aroha News*, 25 June 1887, p. 2.

¹⁷⁹ *Te Aroha News*, 25 June 1887, p. 2; 'Rambler', 'Te Aroha and Rotorua Thermal Baths', *Auckland Weekly News*, 15 October 1887, p. 8.

¹⁸⁰ Te Aroha Correspondent, *New Zealand Herald*, 8 November 1894, p. 6.

altitude of the reservoir would admit of ornamental fountains playing on the lawn. Among other improvements it is contemplated, as soon as funds will permit, to construct winding paths up the spur of the mountain overhanging the baths, on the top of which is a plateau of some four or five acres, backed by the natural forest growth adjacent. The visitors will, from their coign of vantage, thus obtain a magnificent and unrivalled view of the valley of the Thames and adjoining country, as well as, in the summer time, be able to avail themselves of the grateful shade of the New Zealand forest.¹⁸¹

In 1892, rooms were constructed in which people could 'recline, after taking the baths' in bathhouses 1 and 2.¹⁸² Two years later a swimming pool was constructed.¹⁸³ After years of complaints about the lack of a reading room, in 1894 a new building included 'a warm room in which to rest before or after bathing. The leading newspapers will be filed, and a library of books by the best authors provided'. As it was 40 by 30 feet and included a ticket-office, boardroom, and a ladies' waiting room, the reading room cannot have been as commodious as claimed.¹⁸⁴ Six years later it was referred to as 'a nice little reading-room'.¹⁸⁵

In July 1895, a Waikato newspaper praised the domain and its facilities:

The members of the Domain Board neglect no opportunity of furthering the interest of the institutions committed to their charge, and they have been wisely and generously supported in their work by the Government. The original domain area has been kept in excellent order, and pains have been taken to heighten the effect of its native charm wherever possible. At this time of year, when the deciduous trees are bare, the pampas grass may appear a little profuse, but in summer time it affords a pleasant relief to the rich greens, and adds much to the brightness of moonlit evenings.

The most noticeable addition to the Domain is the fine building at the entrance, which contains the Board room, the caretaker's

¹⁸¹ Own Reporter, 'A Trip to Te Aroha', *Auckland Weekly News*, 30 July 1887, p. 29.

¹⁸² Te Aroha Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 28 May 1892, p. 23.

¹⁸³ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 1 September 1894, p. 10, 8 December 1894, p. 23; Te Aroha Correspondent, *New Zealand Herald*, 8 November 1894, p. 6.

¹⁸⁴ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 19 May 1894, p. 22, 8 September 1894, p. 23, 8 December 1894, p. 23.

¹⁸⁵ 'Maratuahu', 'Te Aroha: Past and Present', *Auckland Weekly News*, 24 April 1900, p. 10.

offices, a ladies' waiting room, and the large reading room and library. The latter contains at present about 800 volumes, the use of which is free to visitors, and may be availed of by the residents on payment of a small annual subscription, the proceeds of which are to be devoted to the purchase of new books and papers. The new cold swimming bath, which was got ready for use during the past season, is situated near the southern boundary of the Domain, not far from No. 3 (private) Bath, and is admirably adapted for the purpose for which it was constructed. The bath, which is constructed of concrete, is 63 feet in length by 33 feet wide, with a sloping bottom giving a depth of water varying from 3 feet to 7 feet, which can when repaired be increased to from 5 feet to 9 feet. It is surrounded by a lofty corrugated iron fence, and is provided with all the necessary conveniences in the shape of dressing rooms, &c. This is a popular place of resort during summer, as affording a means of cold bathing to those who for various reasons were not inclined to use the river.¹⁸⁶

Two years later, a matter 'exercising the minds of Te Arohaites' was 'the decreased temperature of No. 2 bath since the so-called improvement works were commenced in its vicinity', probably owing 'to the tapping of some of the hot springs' feeding it.¹⁸⁷ Residents blamed the co-operative labourers whose lack of local knowledge was blamed for tapping some of the principal hot springs and thereby lowering the temperature in this bath 'considerably' and stopping the flow into the private baths.¹⁸⁸ This change was not permanent.

IMPROVEMENTS BY THE TURN OF THE CENTURY

By 1898, 18 springs, 15 of which were hot or tepid, were tapped, and seven bathhouses were in use, along with a 'summer-house, with fountain, providing the mineral water for internal use'.¹⁸⁹ That year saw the opening of the Cadman bathhouse, the more elegant building to be erected. 'Of the Swiss chalet style of architecture', it contained 19 bathrooms as well as

¹⁸⁶ *Waikato Advocate*, 6 July 1895, reprinted in *Auckland-Waikato Historical Journal*, no. 77 (April 2001), p. 25.

¹⁸⁷ 'Twinkler', 'Te Aroha Notes', *Thames Advertiser*, 20 August 1897, p. 3; see also 21 August 1897, p. 3.

¹⁸⁸ *Thames Advertiser*, 21 August 1897, p. 3.

¹⁸⁹ James Hector, 'The Mineral Waters of New Zealand', *New Zealand Official Year-Book, 1896* (Wellington, 1896), p. 427.

'ladies' and gentlemen's waiting rooms, handsomely fitted up'. Instead of 'the old style of wooden baths', the new ones were 'of strong earthenware, heavily enamelled, and four of them are sunk to the floor level so that invalids can get out and in without any unnecessary trouble'.¹⁹⁰ The *Te Aroha News* wanted still more: 'A floating swimming bath', unexplained, 'would be a decided acquisition as well as a great attraction for visitors'.¹⁹¹

Work was still needed on the grounds, which were of lower priority. A gardening correspondent who had visited earlier that year commented that little had been done to make the gardens attractive, although there was 'a splendid lawn partly surrounded with weeping willows', beneath whose 'capital shade' visitors might 'spend their spare time pleasantly'.¹⁹² In April, there were grumbles about the state of the pools and the hours of opening being restricted, which the *Te Aroha News* considered to be unfair on the staff who had to clean up after patrons. 'In addition to this we remember that not infrequently they had to dance attendance as far into the night as 11 o'clock owing to the difficulty experienced in routing some tenacious occupants from their baths'. Keeping in mind 'such formidable and heavily subsidised rivals in the field as Rotorua and Okoroire, the strides in recent years which our springs have made in favor are little short of phenomenal', and largely due to the proven medical efficacy of the water. Restricting the hours of opening would permit the staff to keep the baths clean. The newspaper objected that describing them as filthy betrayed 'either ignorance of the meaning of the word, or a tendency to splenetic exaggeration which can only weaken criticism', for the floors were usually 'as clean as the decks of an English man-of-war'.¹⁹³ A resident who had lived in the district for 14 or 15 years agreed that claims of uncleanliness, raised for the first time ever, were unjustified.¹⁹⁴ 'A Casual Visitor' noted 'a considerable deal of friction simmering' about 'the closing hours, as well as the alleged untidy state in which the baths, etc, are kept'. He took 'an occasional dip, and considering the cut up and rutted state of the paths it must entail an enormous amount of labour on the attendants to keep things

¹⁹⁰ *Auckland Weekly News*, 28 May 1898, p. 36; for photographs and details of the opening ceremony, see *New Zealand Graphic*, 4 June 1898, pp. 697-699.

¹⁹¹ *Te Aroha News*, n.d., cited in *Thames Advertiser*, 3 December 1898, p. 2.

¹⁹² 'Hortus', 'Te Aroha', *Auckland Star*, 12 February 1898, p. 3; reprinted in *Te Aroha News*, 17 February 1898, p. 2.

¹⁹³ Editorial, *Te Aroha News*, 16 April 1898, p. 2.

¹⁹⁴ Letter from 'Octagon', *Te Aroha News*, 23 April 1898, p. 2.

are they are'. He considered the grumbles were a 'storm in a teacup', and suggested that 'a competent landscape gardener' be employed 'to lay out the Domain, keep his plans in the office and carry them out in detail just as the funds' permitted.¹⁹⁵ Another visitor, who had first experienced the hot pools in 1871 and was revisiting after an absence of ten years, considered the grumbles about the board's management to be 'unfounded and unworthy of notice'. Limiting the hours of opening on Sunday was 'a step in the right direction', but thought the hours should be limited further 'for the comfort of' the staff. Charges of uncleanness could not be sustained, and when the current work was completed 'much more will be affected in the way of beautifying the Domain'. He hoped the government would provide additional finance to speedily complete the work.

It should not be potted over but should be done at once. I must confess, when I arrived here ten days ago, there was a feeling of disappointment that so much should remain to be done after all these years. But there seems little to complain of when we consider that Te Aroha residents have not contributed any funds, and that it is only at a comparatively recent date that Government has recognized the justice and necessity of placing the Domain Board in such a position that it will soon be able to stand alone as a self-supporting institution.¹⁹⁶

Once the bathhouse named after him was constructed, Cadman arranged for a landscape gardener to develop the gardens.¹⁹⁷ With the completion of the railway to Thames, the arrival of more visitors required the driving of a tunnel to tap more hot water, and the most popular bath, No. 6, was enlarged.¹⁹⁸

IMPROVEMENTS DURING THE EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY

In 1900, the tennis court was 'thoroughly furnished'.

There is a neat band-stand, from which a good band discourses music on certain afternoons. The beautiful lawn in front of the

¹⁹⁵ Letter from 'A Casual Visitor', *Te Aroha News*, 26 April 1898, p. 2.

¹⁹⁶ Letter from Albert J. Allom, *Te Aroha News*, 26 April 1898, p. 2.

¹⁹⁷ *Te Aroha News*, 14 May 1898, p. 2.

¹⁹⁸ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 6 January 1899, p. 10, 8 September 1899, p. 23.

new building is a rest and a refreshment to the eye. A commencement has just been made with the construction of a large bowling-green, which ... will accommodate 64 players.¹⁹⁹

Over the protests of some visitors, to protect the lawns willows were removed and replaced with other trees.²⁰⁰ Two years later, a major reconstruction of three of the main bathhouses was planned, along with other improvements.²⁰¹ This survey of the development of the domain ends with the government in January 1903 taking control out of the hands of the board, to the latter's delight because it had been inadequately funded.²⁰²

With increased funding, the baths were run more successfully,²⁰³ and although no more buildings were erected, there was more landscaping. In 1936, boring for an increased supply of hot water unintentionally created a new tourist attraction. Water poured from the bore at a rate of just under 1,000 gallons an hour, and, when the side outlet of the bore was closed, surged to a height of nearly 50 feet at approximately 20-minute intervals; a geyser had started,²⁰⁴ which continues to spout at regular intervals.

SPECIAL PROVISION FOR NGATI RAHIRI

In developing the domain, the interests of its original owners had not been forgotten. Residents felt gratitude that Mokena Hou and his family had agreed that the springs become a public reserve. A history of the district published in 1930 recalled that, under this arrangement, 'it was specially provided that a certain valued bath should be reserved for the use

¹⁹⁹ 'Maratuahu', 'Te Aroha: Past and Present', *Auckland Weekly News*, 24 April 1900, p. 10; see also *Te Aroha News*, 17 February 1900, p. 2.

²⁰⁰ Letters from 'A Frequent Visitor' and W.C.W., *New Zealand Herald*, 9 July 1900, p. 7; Te Aroha Correspondent, 'The Te Aroha Domain', *New Zealand Herald*, 13 July 1900, p. 7.

²⁰¹ Own Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 27 November 1902, p. 32.

²⁰² *Auckland Weekly News*, 25 September 1902, p. 25, Te Aroha Correspondent, 9 October 1902, p. 32, Te Aroha Correspondent, 11 December 1902, p. 34, Te Aroha Correspondent, 26 March 1903, p. 33.

²⁰³ For example, see *Observer*, 26 December 1903, p. 7; Te Aroha Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 22 September 1904, p. 37.

