

CHILDREN'S LIVES IN THE TE AROHA DISTRICT

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Abstract: *Exaggerated claims have been made about the joys experienced by children living on goldfields, but many did indeed have happy memories. Childhood in the late nineteenth century often included working at quite a young age to supplement the family income, and examples are given of the wide variety of work undertaken. Some jobs, as in the battery, were physically exhausting, none were highly paid, and not all young workers were well treated.*

Life could be dangerous, as is illustrated by a variety of accidents, some fatal. The river claimed some lives, as did house fires. Ill health was common, with periodic epidemics causing several deaths amongst children – some families experienced multiple deaths.

Abandoned or uncontrollable children were sent to Industrial Homes, some stepmothers lived up to their folk reputation, and several children suffered from cruel treatment. Although most juvenile crimes were of a minor nature, early sexual experimentation caused moral panic among parents.

Adults provided organized activities of an improving nature, especially sports and social gatherings, and some children were able to visit other places. Military cadets were formed, and it was possible to participate in various forms of arts and crafts, notably music. And all children had ways to make their own, unorganized, fun. All of which suggests that for most children, while their life was not as idyllic as some would claim, it was generally happy.

AN IDEALIZED VIEW OF CHILDREN'S LIVES ON THE GOLDFIELDS

Edward Wakefield, writing in 1889, gave his English readers a decidedly rose-coloured view of children's lives on all New Zealand's goldfields:

The gold-fields are a great place for children, whose lot is a very merry one. They want for nothing, and, instead of being looked upon as an encumbrance or an anxiety, are considered the greatest of blessings. They enjoy almost unlimited liberty, but yet are under very fair control, and are usually well-behaved and singularly interesting from their curious combination of simplicity and independence. They all go to school, the miners being most anxious for education; but they begin work at an early age and are generally helpful and energetic in a degree rarely found among town children.¹

¹ Edward Wakefield, *New Zealand After Fifty Years* (London, 1889), p. 168,

One point raised in this eulogy, about children being ‘usually well-behaved’, is considered in the paper on larrikinism.

In this paper, children are defined as normally being up to (and including) 15 years of age.

HAPPY MEMORIES

In 1948, as part of the jubilee of the borough of Te Aroha, two of the children of Thomas Payne Judkins, a boot and shoemaker who moved there at the beginning of 1884,² recalled their childhood experiences. Martha Anne, born in 1879,³ recalled both personalities and events:

The fat baker that had the fire⁴ often stayed at the Post Office with the Cloughs,⁵ remember when the young man [Alexander McKee] shot at Mr Clough down in the rushes.⁶ Remember little Billy, that was drowned in the river.⁷ Old Mr [James] Gerrish the bell ringer⁸ calling out about the SS Patiki ... and [I] was one of the little girls with the Maori girls that held the red, white and blue ribbon across the tracks when the first engine came through to join the Paeroa line [on 1 March 1886].⁹ It was while living there that the Tarawera eruption took place [in 1886], we heard the booming in the night, the sky was so red and mother got us all up to see it, and in the morning, all our clothes lines were covered with ashes.... We all liked the circus that came and tied animals to the school fence. I saw a boy stick a pin into the giraffe’s leg, and the giraffe snatched off the boy’s cap and tore it to shreds with its teeth. I was frightened. The [Fisk] Jubilee Singers sang in the town hall [either in December 1886 or April 1889]¹⁰ and my father carried me on his back that night, it was pouring wet.¹¹

² *Te Aroha News*, 5 January 1884, p. 2; *Star*, 16 November 1909, p. 3; Death Notice, *Auckland Star*, 30 June 1920, p. 12.

³ Birth Certificate of Martha Anne Judkins, 1879/14824, BDM.

⁴ This particular baker’s fire has not been traced; it may have happened in the 1890s, when copies of the *Te Aroha News* have not survived because of being destroyed in a fire.

⁵ Thomas Edward Clough was the postmaster: see *Ohinemuri Electoral Roll, 1896*, p. 10.

⁶ See paper on physical and mental health in the Te Aroha district.

⁷ Could he have been William Onyon (aged 17): see below.

⁸ See paper on his life.

⁹ *Te Aroha News*, 2 March 1886, p. 2.

¹⁰ *Te Aroha News*, 18 December 1886, p. 2, 3 April 1889, p. 2, 6 April 1889, p. 2.

¹¹ Annie Jones to Town Clerk, Te Aroha, 27 March 1948, Letters re 1948 Borough Jubilee Celebrations, Matamata-Piako District Council Archives, Te Aroha.

Her brother, William Edwin Judkins, who had been born in 1881,¹² recalled several dramatic events:

Opening of the railway from Waitoa to Te Aroha – I was given a ride on a jigger over the new bridge on that great day: Burglary at the railway station – the safe was taken outside and battered open one night – the thieves were never caught;¹³ Burning down of [Robert] Harris' store one night – a great blaze;¹⁴ the Tarawera eruption and my mother's washing covered with ashes from it; the Queen's Jubilee in 1887 and the wind spoiling my maypole dance.¹⁵

Another boy recalled the 1880s, when the mines kept the township going financially,

as the miners came down to the place at short intervals and spent their money freely.... Amongst the miners who visited the place there were a number of musicians including some violinists and singers, and for the few days they stayed on each occasion, the township was pretty gay, nevertheless I have no recollection of the services of a policeman being called upon to keep order.¹⁶

(As indicated in the papers on larrikinism, the drink problem, and crime, in fact the policeman's services were regularly called upon.) In 1974, the *Te Aroha News* received an article about William Slaughter, who from 1903 to 1906 lit the gas streetlamps and later was the registrar of dogs:¹⁷

William Slaughter and his friendly wife lived in a small four-roomed cottage on the corner of Brick and Puriri Streets, opposite the famous "Bungalow House."
 "Bill," as he was familiarly known to young and old alike, always wore a large red and white spotted 'Kerchief around his neck.
 He was said to be of Cockney descent and to our childish minds the 'kerchief and his brown felt hat was the acknowledged symbol, or dress, of all Cockneys....

¹² Birth Certificate of William Edwin Judkins, 1881/11124, BDM.

¹³ See *Te Aroha News*, 5 May 1888, p. 2.

¹⁴ See *Te Aroha News*, 10 March 1888, p. 2.

¹⁵ W.E. Judkins to Town Clerk, Te Aroha, 3 April 1948, Letters re 1948 Borough Jubilee Celebrations, Matamata-Piako District Council Archives, Te Aroha.

¹⁶ J.T. Mannix to Town Clerk, Te Aroha, 31 March 1948, Letters re 1948 Borough Jubilee Celebrations, Matamata-Piako District Council Archives, Te Aroha.

¹⁷ See *Auckland Star*, 25 January 1923, p. 3; Death Notice, *New Zealand Herald*, 27 October 1928, p. 1.

Bill was a dapper little man, with a distinctive style of dress, and was very quick in his speech and movements. What he worked at during the day we did not know and it did not interest us.

No children were ever seen at his home, but the neighbours and ourselves were always made welcome. Most families in the vicinity had six or eight children....

It was the delight of local children to watch Bill Slaughter light the lamps in the late afternoon.

Aboard his small pony and carrying a miniature ladder Bill would go from lamp to lamp opening the small glass doors to light them.

The children had a favourite spot on the hillside "up the back" where they could watch the lights appear one by one until gradually the place was like a fairyland. When darkness fell the lights were like jewels on black velvet.

To us this was much more interesting than pressing a switch, as is done today, and lighting up the whole town....

As we turned happily indoors how warm and comforting our homes seemed, with our mothers preparing the evening meal on the reliable black coal range. Later we would hear our lessons read, and after saying our prayers go to bed.

Our prayers always included Bill Slaughter, Mr [Robert] Michael¹⁸ for smoothing the paths and our dear Frederick Wild¹⁹ at the police station, who protected our town twenty-four hours a day.

Sometime in the early morning before we arose Bill would be out extinguishing the lights that were still burning. As we look back the daily round of those men seems to be more of a ritual than a job.

Apart from the songs of the Bell Birds and Tuis and occasional moreporks the only sounds to break the morning and evening silence were the tinkling of the cows' bells on their way to milking.

We are grateful to all these early townfolk who allowed such a happy and carefree childhood on the lower slopes of Mount Te Aroha.²⁰

EMPLOYMENT

Children were commonly sent to work at a wide variety of jobs, sometimes to the detriment of their education.²¹ Ages were rarely specified in advertisements, but by their early teenage years at least most children were supplementing the family income. For an example of children working at a very young age, in 1898 a survey party working at Waiorongomai included two boys aged nine and ten.²²

¹⁸ See paper on his life.

¹⁹ He recalled his name as being Jonathon.

²⁰ 'The Old Lamp Lighters of Te Aroha', *Te Aroha News*, 17 December 1974, p. 10.

²¹ See Jeanine Graham, 'Child Employment in New Zealand', *New Zealand Journal of History*, vol. 21 no. 1 (April 1987), pp. 62-78; Colin McGeorge, 'School Attendance and Child Labour 1890-1914', *Historical News*, n. 46 (May 1983), pp. 17-20.

²² *Te Aroha News*, 12 February 1898, p. 2.

Farmers always required assistance, as in 1900, when a Waiorongomai resident ‘took a stroll just outside the village and saw one mob of cows being driven in to milk by a small boy and a girl about the age of Horace and Frank [his children, aged five and six].²³ There were close on 40 cows and a bull’.²⁴ Three advertisements published in October 1885 sought older children:

Wanted, a Strong Boy, able to Milk well. Apply to Mr Roche, Shaftesbury.
 Wanted, A Smart Strong Boy, about 14 years of age, able to milk and assist on Farm, to go to Karangahake. Comfortable home, and 10s per week.
 Wanted, a Strong Active Boy, able to milk and accustomed to Cattle, about 12 years of age, to go to the Junction [of the Waihou and Ohinemuri rivers]. Good home and 8s per week.²⁵

Another farmer wanted both a married couple and a boy aged ‘about Twelve’.²⁶ A Waitoa farmer advertised for ‘a married man to work a dairy of 30 cows; must have two children able to milk’;²⁷ clearly either boys or girls were suitable. One Shaftesbury farmer sought a boy for inside and outside work: ‘Wanted – A Servant Boy to milk and do small jobs about the house’.²⁸ Being adaptable was a common requirement: ‘Wanted a Boy about fourteen years of age. Must be able to milk, and make himself generally useful’, one farmer specified.²⁹ Girls did a variety of tasks on farms,³⁰ and some were employed as ‘nurse girls’.³¹

Flax mills employed boys, as an 1885 advertisement illustrated: ‘Wanted, Three or Four Lads for Flax Mill’.³² That this was heavy work was implied by an 1874 advertisement for six ‘Stout Boys’ to work in a Thames mill.³³ Nor was it well paid, as illustrated by an 1890 strike caused by the owners of a Thames mill, one of them being Hugh McLiver, formerly manager of the New Find mine,³⁴ wanting to reduce their pay.