²⁰⁴ *Te Aroha News*, 6 November 1936, p. 4; *New Zealand Herald*, 14 November 1936, p. 14.

of Maori.²⁰⁵ In 1885 ‘a large bath’ was built and reserved for Maori, ‘by whom, after a recent remarkable cure of one of their number’, it was ‘likely to be held in high esteem’.²⁰⁶ In 1886, the board set aside £55 to erect baths for them.²⁰⁷ When, in 1889, it was suggested that an invalid seeking a sulphur bath should use No. 7 bathroom in the No. 3 bathhouse, which had a separate outside door and was quite distinct from the baths used by the public, the following exchange took place with Charles Ahier,²⁰⁸ secretary of the board:

Mr [George] Lipsey²⁰⁹ to Mr Ahier: I wish to tell you, Sir, once for all, I consider that number seven bathroom is reserved for the use of the natives, and even if they are Maoris they must have some sort of consideration. They gave the springs to the Government for the use of the public, and none have a better right than they to have a room specially reserved for their use, where they can go and bathe when they like, with a separate entrance quite to themselves. No. 7 bathroom was set apart for them a long time ago, and now you suggest that persons with skin diseases be allowed to use it as well. Surely it is not because the bath has been set apart for the Maoris that such a thing is to be introduced there.

Mr Ahier: I did not know that bathroom was reserved for the use of Maoris.

Chairman: My goodness, I don’t know how that could have escaped your memory Mr Ahier: its been reserved for the natives for years.

Mr Ahier: Oh, I didn’t know.²¹⁰

At the next meeting it was proposed that, because of the reconstruction of No. 3 bathhouse, a new and larger bath be built for Maori at the Sulphur Spring. The chairman said that they had to provide ‘as hot a bath as possible, else they do not care about it’. Another member said that ‘they would be more comfortable’ in their new bath.

²⁰⁵ *Te Aroha and the Fortunate Valley*, p. 273.

²⁰⁶ *Waikato Times*, 21 May 1885, p. 2; *Te Aroha News*, 30 May 1885, p. 3; see also *Te Aroha News*, 13 February 1886, p. 2.

²⁰⁷ *Waikato Times*, 8 June 1886, p. 3.

²⁰⁸ See *Te Aroha Correspondent*, *Auckland Weekly News*, 11 November 1893, p. 23, 23 December 1893, p. 22; *Taranaki Daily News*, 23 January 1919, 4.

²⁰⁹ See paper on his life.

²¹⁰ Domain Board, *Te Aroha News*, 11 December 1889, p. 2.

They would certainly have a much better room than they have at present and they could have the sole use of it. I think the natives should have every consideration shown them in this matter. They gave the springs for public use, and the least we can do is to provide them with a good bath to be reserved entirely for their own use. The present bath kept for them is very small. I would like to see a good roomy bath and bathroom erected for them under the same roof as the one for using the water for the Sulphur Springs; but with separate entrance and approach, and in fact quite distinct in every way; beyond being under the same roof.²¹¹

Although this might suggest a form of apartheid, before this improved pool was built approval had been obtained from George Lipsey, who had married Mokena Hou's daughter and was a spokesman for Ngati Rahiri.²¹² Although there was never any suggestion of banning Maori from using other pools, there may have been a ban imposed by Ngati Rahiri on other Maori using their special pool. In 1927, Lipsey's eldest son, Akuhata or Augustus,²¹³ told the local newspaper that when the domain had been given to the government by his grandfather, Mokena Hou, 'the only stipulation was that the freedom of the springs and baths was to be granted to the members of his family. The privilege did not extend to all natives'. The newspaper responded that 'the wider interpretation given' was 'creditable to the controlling powers and any contracting of privileges would be opposed to the feeling of to-day'.²¹⁴

The implication of Augustus Lipsey's reference to the 'freedom of the springs' was that there was no charge for No. 7 bath, and indeed that was the original arrangement, according to one early settler, William Hetherington.²¹⁵ He stated that when Mokena Hou was induced to give the springs to the government, he agreed 'on condition' that Maori 'were allowed free baths'.²¹⁶ At an 1885 meeting at Thames between John Ballance, Native Minister, and Hauraki Maori, one rangatira, Aihi

²¹¹ Domain Board, *Te Aroha News*, 18 December 1889, p. 2.

²¹² See paper on his life.

²¹³ See paper on his life.

²¹⁴ *Te Aroha News*, 28 October 1927, p. 4.

²¹⁵ See *Te Aroha News*, 29 November 1933, p. 1, 6 January 1941, p. 1.

²¹⁶ *Te Aroha News*, 26 October 1927, p. 5.

Pepene,²¹⁷ complained that Maori were being charged, thereby ‘overriding the original agreement’, which he admitted was ‘only a verbal one’.²¹⁸ Ballance responded that the small charge

only applied to some of the springs; the other are free to all. Then, in the case when the charge is made, no distinction is made between the Europeans and the Natives. The charge is a very trifling one, and has been put on simply to pay the cost of the improvements which have been made. The springs have been enclosed and made private for those who use and enjoy them. Why should the Natives therefore refuse to pay a small sum when the Europeans are willing? I hope they will look at this matter in a reasonable light, and see that what has been done is a very reasonable and fair thing. I do not agree with him that the agreement has been broken. They are open to everybody. The charge that has been made is only to recoup the cost which has been incurred in improving the springs which attract people to the district, and really enhance the value of the land which belongs to the Natives.²¹⁹

Ngati Rahiri therefore could either pay for the public baths, like everyone else, or use their own special one for free. No. 7 bathhouse, built in 1889, had two rooms, each with a wooden bath measuring six feet by two and a half feet and two feet deep; one of these rooms was ‘used as a free bath’ for Maori.²²⁰ Some Maori felt it was too cool, and in 1895 the Under-Secretary for Lands asked the board ‘for separate bath for natives, same temperature as No. 2. The Clerk was instructed to reply that the natives are already provided for and [facilities] cannot be improved’.²²¹ In the 1920s, a porcelain bath was installed, water being piped in from a different spring; at an unknown date, this bathhouse ceased to be used.²²² The Waitangi Tribunal considered that ‘the provision of such a limited facility as a single small bath at spring 7, a tepid spring which was no longer flowing

²¹⁷ See paper on his life.

²¹⁸ *AJHR*, 1885, G-1, p. 37.

²¹⁹ *AJHR*, 1885, G-1, p. 39.

²²⁰ G. Kenny to Superintendent of Tourism, 25 March 1904, Tourist Department, TO 1, 01/121/26, ANZ-W.

²²¹ Domain Board, *Te Aroha News*, 9 October 1895, p. 2.

²²² Waitangi Tribunal, *Hauraki Report*, p. 926.

by the early 1900s, is a minimal acknowledgement of traditional Maori possession of a valued geothermal resource'.²²³

DEFECTS AND CRITICISMS

In 1885, a 'patient' described the 'somewhat ingenious contrivance' provided in No. 2 bathhouse for those with advanced stages of rheumatism:

The contrivance is on the bier principle, and is suspended from a hole in the roof by a block and tackle. The framework is very strong, the ropes ditto, and the whole thing is suggestive of an arrangement for the interment of dead horses. There is a windlass outside, by which the concern is lowered and elevated, but how the patient is shipped and unshipped is perhaps the most perplexing feature of the problem. The whole arrangement is suggestive of his being let down through the roof. The man at the windlass must not be one of those fellows who drink, for if he were not careful the patient might have a very bad time of it. No. 2 bath is very hot, and ordinary mortals generally go into it lawyer fashion, by degrees. But according to this device the unfortunate patient has no such choice, and an additional half turn of the windlass would put him sufficiently far under water to enable him to dispense with remedies for a very long time. To many who have visited the baths of late the whole concern is like a Chinese puzzle suspended in mid-air for the contemplation of bathers. The whole thing is primitive in the extreme, and it is a matter of very great surprise that such an original and intelligent body as the Aroha Domain Board has not been able to devise something more comprehensive and less ungainly than this positively ridiculous contrivance.²²⁴

Seven years later, an unhappy visitor wrote a tirade in the visitors' book:

The baths called private are a disgraceful misnomer, a lady is expected to go into one of these boxes, with perhaps a larrikin admiring her over the wall. It is shameful that these places should not be ceiled, the woodwork round the baths is sodden, and unclean to the feet, the whole arrangements and surroundings form a grotesque insult to the simple majesty of the natural phenomena, and a lamentable illustration of want of taste & sense.

²²³ Waitangi Tribunal, *Hauraki Report*, p. 930.

²²⁴ Letter from 'Patient', *Waikato Times*, 6 June 1885, p. 3.

After referring to the buildings as barns, ‘Cowsheds and Predifices’ (presumably a ‘pre-edifice’ was a primitive structure that did not deserve the name ‘edifice’), he complained about ‘people being attracted by fulsome descriptions to frauds of the nature of this’.²²⁵ The chairman of the board, in quoting this outburst to the Minister of Lands, agreed that the private baths needed ceilings, that most baths needed repairs, and that visitors needed a place to shelter in wet weather. The boardroom, ‘simply a shanty about 12 x 10 unlined unceiled, and no fireplace’, was ‘exceedingly uncomfortable in Winter’.²²⁶ The following year, the ‘deservedly popular’ caretakers were dismissed and control was transferred from the domain board to the town board.²²⁷ Subsequently, the *Observer* Man criticised the running of the baths. ‘Didn’t someone have to help the caretaker bail out No. 6 bath with buckets because they couldn’t let the water off the proper way? Does that come of putting the proper men out of their billet?’²²⁸ It warned that residents must ensure their baths were run in a proper fashion or Rotorua would get the trade, and referred to ‘great dissatisfaction amongst residents and visitors’.²²⁹ The following year, ‘visitors and residents’ were ‘loud in their praises of the Domain since the old caretakers’ were reinstated, for ‘two more popular or suitable man could not be found’.²³⁰

‘A Visitor’, writing in 1896, suggested that steps into the baths be provided with coconut matting to prevent accidents, and said that No. 18 drinking spring was inaccessible to three-quarters of visitors. This spring needed attention, ‘as on Sunday last it was so very low in the pipe that it was impossible to obtain a drink without a thick sediment’.²³¹ In 1901 an Auckland couple complained that the pump in what was known as the Octagon had broken down and should be replaced,

²²⁵ Arthur Dillon Bell, cited in James Mills to Minister of Lands, 5 September 1892, Tourist Department, TO 1, 1891/198, ANZ-W.

²²⁶ James Mills to Minister of Lands, 5 September 1892, Tourist Department, TO 1, 1891/198, ANZ-W.

²²⁷ *Thames Advertiser*, 8 September 1893, p. 2.

²²⁸ ‘Te Aroha’, *Observer*, 25 November 1893, p. 21.

²²⁹ *Observer*, 23 December 1893, pp. 3, 11.

²³⁰ ‘Te Aroha’, *Observer*, 19 May 1894, p. 21.

²³¹ Letter from ‘A Visitor’, *Ohinemuri Gazette*, 24 December 1896, p. 5.

for that is the water most people want to drink, it is much the best; people tell me the pump is worn out and always breaking down, they don't make the most of the place I think, the douche house is very badly kept, a man has charge of that and I don't believe ever goes near it the head rest strap is broken and there is nothing to keep the head above water. I have spoken about it twice.²³²

Despite the economic and social advantages they received from the springs and domain, some residents treated them casually, threatening to tarnish their reputation, as a visitor complained as early as December 1880:

As I am suffering from rheumatism I also intended to take a dip in the Hot Springs. But to my disgust they are in such a filthy and pestilent state from various causes that my anticipations were frustrated, and I could not allow myself to make use of them. Cannot something be done to prevent the springs from becoming contaminated?²³³

While the writer did not specify the source of the contamination, the lack of toilet facilities was clearly relevant, for hygiene was a continuing problem. In 1883 the *Te Aroha News* reported the baths to be in a 'really disgraceful state' and wanted a meeting to discover those responsible.²³⁴ Before private bathhouses were built there was only one small 'hospital bath', and people with skin diseases and tumours bathed in the public pools. As well, some residents had the 'disgusting practice' of washing their dirty linen in the baths.²³⁵ 'Certain parties', mostly women, insisted on using soap, and had to be threatened with prosecution.²³⁶ Complaints continued that the baths were filthy.²³⁷ If the following comment from the visitors' book was to be taken even partly seriously, the filth was caused by some of the bathers, not laxity on the part of the caretakers: 'Hadn't a bath for

²³² Charles C.C. Plunket to Jackson Palmer, 3 October 1901, Tourism Department, TO 1/14, 1901/121/1, ANZ-W.

²³³ Letter from unnamed visitor, *Thames Advertiser*, 6 December 1880, p. 2.

²³⁴ *Te Aroha News*, 17 November 1883, p. 2.

²³⁵ *Te Aroha News*, 26 January 1884, p. 7.

²³⁶ Report by H.A. Gordon (Inspecting Engineer, Mines Department), *Te Aroha News*, 20 November 1886, p. 2.

²³⁷ *Te Aroha News*, 22 March 1884, p. 7.

twelve months. Took off dirt splendidly'.²³⁸ The board's policy of cleaning the baths once a week in winter and twice a week in summer²³⁹ was inadequate. A visitor in 1892 commented on another problem: 'One thing annoyed me considerably at these baths, and that was having the statement planted in front of me, wherever I looked, in large capital letters, "Spitting is a disgusting habit." I believe it is, myself; but the placards struck one as more suitable to the back parlour of a third class hotel'.²⁴⁰ Although to the fastidious it lowered the tone, clearly the signs were necessary. Overworked caretakers in 1898 were having trouble keeping the baths clean, and their long days were added to by the difficulty in 'routing some tenacious occupants' at closing time.²⁴¹

In 1901, the Town Clerk wrote that 'certain bath buildings' were 'literally falling to pieces'.²⁴² The local Member of Parliament requested government funding to erect an enlarged replacement for No. 1 bathhouse, where props had been 'placed under the roof to keep it from falling in'. When the Minister for Lands had visited he 'was able to take his pocket knife and cut a portion of the building to pieces, and dig it away', as it was 'absolutely rotten'. The back of the roof was 'broken' and part had fallen in. No. 4 bathhouse was in 'a very dilapidated condition' and needed replacing. It contained 'one of the best springs', which could not be used because of its state. Five other bathhouses 'urgently' needed painting, all the paint having 'washed off long ago'. In No. 2 the concrete had 'gone', causing the water to run out.²⁴³

In 1900 the board worried about some people taking baths at prohibited times, and 'other matters were also spoken of' which required 'drastic measures'.²⁴⁴ These matters may have been to do with cleanliness or with income. As in the early days, the baths were 'abused' by couples sharing them but paying for only one bath; the board would not allow even

²³⁸ *Waikato Times*, 4 June 1885, p. 2.

²³⁹ *Auckland Weekly News*, 30 July 1887, p. 29.

²⁴⁰ N.E.B., 'A Holiday Trip', *Auckland Weekly News*, 18 June 1892, p. 7.

²⁴¹ *Te Aroha News*, editorial, 16 April 1898, p. 2, letters, 26 April 1898, p. 2.

²⁴² William Hill (Town Clerk) to Under-Secretary, Lands and Survey Department, 24 August 1901, Tourist Department, TO 1/14, 1901/121/1, ANZ-W.

²⁴³ Jackson Palmer to Sir Joseph Ward, 28 August 1901, Tourist Department, TO 1/14, 1901/121/1, ANZ-W.

²⁴⁴ Domain Board, *Te Aroha News*, 10 March 1900, p. 2.

married couples to bathe together.²⁴⁵ Presumably this was the reason why a Thames lawyer wrote in the visitors' book in 1885 that he 'found baths rather severe for married men';²⁴⁶ or was that a more-than-usually-obscure in-joke? Board members were displeased to learn in 1888 that not only did a man suffering from sciatica insist on staying longer in a private bath than was allowed, but that 'he had a young lady friend with him'.²⁴⁷ To enforce the segregation of the sexes, revision of the by-laws in 1901 added a rule that 'no bathing dress' was permitted in the public baths.²⁴⁸ That some avoided paying was common knowledge; in 1897 a Taranaki visitor wrote that he had 'frequently overheard persons at the street corners boasting of the free baths they have had'. He did not blame the caretakers, who had 'long enough hours to put in at their regular work without having to keep guard at the several bathhouses'.²⁴⁹

A few residents nullified some of the efforts to beautify the domain. Shortly after the first major improvements began in 1883, some people took down the slip rails and turned their horses loose to eat the recently planted trees and shrubs.²⁵⁰ Two years later a new resident who allowed four pigs to trespass on the domain was discharged with a caution after pleading that he was unaware of infringing the law 'as he saw those around him acting in a similar manner'.²⁵¹

Larrikinism, a constant problem,²⁵² was one reason for appointing a full-time caretaker in 1884. Larrikins had 'at times made a visit to the springs the reverse of agreeable, especially to ladies', and some people were to be charged with 'making a forcible entry into one of the buildings'.²⁵³ Earlier that year there was a complaint about 'the unseemly, and in some cases, disgusting sentiments' that were 'scrawled up all over the walls'.²⁵⁴ It was hoped that 'a stricter surveillance will be kept over the premises, and

²⁴⁵ *Thames Advertiser*, 14 January 1896, p. 3, 24 January 1896, p. 3; *Ohinemuri Gazette*, 25 January 1896, p. 6.

²⁴⁶ *Waikato Times*, 4 June 1885, p. 2.

²⁴⁷ *Te Aroha News*, 25 February 1888, p. 2.

²⁴⁸ *Te Aroha Correspondent*, *Auckland Weekly News*, 15 March 1901, p. 31.

²⁴⁹ *Ohinemuri Gazette*, 9 January 1897, p. 7.

²⁵⁰ *Te Aroha News*, 1 September 1883, p. 2.

²⁵¹ Magistrate's Court, *Te Aroha News*, 5 September 1885, p. 2.

²⁵² See paper on larrikinism.

²⁵³ *Waikato Times*, 21 June 1884, p. 3.

²⁵⁴ Letter from 'A Bather', *Te Aroha News*, 22 March 1884, p. 7.

an attempt made to keep the place as attractive to strangers as possible'.²⁵⁵ In 1886, the police were asked to patrol the domain in the evenings 'to prevent wanton destruction of flowers, shrubs, etc'.²⁵⁶ But each generation continued the tradition of fouling their own nest: in 1898 'A Visitor' complained of graffiti by both outsiders and residents on seats, trees, and buildings.²⁵⁷ Early in 1901 the board offered a reward 'for information as to the perpetrators of the damage to the octagon and drinking fountain'.²⁵⁸

In 1903, 'An Eye Witness' noted occasional complaints 'of a number of dogs making the reading room a kind of camping ground, with their multiplicity of fleas, presumably on account of the soft matting laid down, very much to the detriment of respectable visitors'. The employees permitted these and their own dogs to wonder around the domain, leading to some 'savagely brutes' ferociously attacking visitors. Dogs should be strictly prohibited, as the bye-laws required, 'as they are simply a menace to Society and will ultimately either damage the reputation of the place, or worst still worry some defenceless or unprotected children'.²⁵⁹

ENCOURAGING TOURISM

Pakeha used the springs from the earliest years of settlement. In March 1882, one man 'found all the hotel accommodation taken up, and had to secure a shake down in a private house'.²⁶⁰ In January 1887 an *Auckland Weekly News* journalist lauded the township:

One cannot help being favourably impressed with Te Aroha at first sight. The idea conveyed is one of prosperity, cleanliness, and picturesqueness. It is a multum in parvo; a little place of huge individualities. The lofty Te Aroha mountain looming up behind the township in ponderous grandeur, forms a stately background. At its base nestles the neat Domain, with the almost unique springs of thermal waters. On the street are palatial hotels, superior lodging-houses, and fine shops. In front, the Waihou river pursues its sinuous course to the Hauraki gulf....

²⁵⁵ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 26 April 1884, p. 21.

²⁵⁶ *Te Aroha News*, 9 October 1896, p. 2.

²⁵⁷ Letter from 'A Visitor', *Te Aroha News*, 3 May 1898, p. 3.

²⁵⁸ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 12 April 1901, p. 26.

²⁵⁹ Letter from 'An Eye Witness', *Te Aroha News*, 14 March 1903, press cutting in Te Aroha Warden's Court, Newspaper Clippings 1895-1905, BBAV 11572/1a, ANZ-A.

²⁶⁰ *Te Aroha News*, 29 March 1882, p. 3.

The domain looks quite an old established institution. I was amazed to find the fine recreation ground which had been formed in two or three years. From the street it rises in a gentle slope, and numerous paths intersect it in all directions. Young trees have been planted.... At the bottom of the rise or terrace is an excellent lawn tennis ground, which is largely availed of.

The baths (six in number) are in the Domain. They are neatly housed, and are boarded at the sides and ends like ordinary house baths. No. 6 is the largest and most patronized, there being frequently five or six persons in it at once. The universal opinion was that to luxuriate therein was the acme of enjoyment. I indulged in seven, including a dip in No. 2, which is the hottest, eight degrees warmer than No. 6, during my stay of two days, and fully concur in the warmest eulogy expressed. There are also two springs of spa water.... They are said to be specifics for indigestion and sundry complaints.

As for the hotels - well, I have seen most in the provincial district, but, outside Auckland, never aught like these. There is one feature that especially pleased me: there is nothing of the gorgeous gin palace about them. The bar is subordinated to the hotel; and not, as is too frequently the case, the accommodation subordinated to the bar. There are four hotels; but the leading ones are the Club, Hot Springs, and Palace. They seem almost on a par, a spirit of emulation enabling the public to have everything in first-class style. I lived like a prince, had abundance of towels, and occupied a spacious well-furnished bedroom, stayed from Monday afternoon till Wednesday morning and paid 10s 6d. What could be more reasonable? The boarding houses are also said to be very comfortable, and judging by external appearances, very suitable for persons who dislike, or do not affect, hotels.

On the river numerous rowing boats, specially adapted for such visitors as find their way to our New Zealand Bath, can be hired at a cheap rate.²⁶¹

A tourist guide published in that year claimed that Te Aroha was 'far preferable' to the other health resorts 'as a residence for nervous invalids and delicate persons for whom repose and complete comfort' was 'desirable'. The new railway link to Auckland was 'a great consideration for persons in delicate health. Railway carriages especially constructed and fitted for invalids' were provided for the seven-hour journey.²⁶² All hotels catered for invalids, boarding houses gave 'every attention' to the needs of those in

²⁶¹ Own Correspondent, 'Impressions of Te Aroha', *Auckland Weekly News*, 22 January 1887, p. 8.

²⁶² *Hayr's Tourist Guide*, p. 47.

‘delicate health’, and prices were ‘in every case less than those at similar establishments elsewhere’. To enable the infirm to walk the ‘romantic and attractive’ paths of the domain, comfortable seats had been placed ‘at intervals of a few yards’.²⁶³

To encourage tourism, seen as Te Aroha’s economic salvation once the goldfield faded, in November 1887 the domain board published a pamphlet entitled *Te Aroha, New Zealand: A Guide for Invalids and Visitors to the Thermal Springs and Baths*. Written by Dr Alfred Wright, who briefly held the post of ‘Physician to the Thermal Springs Domain’, he emphasized the need for medical advice about which baths to use for which ailment. He warned of ‘several cases’ of fainting fits, caused by a fall in blood pressure, ‘having occurred where persons with weak hearts have indiscriminately used No. 2 and the very hot baths’.²⁶⁴ None had been fatal. He gave details of the water’s curative qualities, recommending its use for skin ailments, rheumatism, and kidney trouble in particular, and quoted 11 letters from grateful users. He also gave details of the accommodation available at the Club, Hot Springs, Palace, and Family Hotels, Waverley and Park Houses, and a Temperance Boarding House.²⁶⁵

A guidebook available at the ticket office gave the chemical analysis of each spring together with the temperatures of the baths.²⁶⁶ The board continually publicized its facilities, for example writing to Sir George Grey in 1892 expressing its regret at his ‘very indifferent state of health’ and inviting him to visit, ‘feeling confident from the experience of hundreds of invalids in the past, that the Baths would be efficacious in your case’. Its guide was enclosed,²⁶⁷ but Sir George did not accept the invitation. In the same year, a guide for invalids compiled by the editor of the local newspaper stated that, compared with Rotorua, Te Aroha was ‘far more preferable as a resort for those in quest of health. Sufferers from any form of disease or disturbance of the nervous system, find here a health resort where they can obtain perfect serenity and repose’. He claimed that the springs had, ‘within a remarkably short period, gained for themselves, by their wonderful curative powers, a deservedly high reputation among the *sanatoria* of New

²⁶³ *Hayr’s Tourist Guide*, p. 48.