²³ Birth Certificates of James Horace Holt, 1894/4254; Frank Deacon Holt. 1895/5911, BDM.

²⁴ Thomas Franz Holt to Eliza Helen (Nell) Holt, 10 December 1900, Holt Papers, p. 86, Te Aroha Museum.

²⁵ Advertisements, *Te Aroha News*, 24 October 1885, p. 7, 31 October 1885, p. 7.

²⁶ Advertisement, *Te Aroha News*, 25 July 1885, p. 7.

²⁷ Advertisement, *Waikato Times*, 20 August 1881, p. 3.

²⁸ Advertisement, *Te Aroha News*, 3 November 1888, p. 2.

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

³⁰ For example, see paper on John Squirrell.

³¹ For example, advertisement, *Te Aroha News*, 4 July 1885, p. 7.

³² Advertisement, *Te Aroha News*, 24 October 1885, p. 7.

³³ Advertisement, *Thames Advertiser*, 11 March 1874, p. 2.

³⁴ See paper on the New Find mine.

There were eight boys employed at the mill, seven of whom struck. The eighth would not go out on strike because he was frightened his mother might strike him. We understand two of the boys are going to resume work this morning, the employers having agreed to pay them 12s 6d per week, which is an advance of 2s 6d. Those two who were, before the strike, employed washing, etc, will now be engaged at the strippers, for which work the proprietors had previously to pay 15s per week. The other five boys are remaining firm. One of the boys, we were given to understand, was removed from the stripping machine to loading the bench. This is practically a man's work, and for which he received 15s per week.³⁵

Thomas Bradley, who owned one of the main coaching firms in the Hauraki district,³⁶ was based in Te Aroha during the 1880s and 1890s.³⁷ In 1887, a mine manager travelling from Paeroa to Te Aroha was driven by a 'juvenile coachman, a boy aged about 14 years, son of Mr Bradley ... and a very good whip to boot'.³⁸ The following year, a visitor took the coach on the reverse trip, 'being driven by a son of the proprietor, a smart youth of sixteen years of age'.³⁹ One year later, Bradley and his son, George Langley, commonly known by his second name, were involved in a coach accident in Te Aroha.⁴⁰ Langley, the driver in the two previous examples, had been born in 1875.⁴¹

Boys working on the tramway assisted the older hands in various ways. One task not recorded for Waiorongomai, but probably carried out there as well as at Thames, was unhooking the loaded trucks from the wire hawser and hooking on the empty ones at the bottom of the inclines.⁴² In 1885, Thomas Hill,⁴³ then aged 16,⁴⁴ a driver on the horse grade between Butler's and Fern Spur inclines, had his foot crushed by a truck.⁴⁵ Two years later, a 15-year-old boy was working as a 'Tramway driver',⁴⁶ leading

³⁵ *Thames Star*, 10 September 1890, p. 2.

³⁶ See paper on the drink problem in the Te Aroha district.

³⁷ See *Ohinemuri Gazette*, 15 September 1897, p. 2; *Thames Advertiser*, 16 September 1897, p. 2.

³⁸ 'Aboriginal', 'On the Wallaby', *Thames Advertiser*, 12 December 1887, p. 2.

³⁹ *New Zealand Methodist*, 17 November 1888, p. 4.

⁴⁰ *Waikato Times*, 8 June 1889, p. 2.

⁴¹ Birth Certificate of George Langley Bradley, 1875/5809, BDM.

⁴² F.W. W[eston], 'Thames Reminiscences', *New Zealand Herald*, 24 March 1923, p. 13.

⁴³ See papers on the Piako County tramway at Waiorongomai and on private lives.

⁴⁴ Birth Certificate of Thomas Hill, 23 July 1869, 1869/16285, BDM.

⁴⁵ *Te Aroha News*, 12 December 1885, p. 2, Piako County Council, 23 January 1886, p. 2.

⁴⁶ Armed Constabulary Force, Report of Charges taken at Te Aroha Lock-Up 1880-1903, 3/1887, in private possession.

horses along the level portions of it. Charles Edward McLean, aged 17,⁴⁷ was injured when ‘moving and unloading quartz trucks with his father’,⁴⁸ William, the tramway manager,⁴⁹

Boys were employed in batteries, on various exhausting and monotonous unskilled tasks. A Thames miner had unhappy recollections of working in a battery when a boy: ‘£1 per week, washing blankets, empty tailings Pits, breaking stone etc. No Gum Boots – naked feet – wet as hell, with washing the dam heavy blankets etc – cold as hell 8 long hours – wet clothes etc’.⁵⁰ Another Thames miner who worked when a young teenager recalled ‘blanket-washing at the Manukau battery – wet and heavy work, in 12-hour shifts’.⁵¹ When a 16-year-old was killed at the Waitekauri goldfield in 1897 he was working a 12-hour shift; having started work at 8 o’clock in the morning, he was caught in the machinery at 7.40 in the evening,⁵² by which time he must have been too tired to be careful. Boys fed the stamps by hand, though the self-feeding process introduced into the first Waiorongomai battery was ‘such that one boy could manage the whole of this part of the work, which otherwise would require the constant attention of several men’.⁵³ The ‘blanket boy’⁵⁴ washed and cleaned the blankets used in the mercury process. In 1884, a 17-year-old and a 15-year-old working a night shift were sent to clear leaves blocking gratings on the pipe carrying water to the battery.⁵⁵ In that year, when a tailings plant was constructed, ‘one or more boys will be employed’ to keep the berdans topped up with tailings taken from pits sunk in the floor.⁵⁶

Young teenagers had a variety of mining jobs. For instance, in the 1870s a young Thames teenager worked as an ‘attendant in the change-house’ of one mine, seeing ‘to the drying of the wet clothes thrown off by the miners when they came off shift’ and doing ‘odd jobs for the carpenter and the blacksmith’. In any spare time, he was required ‘to look over the quartz-paddock, especially after rainfall had washed the

⁴⁷ Birth Certificate of Charles Edward McLean, 9 June 1875, 1875/952, BDM.

⁴⁸ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 6 August 1892, p. 23.

⁴⁹ See paper on the Piako County tramway at Waiorongomai.

⁵⁰ A.F. Sawyer, handwritten notes on early Thames (written 1946-1947), W.G. Hammond Papers, folder 36b, MS 134, Library of the Auckland Institute and War Memorial Library.

⁵¹ F.W. W[eston], ‘Thames Reminiscences’, *New Zealand Herald*, 24 March 1923, p. 13.

⁵² *Observer*, 28 August 1897, p. 7.

⁵³ J.G. Black to Minister of Mines, 24 May 1886, *AJHR*, 1886, C-4B, p. 8; H.A. Gordon to Under-Secretary, Mines Department, 5 June 1889, *AJHR*, 1889, C-3, p. 3.

⁵⁴ *Waikato Times*, 20 May 1884, p. 2.

⁵⁵ *Te Aroha News*, 24 May 1884, p. 2.

⁵⁶ *Auckland Weekly News*, 19 April 1884, p. 17.

stone, and pick out for the manager any stone that showed gold, lest dishonest folk should come along and help themselves'.⁵⁷ When old enough to work underground, they assisted experienced miners and learnt from them. In 1901, John Goldsworthy, an experienced mine manager,⁵⁸ told the conciliation board that he considered 'the proportion of boys, one to every five competent men, asked in the union scale, was small enough, when it was considered that it was necessary to train boys to keep up the supply of miners'.⁵⁹ When work resumed in the Werahiko mine at Waiorongomai in 1885, 'one man and a boy', the latter's age unspecified, were breaking out a trial crushing.⁶⁰ Four years later, a miner with a working interest in a Tui mine gave a 'boy' a quarter share in the claim to look after it for him.⁶¹

Both boys and girls worked in shops. In 1883, when Josiah Clifton Firth⁶² arranged for a telephone connection to be made, at his own expense, between his estate at Matamata and the Waiorongomai post office, he had to pay

the very considerable sum of £25 a year for attendance at the Waiorongomai end. In consideration of this £25 the Government employ a boy – a very small boy too – with a voice like a tin whistle, which falls upon one's ear like the chirrups of a blackbird. This diminutive official is mostly engaged in outside work of the office and very often is not "on hand" when required.⁶³

Commonly, family members were employed in shops, one example being John Squirrell's 17-year-old daughter running his Shaftesbury shop while he worked on his farm.⁶⁴ As it was a family concern, perhaps she was paid little or nothing. The hours could be long; one shopkeeper had a 'boy' of unspecified age working in his shop until nine o'clock at night (the shopkeeper continued working until 11.30).⁶⁵

Young teenagers were also employed in boarding houses, on miscellaneous duties, as illustrated by an 1887 advertisement: 'Wanted – A Boy, 13 or 14 years old, to make himself generally useful – Apply at Waverley House, Te Aroha'.⁶⁶ Hotels also

⁵⁷ F.W. W[eston], 'Thames Reminiscences', *New Zealand Herald*, 24 March 1923, p. 13.

⁵⁸ See paper on the Goldsworthy brothers.

⁵⁹ *Thames Star*, 23 May 1901, p. 2.

⁶⁰ *Thames Advertiser*, 3 March 1885, p. 3.

⁶¹ *Te Aroha News*, 29 May 1889, p. 2.

⁶² See paper on the Battery Company.

⁶³ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 11 December 1883, p. 2.

⁶⁴ See paper on John Squirrell.

⁶⁵ *Te Aroha News*, 10 March 1888, p. 2.

⁶⁶ Advertisement, *Te Aroha News*, 4 November 1887, p. 2.

employed teenagers; for instance, in 1882 a publican sought ‘a Girl, about 15, for Hotel at Te Aroha, to make herself generally useful’.⁶⁷ The following year, Thomas Lawless,⁶⁸ a Waiorongomai publican, required ‘a respectable boy, about 16 Years of Age’.⁶⁹ Several years later, a girl, age unspecified, was sought to help with housework in the Family Hotel.⁷⁰

Some opportunities existed for boys to learn trades. For instance, in 1888 the *Te Aroha News* advertised for ‘a smart Youth to learn Printing’.⁷¹ In the following year, ‘youths from 13 to 15 for tinsmith’s work’ were sought.⁷²

When family members were unavailable to assist, sometimes children obtained from the orphanage were employed. Just over six months after his 14-year-old son was drowned, leaving him with only an eight-year-old son,⁷³ in 1884 William Wilson, a Te Aroha draper and who also had a farm at Waiorongomai,⁷⁴ applied to the Thames orphanage for a boy; John Higgins was ‘licensed out to’ him.⁷⁵ It is not known for how long Higgins worked for him. In early 1886, when aged ‘about’ 16 and having returned from an Auckland industrial school to the Thames orphanage before being licensed to work for a gardener, he was charged with having absconded after working for only eight weeks. He claimed that his mother, a Chinese woman, wanted him to abscond so that he could assist her.⁷⁶

There was always a danger that children obtained from an orphanage would be exploited. In 1892 a storekeeper at Paeroa, Charles Featherstone Mitchell,⁷⁷ one of the first to rush to Te Aroha on hearing rumours of gold,⁷⁸ was exposed as a cruel employer. Two ‘lads’ from the industrial school at Kohimarama, Auckland, aged 15

⁶⁷ Advertisement, *Thames Star*, 14 August 1882, p. 3.