²⁶⁴ Wright, pp. 13-14.

²⁶⁵ Wright, pp. 10, 12, 16, 21-24, 27-34.

²⁶⁶ *Waikato Times*, 4 October 1888, p. 2.

²⁶⁷ Charles Ahier (Secretary, Hot Springs Domain Board) to Sir George Grey, 5 July 1892, Grey New Zealand Letters, vol. 1, pp. 28-29, Auckland Public Library.

Zealand, and their fame is every day extending to the sister colonies'.²⁶⁸ Ninety out of a hundred people using the waters either internally or externally were afforded 'more or less relief'.²⁶⁹ He printed 12 testimonials 'selected from among hundreds of others', one of which said he 'came to Te Aroha broken in health and spirits, and am leaving well and happy'.²⁷⁰

A guidebook for tourists published in 1894 included a full page advertisement:

TE AROHA HOT SPRINGS.
THE GREAT SANATORIUM OF AUCKLAND.

This charming place is recommended to those desiring pretty country, pleasant climate, and agreeable society, with the advantages of really comfortable and well managed
NATURAL HOT BATHS.

The **Te Aroha Domain**, in which the **Hot Springs** are situate, is a picturesque tract of country on the slopes of **Te Aroha**. A large portion of the Domain is laid out as a **Garden**, with **Asphalt Tennis Court**, well kept lawns and ample recreation grounds.

Among groups of lovely ferns and beds of beautify flowers the Bath Pavilions are erected. Of these there are seven, including the

Grand New Swimming Bath, 66ft x 33ft.
with ample dressing room accommodation, and numerous Private Baths

Te Aroha is accessible by train from Auckland *without change of carriage*, and may also be reached by way of the Thames and Paeroa by those who prefer travelling by **Water**.

THERE ARE NUMEROUS

**FIRST CLASS HOTELS, BOARDING HOUSES, AND
COTTAGES FOR HIRE AS PRIVATE LODGINGS.**

²⁶⁸ J.S. Ingram (comp.), *Guide for Invalids to the Thermal Springs and Baths of Te Aroha, New Zealand* (Te Aroha, 1892), p. 3.

²⁶⁹ Ingram, p. 7.

²⁷⁰ Ingram, pp. 13-14.

The Domain and the Streets are **well lighted** at night, and the Baths are open from 6 a.m. to 10 p.m., except from 1 till 2, and 6 till 7 p.m.

THERE ARE A LIBRARY AND FREE READING ROOM IN THE DOMAIN GARDENS.

Beautiful walks, rides, and drives abound in the neighbourhood, and the view from the Mountain, Te Aroha, 3,176 ft above the sea is magnificent.

Ladies and gentlemen desiring further particulars may obtain the Pamphlet published by the Domain Board on application to **Mr SNEWIN,**²⁷¹ **Clerk to the Te Aroha Domain Board.**²⁷²

The guidebook assured visitors that, 'though the district does not possess any of the awe-inspiring features of the Lake Country, it has many advantages of a more important character for invalids, who find here a health resort where they can obtain perfect serenity'.²⁷³ Full details of town and domain included the information that 'private dressing-rooms and cold showers are provided in all the bath-houses', No. 1 Bath was 'reserved for ladies', who had access to other baths at specified hours, children under 14 'use No. 5 only', and there was a concrete swimming pool.

There are two valuable hot drinking springs. One of these is No. 8, over which a pretty octagonal summer-house is erected. This water is useful in dyspepsia and renal troubles of other descriptions if taken judiciously. The other, No. 15, is largely used for drinking, and its water is a valuable adjunct to the treatment of some forms of dyspepsia and kidney affections.

The board, to whom 'great credit' was due for their work, was contemplating making 'numerous improvements' soon. 'Experienced attendants' managed the baths, 'bath chairs for invalids' could be hired,

²⁷¹ See *Waikato Times*, 7 December 1893, p. 6; advertisement, *Te Aroha Times and Waiorongomai Advocate*, 3 November 1897, p. 2; *Te Aroha News*, 20 March 1895, p. 2, 15 June 1895, p. 2, 14 July 1895, p. 2, 31 August 1895, p. 2, 2 June 1898, p. 2, 28 June 1898, p. 2, 16 July 1898, p. 2.

²⁷² Advertisement in George Frederic Allen, *Willis' Guide Book of New Route for Tourists: Auckland-Wellington, via the Hot Springs, Taupo, the Volcanoes and the Wanganui River* (Wanganui, 1894), p. vi.

²⁷³ Allen, p. 13.

‘and special attendants or nurses’ were also available, along with the local doctor.²⁷⁴ The 1902 ‘supplementary edition’ listed improvements, including ‘a fine new bath-house, a very pretty building, 98ft x 28ft, with 19 bath-rooms, and four waiting-rooms, &c’, otherwise known as the Cadman bathhouse. A second ‘Concrete Swimming Bath (warm)’ had been constructed, and ‘several’ new springs had been found, ‘including some of valuable medicinal drinking-waters’. The baths were now open continuously from six o’clock in the morning until ten o’clock at night, and ‘male and female attendants’ were ‘always on duty’. In addition to a doctor and ‘duly qualified chemist’, a ‘Convalescent Home, with trained nurse’, had been opened.²⁷⁵ The advertisement now included details of the Cadman bathhouse, ‘admittedly the finest building of its kind south of the line’.²⁷⁶

In 1901, a ten-page pamphlet was published in Te Aroha entitled *Te Aroha, the Modern Bethesda: Some facts for tourists and invalids*, which gave full details of the waters, the domain, and the facilities available in the town. It called the springs ‘The Queen of Spas. The People’s Sanatorium’.²⁷⁷

The government also assisted with publicity, in 1891 sending someone to sketch ‘the principal points of interest’.²⁷⁸ Residents always considered government aid to be insufficient. For instance, a correspondent writing in 1892 about alterations to two bathhouses praised the board for being able to ‘keep the domain in its present fine order, supply all the requisites for the baths, pay their two zealous caretakers, and now spend a good sum in improving the bathrooms, without a single penny of help’ from a government which provided ‘very large sums’ to ‘other watering places’.²⁷⁹ While a £2,000 grant in 1897 was welcomed, there was also a tart reminder that ‘Te Arohaites have experienced ... many disappointments through unfulfilled Government promises’.²⁸⁰ In fact, by the date of the opening of the Cadman Bathhouse in May 1898, since 1883 governments had spent £6,195 on improvements, which had greatly increased the popularity of the

²⁷⁴ Allen, pp. 14-15.

²⁷⁵ Allen, *Willis’ Guide Book*, supplementary edition (Wanganui, 1902), p. 2.

²⁷⁶ Allen, *Willis’ Guide Book*, supplementary edition, p. viii.

²⁷⁷ *Te Aroha, “The Modern Bethesda: Some facts for tourists and invalids”* (Te Aroha, 1901), p. 3.

²⁷⁸ *Auckland Weekly News*, 14 February 1891, p. 18.

²⁷⁹ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 28 May 1892, p. 23.

²⁸⁰ *Waikato Argus*, 11 March 1897, p. 2.

baths, and income had risen from £387 in 1885 to £729 in 1897.²⁸¹ In 1899 receipts were £954 5s 8d, ‘substantial proof’ of ‘the growing favour’ of Te Aroha as ‘a pleasure and health resort’.²⁸²

According to a Sydney newspaper, one reason for the popularity of Te Aroha was that, not being in a volcanic area, ‘nervous ladies’ were not afraid to visit.²⁸³ A Special Reporter from Hamilton confirmed that for the invalid Te Aroha had the edge on Rotorua. There were ‘no disagreeable fumes of sulphur continually filling the air’ and ‘no danger of falling into a boiling spring or breaking through the thin crust of the earth if one leaves the beaten track’.²⁸⁴ According to a later account, not confirmed by any contemporary source but quite possibly accurate, ‘Te Aroha laughed at Rotorua as merely the haunt of Maoris and a place where the visitor found only “mud and excessive charges”’.²⁸⁵

The construction of the railway greatly boosted the number of visitors, particularly because of special excursion trains. The Railways Department was willing to provide Saturday excursions if these were well patronized. When one special train arrived in May 1895 with about 1,400 adults and children, the brass band was hired by the domain board to meet it and play ‘sweet music during the day’.

The Domain Board generously granted the children free use of the baths which they were not slow to avail themselves of. There was an ample supply of tea and fruit which was given by Te Aroha residents and distributed gratis amongst the visitors, and was evidently much appreciated.²⁸⁶

Once the railway reached Thames in 1898, large numbers from there also arrived on special excursions.²⁸⁷

In the summer of 1894, an Auckland, who spent some days sampling the baths and other entertainments wrote a humorous account:

²⁸¹ *Te Aroha News*, 26 May 1898, p. 2.

²⁸² *Te Aroha Correspondent*, *New Zealand Herald*, 23 July 1900, p. 7.

²⁸³ *Sydney Evening News*, 4 June 1889, p. 3.

²⁸⁴ Special Reporter, ‘Te Aroha and Waiorongomai’, *Waikato Times*, 4 October 1888, p. 2.

²⁸⁵ C.T. Harris, *Settlement and Development of the Upper Thames Valley, 1877-1937: Diamond Jubilee of the Piako County* (Te Aroha, 1937), p. 85.

²⁸⁶ *Te Aroha News*, 15 May 1895, p. 2.

²⁸⁷ For example, *Thames Star*, 5 May 1899, p. 4, 6 June 1899, p. 4.

Te Aroha at last! We got out, and hied us to the Palace Hotel. Here we secured rooms and then made a bee-line for the baths. To appreciate a warm bath properly you must spend seven hours in a railway carriage. The baths form Te Aroha's principal attraction. The people down there lead a sort of amphibious life – live partly on land and partly in the baths.

The baths are situated in the Domain at the foot of the mountain. There is an "office" at the Domain gates, where you go to be informed that they don't keep bath-tickets. They direct you to "go to one of the shops and try." This arrangement struck us as peculiar. It was like going to the Opera House, and on approaching the pay-box to be told that they don't keep tickets but that you may get them at the greengrocery round the corner. We got the tickets at last, at a little shop whose stock-in-trade appeared to consist principally of fly-marked almanacs of a remote period and sundry glass jars containing faded lollies, while some consumptive bananas reposed in the front window. We got our tickets and then discovered that it was necessary to hire towels at the same shop "as they didn't provide them at the baths." We paid for the loan of two towels and went our way. But before we got back to the baths we began to have misgivings. Perhaps they didn't provide hot water either and it would be necessary to go in quest of it, and get it in our own jugs or cans?

The young lady attendant at the "office" was most civil and obliging. "Hot baths?" she said, "certainly! What keys shall I give you?" We said we didn't care. We hadn't given the subject much thought. She could bestow upon us any keys she liked and we would value them highly. Then she began to laugh, and said we didn't understand. The baths were in bath houses and she kept the keys of the bath houses. There were a lot of different kinds of baths. We could have baths for rheumatism, headache, toothache, sprains, wrenches, nerves, skin complaints, mother-in-law on the brain, stonebrokenness, or anything we liked. They were all the same price – the private baths – and no extra charge was made. Seeing we hesitated, uncertain which bath to try, the merry maiden said: "Well I'll give you No. 3. If that doesn't suit, you can try something else next time. Try 'em all round; they won't kill you." She is a nice girl and we resolved to take her advice.

No. 3 shed is fitted with a number of small private bath-houses similar to those in Auckland. Each has two taps. One is ordinary cold water, the other the hot spring ditto. The restful, soothing feeling of lying full length in that delightful warm spring water for ten minutes or so must be experienced. It can't be described. The orthodox time for soaking is, I believe, three-quarters of an hour. But ten minutes satisfied me. You see I was fresh from town. After a month or two at Te Aroha, I should probably be glad to spend a week in the bath without getting out.