⁶⁸ See paper on his life.

⁶⁹ Advertisement, *Te Aroha News*, 24 November 1883, p. 3.

⁷⁰ Advertisement, *Te Aroha News*, 8 May 1889, p. 2.

⁷¹ Advertisement, *Te Aroha News*, 19 May 1888, p. 2.

⁷² Advertisement, *Te Aroha News*, 5 March 1889, p. 2.

⁷³ *Te Aroha News*, 15 September 1883, p. 2.

⁷⁴ For example, *Thames Advertiser*, 3 October 1881, p. 2, 19 April 1882, p. 3; *Te Aroha News*, 13 October 1883, p. 3, 1 March 1884, p. 7, 12 June 1886, p. 2, 14 August 1889, p. 2.

⁷⁵ Thames Orphanage and Training School, Minute Book 1879-1885, Minutes of Meeting of 7 April 1884, YBAZ 1244/1, ANZ-A.

⁷⁶ *Thames Star*, 4 March 1886, [p. 2].

⁷⁷ See paper on the Thames Miners Union.

⁷⁸ See paper ‘Awaiting the Proclamation of the Te Aroha Goldfield: 1 – 24 November 1880’.

and 16,⁷⁹ were indentured to him as apprentices in his newspaper business, but absconded, and once found were remanded to Thames for sentence.⁸⁰ When pleading guilty they stated they ‘had been ill-treated’,⁸¹ and were recommitted to the Kohimarama home.

In doing so His Worship referred to the evidence that had been taken at Paeroa, and said that in the face of this, though they had been indentured, it would not be right to send them back to Mr Mitchell, particularly as it had been shown that they had not been properly fed and clothed. Personally he had seen the little fellow Burgess come into the Court at Paeroa for slips of “copy” without shoes, and had he known at the time that he was a lad from the Home, he would certainly have interfered, but he had always been under the impression that Burgess was the child of one of the settlers. He, therefore, thought it best to order them back to the Home, and the Minister for Education could be communicated with as to what should be done with the lads.⁸²

In 1902 the *Te Aroha News* implied that there was no exploitation in its district: ‘If the law relating to child labour requires amendment, it should begin in town rather than in the country’.⁸³ This comment was questionable, certainly earlier in the town’s history, for in 1889 the two eldest sons of a woman separated from her husband worked, off and on, at unspecified employment. The eldest child was only 12, and earned about 6s a week, whilst his brother earned about 1s less.⁸⁴

The quality of the work done by juveniles cannot now be determined, although a 1909 report indicated that some teenage males were a trial to their employers:

There must be some hard cases in Te Aroha judging by the following advert, which appears in the local journal: -

WANTED – A BOY

That is not full of sleepiness, does not smoke too many cigarettes, loves to be a little handy, is not anxious to give “cheek,” and who wants to learn the trade. If that said boy will call at our office, we will treat him well, and, what is more, take some little interest in his welfare.

LET THAT BOY APPLY QUICKLY.⁸⁵

⁷⁹ Auckland Industrial School, Admissions Register, Boys, 1883-1890, folios 298, 317, BAAA 1955/2, ANZ-A.

⁸⁰ *Thames Advertiser*, 11 June 1892, p. 2.

⁸¹ Police Court, *Thames Advertiser*, 17 June 1892, p. 2.

⁸² *Thames Advertiser*, 8 July 1892, p. 2.

⁸³ *Te Aroha News*, n.d., reprinted in *Observer*, 6 September 1902, p. 3.

⁸⁴ Magistrate’s Court, *Te Aroha News*, 4 September 1889, p. 2.

⁸⁵ *Observer*, 9 January 1909, p. 16.

As boys provided cheaper labour, they were attractive to employers: in 1883, for instance, they were paid £1 10s a week.⁸⁶ In an 1889 report about mining machinery, the inspecting engineer of the Mines Department disapproved of employing boys:

The general usage in New Zealand is to feed the stamps by hand, and boys are employed for this purpose on account of cheap labour; but the feeding by hand can never be performed with so much regularity as by an automatic process, and stones of all sizes are thrown into the mortar, which cushions the blow of the stamp, causes more wear and tear, and the grating or screens are continually getting broken. The idea of cheap labour to take the place of automatic machinery, in a case like this, is purely one of false economy.⁸⁷

ACCIDENTS

Accidents causing death or injury to children were common throughout the colony. For an 1870 example, James Clarke, the namesake of his father, a grocer at Te Aroha from the 1880s onwards,⁸⁸ when aged three years and eight months had his head crushed by falling timber. As his father was in Auckland, ‘the brunt of the affliction and its sickening details fell upon the mother’.⁸⁹ (Within the next five years Clarke would lose two more children, both aged less than a year, one to croup and the other to pneumonia.⁹⁰) In 1884, another fatal accident with a link to Te Aroha occurred at Thames:

A sad drowning accident occurred yesterday afternoon, a child named Isadora, the illegitimate offspring of Mary Campbell, being found quite dead in a well, situated on the Golden Calf Spur. The little one was but four and a half years of age and lived with its grandmother in a little cottage near the old Nonpareil shaft, the mother being at present absent at Te Aroha.⁹¹

No child died from falling down a well at Te Aroha or Waiorongomai, but it was a close-run thing on two occasions. In 1893, the small son of a Waiorongomai miner fell into the well adjoining his house. He had been clutching a cat, which escaped and

⁸⁶ ‘Table showing the Average Rate of Wages per Week for the Year ending 31st March 1883’, *AJHR*, 1883, H-5, p. 57.

⁸⁷ H.A. Gordon to Under-Secretary, Mines Department, 7 June 1889, *AJHR*, 1889, C-3, p. 3.

⁸⁸ See paper on Robert and Elizabeth Mackie.

⁸⁹ Death Certificate of James Clarke, 31 August 1870, 1870/451, BDM; *Auckland Weekly News*, 3 September 1870, p. 11.

⁹⁰ Death Certificates of Margaret Ann Clarke, 27 May 1873, 1873/695; Alfred Edward Clarke, 16 February 1875, 1875/55, BDM.

⁹¹ *Thames Advertiser*, 16 February 1884, p. 3.

returned to the house all wet, prompting his mother to check the well; seeing her son floating face-up, she called on neighbours to rescue him. ‘After two or three hours of incessant rubbing, the little boy showed signs of returning life, and the next morning he was running about almost as well as before’.⁹² At Te Aroha five years later a ‘little girl’ fell down a well behind her house. A young man dropped into it to find the child ‘floating on the surface, upheld by its clothes apparently. The little creature was nearly drowned, and it was quite half an hour before it recovered consciousness’.⁹³

The river was equally dangerous, sometimes fatally so, as in the case of George Lipsey’s son George.⁹⁴ In 1884, William, aged 17, the eldest son of Richard Onyon,⁹⁵ the leading shipping agent in the Thames district,⁹⁶ was drowned when steering a punt between Paeroa and Te Aroha. He had been towed by a steamer when the tiller broke, causing him to fall overboard and be dragged down by a strong undercurrent.⁹⁷ To add to his parents’ sorrow, their four-month-old daughter had died only two weeks previously.⁹⁸

An accident in 1888 resulted in ‘a gallant rescue’:

On Wednesday evening, as some little boys were bathing in the river above the township, a little fellow about eight years old, named George Cornes, came near meeting a premature death. Carried down by the current, he got into deep water, and the other lads were unable to render him any assistance. Hearing their cries, Mr Fred Smithyman [editor of the *Aroha Gazette*],⁹⁹ who chanced to be near the spot, at once hastened to the rescue, and without hesitation plunged into the water. The boy had by this time disappeared under the surface, but after diving two or three times he succeeded in getting hold of the youngster, and brought him to the bank, where, remedies being applied, he gradually recovered consciousness. The incident should prove a warning to parents to try to prevent their children from going into the river, as there is scarcely a place in it that is safe to bathe in for those who cannot swim.¹⁰⁰

⁹² *Thames Advertiser*, 21 August 1893, p. 2.

⁹³ *Thames Advertiser*, 12 November 1898, p. 2.

⁹⁴ See paper on George Lipsey.

⁹⁵ Birth Certificate of William Onyon, 1866/5713; Death Certificate of William Onyon, 11 April 1884, 1884/1046, BDM; *Te Aroha News*, 12 April 1884, p. 2.

⁹⁶ *New Zealand Herald*, 12 February 1889, p. 5.

⁹⁷ *Thames Advertiser*, 12 April 1884, p. 3; *Te Aroha News*, 12 April 1884, p. 2, 19 April 1884, p. 2.

⁹⁸ Death Certificate of Jessie Onyon, 28 March 1884, 1884/3932, BDM.

⁹⁹ See *Te Aroha News*, 22 August 1888, p. 2.

¹⁰⁰ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 11 February 1888, p. 2.

Horses could be dangerous, and one of the first accidents to be reported, in a Thames newspaper in November 1881, involved one:

A lad named John Miller was brought down from Te Aroha last night and admitted to the Hospital, suffering from injuries received on Tuesday by his arm being caught in a rope attached to a horse he approached. He was repeatedly cautioned to keep clear of the animal, but without avail, and the result was that the horse bolted, dragging Miller after it for a distance of two miles.¹⁰¹

He survived. Not so Charles William Wilson, aged 14-and-a-half, the eldest son of William. When he returned to Te Aroha from his father's Waiorongomai farm late one afternoon in September 1883 he said: 'that his horse's legs being dirty he would ride down and give him a wash in the river, which is only about 200yds from his father's house'. Accompanied, on foot, by his younger brother William, aged eight,¹⁰² he rode the horse into the water. William later explained

that he saw his brother take one foot out of one stirrup and so bring both legs on one side, and then lean across the saddle, causing the occupied stirrup to stick out nearly straight from the horse's side. He stated that he did this whilst trying to stoop down and get a drink. The horse began "back-jumping," so that Charlie was unable to get him out of the deeper water on to the shallow bank again, and, finding this, told his brother to run and get someone to get a boat. The younger boy ran home to tell his father but did not mention the matter to any one on the way, though passing a number of shops and houses. His father ran down at once, saw the horse with the saddle on at the opposite side of the river, but no trace of his son.

Although Wilson called men playing football nearby to assist, his son could not be found.