There are few distractions in this delightful watering place. If you play billiards you can get a capital table at the Palace, which is a really nice house, and where Mr [Samuel Tozer] and Mrs [Anna Row] Smardon²⁸⁸ will make you really comfortable. If you don't play billiards, don't drink beer or whisky, don't walk, don't boat, you will have to fall back on the baths. But they are worth falling back on. Especially if you have rheumatism or anything of that kind....

Te Aroha is quiet, very quiet. For people who are tired of town bustle and worry, it ought to just fit the bill. In fact, there is a restfulness about it that sometimes becomes a trifle oppressive. But there are some nice rambles to be had. Waiorongomai, with its famous gorge, is not far off. The mountain itself is worth scrambling up. The river is pretty. And boats in abundance may be hired....

Te Aroha ought to be a nice place to "suffer a recovery" in. In the rotunda which will be found amongst the Domain shrubs and flowers, is a pump and an enamelled mug. When you work that pump, warm soda water, fresh from the factory of Nature herself, comes gushing out. Some visitors consume vast quantities of this hot soda. The taste for it is probably acquired. I didn't stop long enough to acquire it myself....

We were only three days at Te Aroha. But we had a good time. We bathed at short intervals, smoked many pipes, played many games of billiards, had a few walks and one scramble up the mountain side – from the point we reached a fine view of Te Aroha, its winding river, and the country round about for many and many a mile may be seen....

If you are thinking about a holiday and don't know where to go you might do worse than try Te Aroha – a great deal worse. It's a cheap trip, while really excellent accommodation can be had on extremely reasonable terms.²⁸⁹

By 1886, the visitors' book had been signed by hundreds of people from all over the world. A journalist providing some examples of their comments:

The accompanying remarks are few, wanting in wit as well as logic, and by no means remarkable for purity of English. Such as they are, however, I will furnish you with a few of them.... "Baths are verra guid but ye are a the better o a wee droppie after them - Walker's whisky is the best".... An Australian on his honeymoon trip thus writes: "No. 2 bath is splendid for the newly married people." This is followed up by the opinions of a crusty old bachelor who says:- "Should like to take No. 2 bath home with

²⁸⁸ See section on publicans in paper on drink.

²⁸⁹ C.A. Wilkins, 'In Hot Water: A Little Holiday Jaunt', *Observer*, 13 January 1894, p. 19.

me, but as I am not a married man it would not be fair to deprive newly married couples (vide the above) of what must be a positive necessity.” A frequenter of sulphurous regions holds forth as follows:- “Have been stewed at Mortlake, steamed at Rotorua, boiled at Wairakei, but enjoyed none better than swimming at No. 2.”²⁹⁰ ... Throughout the whole book there is abundant testimony to the esteem in which the caretaker Mr McKee is held and Messrs [George] Wilson²⁹¹ and [Henry] Crump,²⁹² chairman of and engineer to the Board respectively, both come in for a fair share of commendation.²⁹³

Publicity about the curative qualities of the water continued to be published in the twentieth century to attract ‘tourists and invalids’.²⁹⁴

RIVALRY WITH ROTORUA

There were constant complaints that Rotorua was favoured over Te Aroha. The board even alleged that Cook’s tourist agency discouraged visitors from going to Te Aroha, a claim that was denied.²⁹⁵ It was believed that Rotorua was assisted unfairly by the government,²⁹⁶ as when in 1895 the *Te Aroha News* referred to the £5,000 spent annually to maintain the Rotorua sanatorium, as well as the free advertising ‘and numerous other favours bestowed’. Attempting to prove that Te Aroha ‘altogether unaided’ attracted more visitors, it gave figures for the use of the baths at both places between April and September: 8,942 tickets were sold in Rotorua for an income of £158, whereas 7,885 were sold in Te Aroha for £164 17s 6d,

²⁹⁰ Written by Thos. Eustace Corkhill: see ‘A Visitor’, ‘Te Aroha Hot Springs’, *Waikato Times*, 4 June 1885, p. 2 (where he stewed in Matlock).

²⁹¹ Inspector of Mines: see paper on his life.

²⁹² For his life at Te Aroha, see *Waikato Times*, 6 October 1885, p. 2; *Te Aroha News*, 17 July 1886, p. 2, 31 July 1886, p. 2, 9 October 1886, p. 2; *Thames Advertiser*, 23 August 1894, p. 2.

²⁹³ Paeroa Correspondent, ‘Te Aroha and its Environs’, *Thames Advertiser*, 11 October 1886, p. 2.

²⁹⁴ For example, *Te Aroha*, *The Modern Bethesda: Some facts for tourists and invalids* (Te Aroha, 1901); a copy of this thin pamphlet is held in Tourist Department, TO 1/14, 1901/121/1, ANZ-W.

²⁹⁵ *Thames Star*, 7 June 1901, p. 4.

²⁹⁶ For example, *Te Aroha News*, 11 May 1895, p. 2, Domain Board, 9 October 1895, p. 2; *Thames Star*, 29 March 1901, p. 2.

giving £6 17s 6d extra revenue to the latter.²⁹⁷ A local correspondent argued that if it had the assistance that was its due, such as another reservoir for the baths, 'Rotorua would be nowhere'.²⁹⁸ In 1902, the *Te Aroha News* wrote that, if the government took over the domain, it would soon 'be alive with inspectors, landscape gardeners, balneologists, etc, to say nothing of a staff of fifty or so prisoners laying out the Domain grounds, beautifying our river walks, etc'.²⁹⁹

One journalist claimed, in 1901, that the government did little to assist either place. After claiming that their springs had 'medicinal and curative properties' that were 'not surpassed by the hot springs to be found in any other part of the world', he considered it 'somewhat surprising' that the government had 'not done more to make them more widely known, and to utilize these valuable national assets, as they certainly would be utilized were they the property of a private syndicate or a public company'. The government had recently 'displayed a little more interest in Rotorua', but Te Aroha had

long suffered from neglect. The new baths are, no doubt, an immense improvement, and are steadily growing in popularity, but there is still ample scope for the expenditure of many thousands of pounds in developing the marvellous thermal resources of the district. Te Aroha cannot hope to rival Rotorua, which is par excellence the wonderland of the southern hemisphere, but it has many attractions of its own, while its hot springs and cold mineral waters are acknowledged to be invaluable remedies for many complaints.

Overseas visitors should be informed about these through tourist agents and advertisements, and the Agent-General in London should lecture on Rotorua and Te Aroha instead of on socialism.³⁰⁰ One member of parliament, when requesting funding of repairs and suggesting the creation of a natural vapour bath that would be 'unique in the Colony and of great service to invalids', complained that it was not fair to spend so much on

²⁹⁷ Editorial, *Te Aroha News*, 19 October 1895, p. 2.

²⁹⁸ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 16 May 1891, p. 30.

²⁹⁹ *Te Aroha News*, n.d., cited in *Observer*, 6 September 1902, p. 3.

³⁰⁰ 'The General', 'On Things in General', *New Zealand Herald*, 17 April 1901, p. 3.

Rotorua and to neglect Te Aroha.³⁰¹ Shortly afterwards, when assured that it would receive its fair share of funds, the town clerk wrote that it had

always seemed to the Board an inexplicable matter, that while Rotorua is “boomed” in all advertising mediums, and has public money lavishly spent there, Te Aroha should be so persistently ignored, especially as the Domain and the springs are exclusively Government property. If only on the principle of having “two strings to your bow” it were a wise policy to develop both places. It ought always to be born in mind that the waters of Te Aroha and Rotorua are totally different in their constituents and effects. The testimony of sufferers has proved this over and over again. Why then, not encourage travellers, and seekers after health to visit both places, and take care that the merits of both waters shall be placed before them.³⁰²

A 1905 visitor agreed. After noting that the tourist trade at Te Aroha had ‘assumed very considerable proportions, which will doubtless be greatly increased when this pretty and attractive health resort becomes better known’, he described it as

a very charming little health and pleasure resort. The appearance of the three hotels and of the shops is a credit to a place of its size. The boardinghouses - of which there are some twelve or fourteen - appear to give great satisfaction to the tourists generally, and are very reasonable in their charges.... The park is a charming little spot, and Te Aroha, with its hot baths and health-giving mineral waters, is an ideal place for rest, recuperation, and change of air. I consider it even preferable to Rotorua for these purposes. It is also a very cheap place to stay at. Rotorua is, of course, a model place for sightseeing; while Te Aroha is for rest. I have heard too frequently stated while there that the Government was booming Rotorua, and starving Te Aroha. There is probably a good deal of truth in this. Its beautiful forest-clad mountain ... if at Rotorua, would at once have thousands of pounds spent in opening it up with roads, planting grass plots, placing seats under the trees, etc. Why should this not be done where it is?³⁰³

³⁰¹ Jackson Palmer to Sir Joseph Ward, 28 August 1901, Tourist Department, TO 1/14, 1901/121/1, ANZ-W.

³⁰² William Hill to Sir Joseph Ward, 30 September 1901, Tourist Department, TO 1/14, 1901/121/1, ANZ-W.

³⁰³ J.W. Duffus, ‘The Thames Valley’, *Auckland Weekly News*, 16 March 1905, p. 16.

MEDICAL AIDS AND MEDICAL SPECIALISTS

Men who claimed to be able to make the waters even more effective were appointed when finance permitted, and new medical techniques were tried. For instance, in 1885, ‘acting on the suggestion of a medical man of some eminence, who a short while ago visited the hot baths’, the board acquired an electric battery for use in No. 3 bathhouse. This ‘new curative agent’ was expected to enhance the efficacy of the water, ‘especially in paralytic and rheumatic ailments’, and it was soon reported that people ‘dipped in the electrified waters’ spoke highly of it.³⁰⁴ These ‘electric baths’ were still provided in the 1950s, when it was claimed that ‘by passing a controlled electrical current through the water, valuable tonic effects can be induced whereby the circulation and the nervous system are “toned up”’.³⁰⁵ In 1930 it was also possible to be treated by the Greville Hot Air apparatus, to have Dry and Farado Massage, and to have salts conveyed through the skin by an electric ionisation process.³⁰⁶ In both 1930 and 1956, from three to six weeks’ treatment were recommended to effect a cure.³⁰⁷

In 1886, John Charles Cadman, ‘the Eminent Eclectopathy Scientist Specialist Professor of Electricity and Hydropathy. Inventor ... of “Recuperine,” and the Magneto-Electric Continuous double Current Girdles’, advertised that he gave free consultations in his ‘Consulting Rooms’ at a local hotel.³⁰⁸ Cadman had set himself up as a ‘Professor of Natural Science’ in Auckland in 1880, and five years later trademarked ‘Recuperine’, a medicinal wine.³⁰⁹ So impressed was the board that they appointed him hydropathist and electropathist for six months.³¹⁰ He would not receive a salary, instead being paid by those he treated; the lack of a

³⁰⁴ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 14 May 1885, p. 2, 13 June 1885, p. 3; see also *Te Aroha News*, 30 May 1885, p. 2.

³⁰⁵ ‘Te Aroha’s Mineral Drinking Waters’ (1956), p. 2.

³⁰⁶ Dr J.D.C. Duncan, ‘The Te Aroha Spa’, in *Te Aroha and the Fortunate Valley*, p. 222.

³⁰⁷ Duncan, ‘The Te Aroha Spa’, in *Te Aroha and the Fortunate Valley*, p. 222; ‘Te Aroha’s Mineral Drinking Waters’ (1956), p. 3.

³⁰⁸ Advertisement, *Te Aroha News*, 28 August 1886, p. 3.

³⁰⁹ Murray R. Frost, *Behind the Dispensing Screen: Early New Zealand Pharmacists* (Hamilton, 2004), p. 15.