The poor lad was well able to swim and had frequently ridden into the river for a similar purpose. The place where the sad event took place is one familiar to every inhabitant of this township, situated right at the foot of Rolleston-street and within a few yards of where the various steamers berth, with two goods stores alongside. Indeed, it is a remarkable fact that no one saw the accident. People are about the place in daytime almost continually. There are places of business within a hundred yards, and a party of footballers were at play in the very next paddock. The place is commonly used for the purpose of washing horses, and hitherto no accident has even occurred though it is undoubtedly dangerous. The descent into the water is very steep, a shingle bank runs nearly half-way across the river at the place, but its width is limited, and at the far end it shelves quite suddenly into deep

¹⁰¹ *Thames Advertiser*, 10 November 1881, p. 2.

¹⁰² Inquest on Charles William Wilson, Justice Department, J 1, 83/1816, ANZ-W.

water; also, immediately above and below the water is deep and rapid. At the time of the accident the water on the shingle bed itself might be twenty or thirty inches deep. From what is known it seems probable that the lad having ridden through the water and wishing to give the horse a thorough good wash, rode into the deeper water and to keep his feet dry, took one foot out of one stirrup, as his little brother related, brought both legs to one side, and lent across the saddle with his legs stretched out; that whilst in this position he got into deeper water than he purposed, and hastily trying to recover his proper position, slipped off, or that whilst in the above position the horse's feet suddenly gave way, and cause him to lost his balance and fall head foremost into the river.

Pakeha in boats searched 'far into the night' and Maori dived deeper into the river, but the body was not found till the following day, 90 yards downriver. There were 'no marks of violence', apart from a slight bruise on the forehead. 'Generally speaking', his face 'wore a very placid appearance and there was nothing to suppose the struggle for life was prolonged'. He had been 'a skillful horseman for his age, and a general favorite with his companions'. At the inquest, his younger brother described him trying to get a drink by leaning over the horse's back. When it commenced bucking, 'Charlie bobbed his head up and sang out to me about the boat, and I ran home. Charlie was trying to get the horse up the bank out of the river again, but could not manage it, I think, on account of the current'.¹⁰³

In 1884, a boy employed by the Battery Company 'had his leg broken by a kick from a horse', necessitating being taken to hospital.¹⁰⁴ Five years later, another boy was thrown out of a buggy, 'the wheel passing over his leg and grazing his shin, but with the exception of a few bruises he was otherwise uninjured'.¹⁰⁵ Less than two months later, a four-year-old boy was nearly killed at Waiorongomai when he fell off a horse bus and a passing spring cart's wheel ran over his chest; as the cart was empty, he escaped with severe bruising.¹⁰⁶ A few days later, a boy was thrown when a pony stumbled in a Te Aroha street, badly bruising his face.¹⁰⁷ In the following month, a pony threw a teacher's son, breaking his leg.¹⁰⁸ In a worse accident, a boy was thrown off a horse head first into a manuka stump, fracturing his skull.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰³ Death Certificate of Charles William Wilson, 11 September 1883, 1883/6299, BDM; *Te Aroha News*, 15 September 1883, p. 2.

¹⁰⁴ *Waikato Times*, 18 March 1884, p. 2.

¹⁰⁵ *Te Aroha News*, 27 March 1889, p. 2.

¹⁰⁶ *Te Aroha News*, 11 May 1889, p. 2.

¹⁰⁷ *Te Aroha News*, 15 May 1889, p. 2.

¹⁰⁸ *Te Aroha News*, 29 June 1895, p. 2.

¹⁰⁹ *Te Aroha News*, 13 January 1898, p. 2.

Even homes were hazardous. A three-year-old boy suffered ‘a most painful accident’ in 1889, a Waiorongomai correspondent reported:

It appears the mother had left the house for a few minutes to attend the call of a tradesman, and during her absence the little chap went to the fire and attempted to help himself to the contents of one of the saucepans, and whilst reaching over the fire the ends of his scarf that was around his neck fell right over the blaze and flared up in his face. The cries of the sufferer quickly brought the mother back, when she found him in a terrible plight, the clothes round his neck being all on fire. She quickly extinguished the flames, removed his clothes, and applied the usual remedies. The doctor was at once sent for, and on examination found the child terribly burnt, especially about the lower part of the face. On making enquiries this morning I learnt that the boy was progressing very favourably.¹¹⁰

Less fortunate was ‘a fine little boy’, Patrick, aged two-and-a-half, the eldest son of a miner, Thomas Casey, who was burnt in a ‘lamentable affair’ in the previous year:

Mrs Casey left her two children (the second being about 11 months old) alone for a very few minutes, giving them some lollies, etc, to amuse them in her absence whilst she went to a neighbour’s for some milk, not being away she stated for five minutes altogether. On her return, however, a sad sight met her view – the little boy’s clothes being all on fire, and the poor child in a state of great terror.¹¹¹

His mother attempted to put out the flames with her hands until a surveyor arrived, found blankets, and extinguished them. With the help of a neighbour’s wife, he took the boy’s clothes off and rubbed him with ‘sweet oil and flour’. Patrick, who told his mother that ‘the naughty paper caught fire and burned Topsy (meaning himself)’, stopped crying once a chemist applied liniment and wrapped him in lint, but died the following day.¹¹² The lower part of his body and his thighs ‘were severely burnt, a thick flannel wrap having saved the upper portion of the body’, but ‘the shock to the system was too great’.¹¹³ Another account reported that his mother ‘found the little one with everything burned off him but his waistband’. ‘Much sympathy’ was ‘felt for the parents, and the poor mother’ was ‘heartbroken’.¹¹⁴ In another family tragedy, nearly

¹¹⁰ Waiorongomai Correspondent, *Te Aroha News*, 13 July 1889, p. 2.