³¹⁰ *Te Aroha News*, 11 September 1886, p. 2.

qualified doctor was the main reason for his selection.³¹¹ His appointment was controversial, and a public meeting was immediately held to discuss this and other actions of the board. The meeting was abandoned after one champion of the board ‘(who only the other day figured as defendant in an assault case), moved that the meeting pronounce the Chairman both mad and drunk’, whilst another, ‘(who was certainly not accountable for what he said, having imbibed too freely), tried to keep the floor during nearly the whole time, and to “talk down” all business’.³¹² Because of these ructions, ‘Professor’ Cadman resigned immediately.³¹³ As he had no formal qualifications, he then trained ‘in the art of drug dispensing’, and from 1894 onwards was a chemist in several country towns.³¹⁴

In 1894 a visitor noted that residents were ‘much upset about their famous baths’ because ‘formerly an expert managed the baths whose advice was invaluable to invalids. But he and his *confrere* (another old hand) were “retrenched” when the “Board” took the Baths under its wing’.³¹⁵ This was a reference to the town board’s dismissal of the caretakers, later reversed.

More orthodox treatments were provided as the sanatorium developed. In 1897 massage treatment commenced after a room adjoining No. 2 bath was leased by a professional masseur,³¹⁶ and in February 1900 James Muir, ‘hydropathic specialist’, was appointed for a trial period.³¹⁷ Having obtained personal benefit from this treatment in 1891, he decided to take up hydrotherapy as a profession. ‘He devoted himself closely to the study of the subject under the most prominent medical men and hydropathists in Great Britain’, and ‘occupied almost every position in leading hydropathic establishments, from that of bath attendant to that of manager’. Upon arrival in New Zealand in 1898, he became manager of hydropathic baths at Wellington and Rotorua.³¹⁸ Hydropathy was ‘an acknowledged method of cure for disease’, according to an Auckland newspaper, ‘a very ancient

³¹¹ George Wilson to Under-Secretary of Lands, 6 October 1886, Tourist Department, TO 1, 1891/198, ANZ-W.

³¹² *Te Aroha News*, 11 September 1886, p. 3, 18 September 1886, p. 2.

³¹³ *Te Aroha News*, 25 September 1886, p. 2.

³¹⁴ Frost, *Behind the Dispensing Screen*, pp. 16-17.

³¹⁵ C.A. Wilkins, ‘In Hot Water: A Little Holiday Jaunt’, *Observer*, 13 January 1894, p. 19.

³¹⁶ *Waikato Argus*, 10 April 1897, p. 2; *Thames Advertiser*, 8 May 1897, p. 2; *Te Aroha News*, 8 January 1898, p. 3.

³¹⁷ *Te Aroha News*, 10 February 1900, p. 3.

³¹⁸ *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 2, p. 825.

practice, revised some time since with perhaps too large pretensions'. England had 50 hydropathic establishments and Scotland 15. Muir knew 'all about the application of different kinds of baths', and was 'thoroughly qualified to administer the treatment', which many in Auckland believed in. 'They may now indulge in a course with greater natural advantages as respects water than in any establishment in England'. The board was having an apartment in the Cadman Bathhouse 'fitted up with all the requisites required by Mr Muir for the mysteries of all the varieties of water application'.³¹⁹

As within a month of his appointment the board received several letters from Auckland doctors stating that their patients had benefited, it 'resolved to have several of these printed on a large card, and placed in the various bath-houses, hotels, etc'.³²⁰ Further good publicity came when the Governor, visiting in April, stated that he was impressed with Muir's 'pack' treatment.³²¹ Within four months of being appointed to Te Aroha, he received 500 testimonials within four months, many from 'well-known people', including the Premier, Richard Seddon.³²² Muir published a booklet citing some of these testimonials along with details of the baths and springs and advice on how they should be used, as well as an English doctor's praise of hydropathy.³²³

Despite the praises he cited, Muir resigned in September to become a travelling rug salesman, allegedly because he was too 'live and progressive a man for Te Aroha' and could not tolerate interference from the board's 'stick-in-the-mud ways'.³²⁴ Others claimed that, while 'undoubtedly' some had benefited, others had not, and fewer people had used the baths while he was employed.³²⁵

Not till 1893 did the board appoint a woman as caretaker (later termed a 'lady attendant').³²⁶ Her appointment was 'a very great advantage to lady-

³¹⁹ *New Zealand Herald*, 21 April 1900, Supplement, p. 1.

³²⁰ Domain Board, *Te Aroha News*, 10 March 1900, p. 2.

³²¹ *Auckland Weekly News*, 13 April 1900, p. 37.

³²² *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 2, p. 825.

³²³ James Muir, *How to Take the Baths and Drinking Waters at Rotorua and Te Aroha* (Wellington, 1900), pp. 5-6, 8-10, 12-13, 20-31, 35-40.

³²⁴ *Observer*, 22 September 1900, p. 7.

³²⁵ *Observer*, 29 September 1900, p. 7, letter from James Mills, 6 October 1900, p. 7.

³²⁶ *Te Aroha News*, 10 February 1898, p. 2; *New Zealand Graphic*, 19 February 1898, p. 226.

visitors, many of whom have been said to have complained of the want of a female to attend to them'.³²⁷ Two-thirds of those using the baths were women, some of whom needed assistance.³²⁸

The board wished to appoint a qualified doctor, but, unable to subsidize one, it appealed to the government, supported by a petition from residents offering to provide some of the money.³²⁹ The Bishop of Wellington informed the board in 1887 that,

as no medical advice could be obtained, it was impossible to ascertain either which [baths] to use or how to use them, or for what length of time. As this is a Government domain, it would certainly be advisable to make a moderate grant to some competent medical man to induce him to reside here until the value of these springs is better known.³³⁰

Local doctors sometimes gave advice about appropriate use of the waters, but because of their small number of patients they could not afford to remain without being subsidized.³³¹ Although in the nineteenth century the government rejected all requests to provide a doctor,³³² in 1900 it was willing to grant £50 a year, but by granting Rotorua £500 for the same purpose created another grievance.³³³ The following year, the Town Clerk explained that, despite this grant, because there were few private patients there was 'not sufficient inducement for a doctor to stay. Within the last 9 months, three doctors have started in succession, and have had to leave'. This lack of a doctor was 'a decided drawback to Te Aroha as a resort for invalids'. As the government provided a subsidy of £125 for Hanmer Springs, he requested the same.³³⁴ Not until the government took over the

³²⁷ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 8 July 1893, p. 23.

³²⁸ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 10 March 1894, p. 23.

³²⁹ Tourist Department, TO 1, 1894/198, ANZ-W; *Te Aroha News*, 20 November 1886, p. 2, 27 November 1886, p. 2, 13 September 1887, p. 3.

³³⁰ *Auckland Weekly News*, 4 June 1887, p. 34.

³³¹ For example, Dr Alfred Wright: *Te Aroha News*, 4 June 1887, p. 2.

³³² For example, Alfred Wright to Minister of Lands, 15 August 1887, 17 August 1887, 6 January 1888; Minister of Lands to Alfred Wright, 19 January 1888, Tourist Department, TO 1, 1891/198, ANZ-W.

³³³ *Auckland Weekly News*, 27 April 1900, p. 10.

³³⁴ William Hill to Superintendent, Tourist Department, 13 September 1901, Tourist Department, TO 1/14, 1901/121/1, ANZ-W.

running of the domain in 1903 was the sanatorium adequately staffed under the direction of a suitably qualified doctor, who had formerly worked at Rotorua.³³⁵

In 1902, the Lucien Institute advertised that its 'baking cure' could treat spinal curvature, 'muscular and joint diseases, letheamia, rheumatism, gout, rheumatoid arthritis, rheumatic and gouty deformities, dropsical limbs, obesity, fibrous ankylosis of joints (Stiff Joints), Etc'. Using 'The Latest and Most Perfected Apparatus, Absolute "Dry Heat", to 400 degrees', the illustration showed a patient enclosed, apart from his head, in a boiler. This treatment, 'taken in conjunction with the THERMAL Baths and waters, massage Electrotherapeutics, Swedish movement Systems, will ameliorate and cure where other remedial measures have failed'.³³⁶ No accounts of the effectiveness of this alarming treatment have been traced.

Lack of funds delayed the 'continental system of treatment by inhalation', as recommended in a 1902 report. The town clerk had recommended creating this by using

a tunnel which was driven into a hill to tap a fresh supply of hot water. This tunnel goes in about 150ft, and the heat of the vapour is very considerable as you go into the drive. In a crude way, there are all the elements of an ideal natural vapour bath. Several medical men, who have inspected the drive, are strongly of opinion that with proper development a great curative agency could be established, some going so far as to assert that with proper appliances this is more valuable than all the baths.³³⁷

Plans were devised between 1903 and 1909, but although the government balneologist considered that 'this would be the most valuable bath at Te Aroha from a medical point of view',³³⁸ in the latter year the

³³⁵ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 27 November 1902, p. 32, 11 December 1902, p. 34, 26 March 1903, p. 33.

³³⁶ Advertisement, *Waikato Advocate*, January 1902, reproduced in *Auckland-Waikato Historical Journal*, no. 77 (April 2001), p. 26.

³³⁷ Willaim Hill to Superintendent, Tourist Department, 1 September 1902, Tourist Department, TO 1/14, 1901/121/1, ANZ-W.

³³⁸ Memorandum by Arthur S. Wolhmann (Government Balneologist), n.d. [received by Tourist Department on 9 January 1909], Tourist Department, TO 1, 4/355, ANZ-W.

plans were shelved 'indefinitely', presumably on financial grounds,³³⁹ and were never revived.

MIRACLE CURES

The growth of the sanatorium and the steadily increasing number of visitors was evidence that the waters, whether taken internally or externally, assisted many sufferers. But more than relief of symptoms was claimed: complete cures were reported regularly. An Auckland journalist writing in late November 1880 observed a Hamilton man who 'was suffering badly from rheumatism and had to be assisted from the landing up to the hotel. After using the baths for a few days I saw him walking about without help, and he informed me that he felt much better'.³⁴⁰ In December, the *Te Aroha Miner*, which might be accused of wanting to encourage local prosperity by over-praising the springs, wrote that they had 'long been known to possess wonderful curative powers in cases of rheumatism, and kindred ailments, and quite recently several cures have come under our notice'. One man,

who three weeks or a month ago was completely crippled by a severe attack of rheumatism, and who had spend pounds and pounds in doctors' bills, is now perfectly cured through the use of the Springs. We could mention others who have obtained relief.³⁴¹

In the same month, a temperance advocate reported that he had 'met a person at Te Aroha last week who, a short time ago, could only walk with the help of two sticks. As proof of his restoration by the hot baths ... he had walked the day before from Shortland, a distance of thirty-four miles'.³⁴² A Paeroa resident who spent five months at Te Aroha during the first rush 'witnessed quite a number of persons suffering from rheumatism and kindred complaints' obtaining 'considerable relief from continuous bathing'.³⁴³ The landlord of the Hot Springs Hotel described a cure in 1881:

³³⁹ See Tourist Department, TO 1, 4/355, ANZ-W.

³⁴⁰ Own Correspondent, *Auckland Star*, 23 November 1880, p. 3.

³⁴¹ *Te Aroha Miner*, n.d., reprinted in *Waikato Times*, 9 December 1880, p. 2.

³⁴² *Thames Advertiser*, 23 December 1880, p. 3.

³⁴³ Paeroa Correspondent, 'Te Aroha and its Environs', *Thames Advertiser*, 11 October 1886, p. 2.

One young man who on arrival had to be carried in a chair to his daily bath ... is now camping out and braving all the roughing of pig hunting; while an old lady who not long ago was so crippled with sciatica that she had to be carried to the spring, now steps briskly up the hillside twice a day for her dip.³⁴⁴

Thomas Rawdon, the foreman of works for the Thames Borough Council, arrived in 1883 unable to move either hand or foot after a stroke and also suffering from asthma and bronchitis. 'He is now able to walk alone, has made flesh, and the bronchitis and asthma have completely left him. Mr Rawdon walks about the township, pounding the praises of our "pools of Siloam," and promises to send up all the blind, halt and lame of his acquaintance'.³⁴⁵ And he did so after returning to Thames 'almost a new man, infused with quite a cheerful spirit', but then unexpectedly dropped dead in his office less than two months after his 'cure'.³⁴⁶

In 1885, another man wrote that he had been cured of crippling rheumatism.³⁴⁷ Two months later, another visitor, Joshua Hartley,³⁴⁸ using the pseudonym 'Voz', on looking through the visitors' book 'was struck with the large number of reliable testimonies written therein of benefits derived by visitors suffering from almost "every ill that flesh is heir to." Several invalid visitors I met in the township also testified personally to the wonderful benefits they were deriving from the use of the baths'.³⁴⁹ Later that year, another man wrote about 'Marvellous Cures':

The visitors' book shows that people from all parts of the world have sought the remedial influence of the baths, and, judging by their written testimonies, with very beneficial results. A well-known Wanganui gentleman [Edward Garner]³⁵⁰ notifies that for upwards of ten years he had been suffering from rheumatic gout and indigestion. On the recommendation of Dr Lewis, of Auckland, he went to Te Aroha. After using the baths and drinking the waters regularly, he found himself in better health than he had enjoyed for ten years, and now highly recommends the use of the baths for any one suffering from similar complaints.

³⁴⁴ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Thames Advertiser*, 4 July 1881, p. 3.

³⁴⁵ *Te Aroha News*, 1 December 1883, p. 2.

³⁴⁶ *Thames Advertiser*, 23 January 1884, p. 3.

³⁴⁷ Letter from John Lamb, *Te Aroha News*, 31 January 1885, p. 7.

³⁴⁸ See *Waikato Times*, 4 June 1885, p. 2.

³⁴⁹ 'Voz', 'A Trip to the Te Aroha Hot Springs', *Auckland Weekly News*, 4 April 1885, p. 7.

³⁵⁰ See *Te Aroha News*, 12 December 1885, p. 2.

Another gentleman suffering from sciatica says he found great relief in one week. A martyr to lumbago and sciatica says he was quite cured in 21 days. People who have been to Rotorua and Waiwera say that the curative properties of the Aroha baths eclipse either of these places.... People who have arrived at the baths in sedan chairs or supported on crutches have returned home without any artificial support; and indeed, so frequently has this been the case that it has been suggested to the local authorities to erect a museum for the safe keeping of these interesting relics, by which a considerable revenue might be raised by an annual sale of the stock in trade.³⁵¹

Another Aucklander wrote that his rheumatism had been so bad that he could not use his legs properly 'and also felt languid and dull, desiring only to be left alone'. After two weeks of bathing twice daily and drinking the water three times a day, as well as taking 'as much exercise as possible in the bracing air', he was a 'new man'. A Wanganui resident described No. 3 bath as 'the best doctor I've visited yet'.³⁵² The following year, 'Voz' again read hundreds of 'astonishing testimonials' in the visitors' book, quoting one:

I came up here in dread and fear,
 Expecting to meet my Maker,
 But thanks to the powers of the Te Aroha Springs,
 I've deceived the undertaker.³⁵³

Another visitor noted one benefit of drinking the water that was otherwise unmentioned. Although it was 'slightly laxative' it was 'a splendid tonic and very soothing, invariably curing dyspepsia', and it was 'always indulged in for relief' by residents 'in the habit of carousing'.³⁵⁴ A Methodist minister, who would not have had the same problem, wrote that drinking the water had cured his indigestion.³⁵⁵ One grateful farmer gave £5 to the domain board 'as a thank-offering' for the cure of his son, who had 'suffered greatly, almost since birth', but through using the waters enjoyed 'excellent

³⁵¹ 'The Aroha Hot Springs: Marvellous Cures and Manifold Attractions', *Waikato Times*, 3 December 1885, p. 2.

³⁵² Letter from James Stichbury, *Te Aroha News*, 12 December 1885, p. 2.

³⁵³ 'Voz', 'A Holiday at Te Aroha', *Auckland Weekly News*, 24 April 1886, p. 6.

³⁵⁴ C. Voice-Hawkins, 'My Visit to Te Aroha', *Observer*, 30 May 1885, p. 3.

³⁵⁵ Letter from Rev T.J. Wills, *Te Aroha News*, 18 April 1885, p. 7.

health'.³⁵⁶ A justice of the peace was cured of insomnia, and a Member of the Legislative Council was 'convinced' that the springs contained 'extraordinary curative properties for the following complaints: supposed gout, rheumatism in all its forms, dyspepsia and cutaneous disorders', and should be good for renal complaints. He had urged Sir Julius Vogel to try the waters.³⁵⁷

As wet mines gave many miners rheumatism and related problems, many must have benefited from the baths. A Quartzville miner, Charles Peters, ³⁵⁸ after suffering for 19 years from lumbago and rheumatism, sometimes being unable to walk, was cured in one week by Cadman.³⁵⁹ One visitor cured his rheumatism by immersing himself in 'a somewhat slimy cauldron, seething and bubbling at a temperature of one hundred and eighteen degrees'.³⁶⁰ Another 'martyr to rheumatism' was King Tawhiao, who in May 1885 stayed with Mokena Hou while using the sulphur baths.³⁶¹ After being given free use of a private bath for 'a prolonged simmer', he departed 'much benefited by his frequent visits'.³⁶² Like others, Tawhiao found the benefits fleeting, requiring further visits to ease his symptoms. In September that year he once again derived much benefit.³⁶³ Two years later he returned, still seeking a cure.³⁶⁴

Although clearly in Tawhiao's case his symptoms were relieved but his rheumatism remained, remarkable cures of sufferers from throughout New Zealand and abroad continued to be recorded.³⁶⁵ In 1890 a correspondent

³⁵⁶ *Waikato Times*, 31 March 1885, p. 3; *Te Aroha News*, 28 March 1885, p. 2; the child was either John Lionel Smith or Bellefield Seddon Smith: Birth Certificates of John Lionel Smith, 24 April 1882, 1882/5957; Bellefield Seddon Smith, 27 January 1884, 1884/1356, BDM.

³⁵⁷ Testimonials printed in *Te Aroha News*, 4 September 1886, p. 2.

³⁵⁸ *Tauranga Electoral Roll, 1885*, p. 22.

³⁵⁹ *Te Aroha News*, 2 October 1886, p. 3.

³⁶⁰ *Observer*, 6 March 1886, p. 3.

³⁶¹ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Thames Advertiser*, 30 May 1885, p. 3.

³⁶² *Waikato Times*, 28 May 1885, p. 3, Te Aroha Correspondent, 6 June 1885, p. 2; *Te Aroha News*, 30 May 1885, p. 2.

³⁶³ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 10 September 1885, p. 2.

³⁶⁴ *Waikato Times*, 8 October 1887, p. 3.

³⁶⁵ For example, letters in *Te Aroha News*, 12 December 1885, p. 2, 4 September 1886, p. 2, and the cases of Bishop Hadfield of Wellington, *Te Aroha News*, 4 June 1887, p. 2, Peter Anderson of Blenheim, *Te Aroha News*, 26 November 1887, p. 3, Rev. James A. Crawford

noted that every day in the domain there was ‘an exhibition of the lame, the halt, and the blind. Poor creatures, they seem to derive great benefit from the waters’.³⁶⁶ An Auckland visitor was told of the benefits to rheumatics:

I was told of a man who had to be lifted, chair and all, into one of the big open baths. He couldn’t stand. The rheumatism wouldn’t let him. In six weeks that party hadn’t got a trace of rheumatism left, and he went away from Te Aroha a “well man.” In the visitors’ book at the Baths, as well as that at the Palace Hotel, will be found the testimony of numberless visitors to the extraordinary virtues of Te Aroha water.³⁶⁷

A comment in the *Te Aroha News* that ‘comparatively few have failed to receive very great benefit’³⁶⁸ revealed that not all invalids recovered and that newspapers publicized only the successes. The common view in the nineteenth century was indicated in the visitors’ books: No. 2 bath was ‘a certain cure for hidebound invalids’, ‘excellent cure for bashfulness and blasphemy’, ‘cured a compound fracture of a wooden leg’, and, contradictorily, that the water was either ‘good for curing love in third degree’ or could ‘cure anything but love and lying’.³⁶⁹

In 1891, the *New Zealand Graphic* accompanied its photographs of the domain³⁷⁰ with praise of the ‘many surprising cures of rheumatism and other cognate diseases’ effected. The latest bathhouse was for

a cold water spring, which has been found to be wonderfully efficacious in cases of skin disease. Being a cold spring, but little attention had been paid to it, until a gentleman, well-known in Auckland, was induced by a local resident to wash in it. The result was truly astonishing, as in a very short space of time he found to his intense delight that, like Naaman of old, “his flesh came again like unto the flesh of a little child, and he was clean.”

There were ‘many well-authenticated instances’ of cure or alleviation of cases of ‘acute rheumatism, pronounced hopeless by the medical

of County Londonderry, *Te Aroha News*, 8 December 1888, p. 2, Edwin Perkins of Auckland, *Te Aroha News*, 22 March 1900, p. 2.

³⁶⁶ ‘Te Aroha’, *Observer*, 8 February 1890, p. 15.

³⁶⁷ C.A. Wilkins, ‘In Hot Water: A Little Holiday Jaunt’, *Observer*, 13 January 1894, p. 19.

³⁶⁸ *Te Aroha News*, 18 October 1884, p. 2.

³⁶⁹ *Waikato Times*, 4 June 1885, p. 2; *Observer*, 3 April 1899, p. 11.

³⁷⁰ Photographs, *New Zealand Graphic*, 16 May 1891, p. 5.

faculty'.³⁷¹ Two years later, this journal doubted whether its waters were 'so efficacious as those at the sanatorium at Okoroire', but it was 'beyond doubt that in several most obstinate cases of rheumatism which had resisted every treatment at other sanatoriums marvellous cures have been effected'.³⁷²

Claims for cures continued well into the twentieth century. A Wellington man told the *Te Aroha News* in 1936 that he had visited annually for 20 years. On his first visit his rheumatism had 'seemed hopeless', but after two visits to Te Aroha and Rotorua he was completely cured. He recommended that 'to receive the most immediate and beneficial result sufferers with uric acid trouble should firstly attend Rotorua because of the sulphurous waters, and secondly take the treatment of the soda waters of Te Aroha'. Taken in this sequence this combination was 'absolutely ideal for obtaining relief, if not a complete cure'.³⁷³ Two other cases 'selected at random' were described in a pamphlet about the spa. 'One patient, so crippled with rheumatism that he was unable to walk and had to be conveyed on a stretcher, in one month benefited to the extent of being able to make the 1,000 foot climb to Bald Spur'. The other, 'an influential farmer in the district' who 'was once a cripple, had his health so far restored as to allow of him taking over and working the farm on which he now lives'.³⁷⁴

WHO WERE THE VISITORS?

According to one board member, Te Aroha was 'the resort of the bulk of the working Class, who require the use of mineral waters in the treatment of their numerous ailments'.³⁷⁵ Possibly it was a working-class bather who wrote in the visitors' book that the baths were 'the next great wonder to the pyramids of Egypt'.³⁷⁶ As these books have not survived and in its early years the *Te Aroha News* recorded the names irregularly and incompletely, it is not possible to give a detailed analysis of the visitors. One example, in

³⁷¹ *New Zealand Graphic*, 16 May 1891, p. 4.

³⁷² *New Zealand Graphic*, 25 March 1893, p. 279.

³⁷³ *Te Aroha News*, 23 March 1936, p. 1.

³⁷⁴ *Te Aroha Spa*, [p. 17].

³⁷⁵ James Mills to Minister of Lands, 5 September 1892, Tourist Department, TO 1, 1891/89, ANZ-W.

³⁷⁶ *Waikato Times*, 4 June 1885, p. 2.

February 1885, recorded two from Otago, 25 from Auckland, 12 from Thames, one from Port Albert, two from Waiuku, one from Coromandel, one from Whangerei, one from Paeroa, one from Queensland, and two from Newcastle, New South Wales.³⁷⁷ A list published on 2 January the following year gave an incomplete list of adults that included 78 from Auckland, 16 from Thames, ten from the Waikato, one from Napier, two from Cambridge, one from Hamilton, one from Morrinsville, one from Karangahake, one from Christchurch, three from Queensland, and one from Ireland.³⁷⁸ A week later, visitors came from 18 places, including one each from Melbourne and England.³⁷⁹ The following week there were one each from Melbourne, Sydney, and Queensland, two from England, and a mother and child from New York. The Palace Hotel accommodated the Minister of Public Works, two Legislative Councillors, one Member of the House of Representatives, and two professors.³⁸⁰ Later in the month the same hotel hosted a major, a major general, and a clergyman and his wife from England.³⁸¹ Samples from January 1888 produced the dean of Sydney Cathedral, three others from New South Wales, three from Melbourne, and a colonel from London, along with people from throughout New Zealand.³⁸² Amongst the New Zealanders in February were the Hon. G.W. Waterhouse, the Under-Secretary of the Native Department, and Mr Justice Gillies.³⁸³ Having such distinguished visitors caused the following ‘incident’ in the Hot Springs Hotel in 1890:

Too officious bobby enters on Sabbath, and two gentlemen are discovered with a like number of whiskies before them. Bobby: “Are ye travellers or boarders?” Answer: “Boarders, of course.” Bobby (to landlord): “Who are these gintlemen?” Landlord: “Well, one is the Hon. Mr -----, M.L.C., of New South Wales, and the other is the Chief Commissioner of Police for the colony of -----!” Exit bobby in a great hurry.³⁸⁴

³⁷⁷ *Te Aroha News*, 14 February 1885, p. 2.

³⁷⁸ *Te Aroha News*, 2 January 1886, p. 2.

³⁷⁹ *Te Aroha News*, 9 January 1886, p. 2.

³⁸⁰ *Te Aroha News*, 16 January 1886, p. 2.

³⁸¹ *Te Aroha News*, 23 January 1886, p. 2, 30 January 1886, p. 2.

³⁸² *Te Aroha News*, 7 January 1888, p. 2, 14 January 1888, p. 2, 21 January 1888, p. 2.

³⁸³ *Te Aroha News*, 4 February 1888, p. 2, 25 February 1888, p. 2.

³⁸⁴ ‘Te Aroha’, *Observer*, 1 March 1890, p. 14.

Later samples revealed the same mix. In the *Te Aroha News* for 13 January 1900, at least 40 people (there were an unspecified number under the heading 'family') had stayed at the Hot Springs Hotel during the previous week. The Grand Hotel had 47, Park House had 14, and Gladstone had 17. Visitors came from all over the North Island, especially Auckland, as well as Sydney, Victoria, and Western Australia. Amongst the visitors were 'Mrs Dr Lindsay and family', a captain, and a Taranaki parliamentarian and his son.³⁸⁵ During the following week over 63 stayed at the Hot Springs Hotel, including seven from New South Wales, two from Western Australia, and 'Lady Tangye and nurse' from England. Devonshire House had 16, as had Heathcote's Temperance Hotel; Park House had 15, including two from Sydney, while the Grand Hotel had 19.³⁸⁶ The week before 27 January had over 43 at the Hot Springs Hotel, including two Auckland families and their servants. Four people from Sydney, four from Western Australia, and one from Adelaide stayed at various premises.³⁸⁷ In the last example, published on 21 February, not only were there five Australians but there was one each from Edinburgh, Dublin, and Yarmouth.³⁸⁸

A similar range of visitors came during the 1880s, and at least some mingled with miners and other locals on the domain, in bars and dining rooms, and in local organizations and festivities, as illustrated by D'Arcy Texas McDougall.³⁸⁹ The tourist season ran from approximately the middle of October to the end of May, but some visitors used the springs during winter as well.³⁹⁰ Therefore, quite apart from any relaxing or health-giving qualities of the waters, the springs created a different social climate to any other mining district in New Zealand, and some businessmen and publicans who came to provide services for miners ended up providing these, more profitably, to tourists.

ALMOST A VISITOR IN 1915

³⁸⁵ *Te Aroha News*, 13 January 1900, p. 2.

³⁸⁶ *Te Aroha News*, 20 January 1900, p. 2.

³⁸⁷ *Te Aroha News*, 27 January 1900, p. 2.

³⁸⁸ *Te Aroha News*, 21 February 1900, p. 2.

³⁸⁹ See paper on his life.

³⁹⁰ *Auckland Weekly News*, 30 July 1887, p. 29.

The tourist trade would fade over time, as transport improved and more adventurous holidays became easier and more popular. Frank Morton, a journalist, editor, and poet,³⁹¹ in 1915 gave what may have become a popular view of Te Aroha, at least amongst the younger and healthier:

This mail brought me thirty-five picture postcards from Te Aroha, each bearing an anguished message of pleading and reproof. It seems that when I wrote something about that part of the country a little while back I did not mention Te Aroha, and in that fact Te Aroharoorans find great cause of grievance and dismay. One picture was of a local bank, and the note on the space “for correspondence only” asked me, ‘What do you think of this?’....

In the trains that sometimes move perceptibly in those parts I have twice crawled past Te Aroha. On both occasions we lived at the railway-station for a considerable time; but I did not descend, because I am heavy of foot, and not for anything would I wantonly have disturbed the slumber of those placid shades. Te Aroha lies under and against a big hill, and up the hillside rises for ever the tired slow vapour cast by Te Aroha’s breathing as it snores. I am not one of those grossly familiar and impertinent people who wander uninvited into the bedroom of sleeping communities. Never shall it be said that I profanely invaded and disturbed any eternal silence. I’d scorn to do it. Mind you, fair’s fair. I’m told that once a week, when the WEEKLY NEWS arrives, Te Aroha rises on one elbow, scans the notices of Births and Deaths, and then subsides again contentedly murmuring “Thank goodness the world gets on right enough without our bothering!” There’s energy! There’s patriotic spirit! There’s pious resignation to a state of dreamful joy!

Mind you, too, I only speak of a place (with due charity) as I find it. I am credibly assured by intrepid explorers and persons who recklessly dare the unknown that Te Aroha is quite a lively place in summer. A man at Te Kuiti told me that on the bowling green at Te Aroha the Te Arohatootlers manage to get out of the way of the bowls five times out of six. Being above all things a truthful man, I think I ought to mention this. I admit that the Te Kuititiddler here alluded to has a wild imagination, that occasionally slips all bonds of scruple....

If I live, I shall go to Te Aroha some day when I need rest. I shall go there and take the waters that my postcard friends so warmly commend. I shall see the bowling-green on which the energetic or athletic Te Aroharoorers spring so nimbly and wonderfully about.

³⁹¹ See Joanna Woods, *Facing the Music: Charles Baeyertz and the Triad* (Dunedin, 2008), index.

I shall write sweet things in the Visitor's Book. In case I forget, I now give you permission to remind me.³⁹²

CONCLUSION

Although founded as a mining settlement, Te Aroha became prominent as a sanatorium, attracting visitors to soak in its hot waters and to drink copious draughts of the mineral springs, both being claimed to have miraculous curative properties. Although these claims could be challenged, the hot springs were the basis for a flourishing tourist trade, and enabled locals to mingle with a variety of visitors, unlike other mining centres that lacked such an attraction.

Appendix

*Figure 1: 'The flow paths of groundwater at Te Aroha', mapped by Max Oulton, University of Waikato, and published in Waitangi Tribunal, *The Hauraki Report: Wai 686* (Wellington, 2006), vol. 3, p. 906; used with permission.*

*Figure 2: 'The Te Aroha Domain mineral springs, circa 1910', mapped by Max Oulton, University of Waikato (based on John Henderson and John Arthur Bartrum, *The Geology of the Aroha Subdivision, Hauraki, Auckland: Geological Survey Bulletin No. 16* (Wellington, 1913)), and published in *Hauraki Report*, vol. 3, p. 913; used with permission.*

³⁹² Frank Morton, 'Te Aroha', *Auckland Weekly News*, 17 June 1915, pp. 14-15.

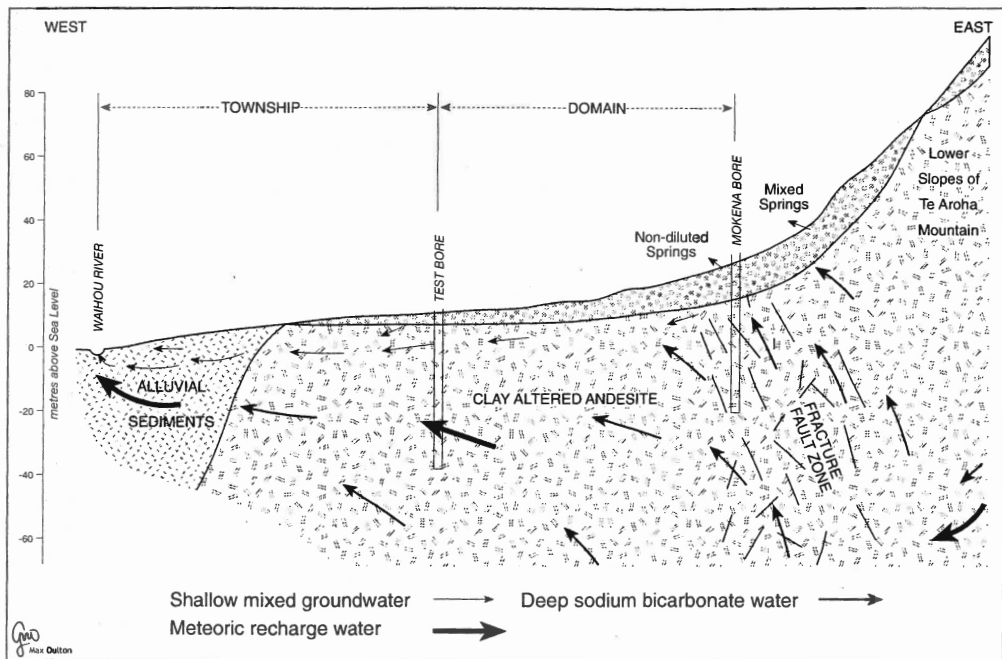


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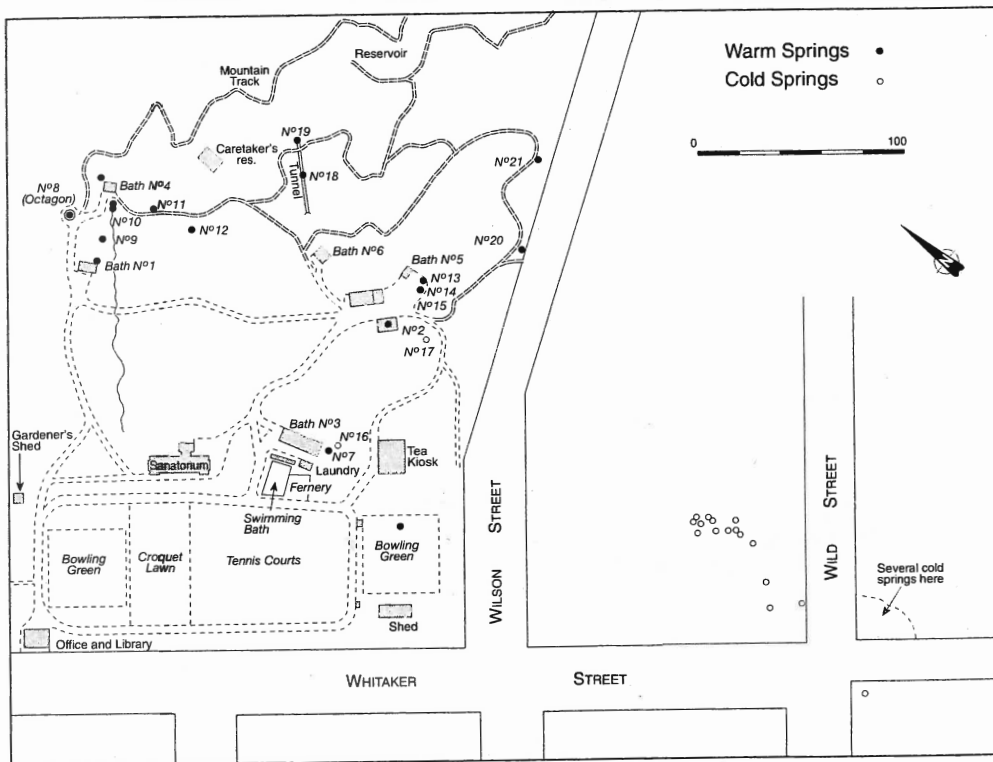


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