¹¹¹ *Te Aroha News*, 22 August 1888, p. 2.

¹¹² Death Certificate of Patrick Casey, 20 August 1888, 1888/5418, BDM; Inquest on Patrick Casey, Justice Department, J 46 COR, 1888/512, ANZ-W.

¹¹³ *Te Aroha News*, 22 August 1888, p. 2.

¹¹⁴ *Waikato Times*, 23 August 1888, p. 2.

two years later their nine-month-old son died of ‘Convulsions and Debility from Birth’.¹¹⁵

John Benjamin Johnson, a plumber and tinsmith,¹¹⁶ lost two young children. The first, a boy aged nearly five, died from bronchitis.¹¹⁷ Much less expected was the accidental death of a month-old daughter, who was overlaid in bed and smothered.¹¹⁸ Her mother, who slept in a double bed with the baby and her two youngest children (her husband sleeping in another bed), described what happened after putting the baby to bed:

The child was then in good health it never woke all night & at half-past six I was aroused by the milkman, after taking the milk I picked up the baby & noticed it was a little stiff & I then went to my husband’s bed & told him the baby was dead. He jumped out of bed at once looked at the baby & then went for the doctor. – I was trying then to bring life into the child by rubbing it, I was doing this for half an hour or more, I then sent one of the children for Mrs White when I was unable to get the doctor. – Mrs White could not come until the afternoon. I also sent to Mrs Grattan who came about 8 o’clock in the morning, she said it was no use doing anything & did nothing. The doctor came between ten & eleven and pronounced the child dead. – I think the child’s death was caused by having too many clothes about it, it did not seem at all well all day on the Saturday & I kept the shawl on it all night. – We were crushed in the bed & I could not say whether either of the other children rolled on it. – As far as I could judge the child must have been dead for pretty nearly an hour when I discovered it. – I had all the children on one side of me, & the baby was next to me.... I am a very sound sleeper, but I always woke if the baby cried but would not do so if it did not cry.... Previous to the birth of this last child I used to sleep with the other two children & since then I have always had the baby with me. – It was to save me from running to the children that I kept them in the bed with me.

The doctor noted signs of suffocation and told the coroner’s court: ‘I don’t think there was room enough in the bed the mother & children were sleeping [in] & it was rather risky’. The verdict was accidental death with ‘no blame attached to anyone’.¹¹⁹

Tools could be dangerous. For instance, in 1889 a Waiorongomai correspondent, on what must have been a quiet news day, reported that two young twin boys were

¹¹⁵ Death Certificate of Thomas Casey, 11 May 1890, 1890/1968, BDM.

¹¹⁶ See paper on the temperance movement in the Te Aroha district.

¹¹⁷ Death Certificate of Charles Butler Johnson, 10 October 1892, 1892/4620, BDM.

¹¹⁸ Death Certificate of Amy Johnson, 29 August 1903, 1903/4974, BDM; *Auckland Weekly News*, 3 September 1903, p. 17.

¹¹⁹ Inquest on Amy Johnson, J 46 COR, 1903/800, ANZ-W.

playing ‘with a tomahawk, when one of them chopped the other’s finger somewhat severely’.¹²⁰ Items required for mining could be lethal, as an 1897 report illustrated:

Two little boys, twin sons of Mr T[homas] Kirker ([a miner at] Waiorongomai),¹²¹ had a very narrow escape of serious injury on Tuesday night last.... It appears by some unaccountable means they because possessed of a dynamite cap, and while in the [process of] hammering it on a stone it suddenly exploded and scattered pieces of stone and earth in all directions. Some of the flying stones struck the youngsters with some force, one of them receiving nasty cuts on his forehead and legs, while the other one had the back of his hand badly wounded.¹²²

One of the earliest Pakeha deaths in the district, in mid-1881, was of a four-and-a-half-year-old boy, the son of a miner, who with some children was playing with the axle of a sledge used for carting quartz when the sledge fell on him.¹²³ Taken to the Hamilton hospital, he died of a ruptured lung three days later.¹²⁴

Farms had many hazards. For instance, when a Te Aroha West farmer’s son played on a farm gate that had been taken off his hinges to be repaired it fell on his leg and broke it.¹²⁵ Another farmer’s six-year-old son slipped into a hole in which stumps were smouldering under a thin crust of earth, severely burning his feet and ankles.¹²⁶

The most unusual experience occurred in 1900, when a small boy was almost shot by a Volunteer practicing shooting with a pea rifle in a neighbouring backyard: missing the kerosene tin, he hit the boy’s hat.¹²⁷

A DANGEROUS PRACTICAL JOKE

In 1903, some bored Aucklanders amused themselves with a practical ‘joke’ with overtones of bullying, nearly causing a death:

They are telling a somewhat gruesome story about the Te Aroha races. Amongst the visitors were a number of “followers of the turf” from town, and finding the time dragging heavily on their hands, these gentry indulged

¹²⁰ Waiorongomai Correspondent, *Te Aroha News*, 19 June 1889, p. 2.

¹²¹ See Mines Department, MD 1, 92/34, ANZ-W; *Thames Advertiser*, 26 February 1886, p. 3, 5 March 1886, p. 3; *Te Aroha News*, 25 April 1888, p. 2, 2 June 1888, p. 2, 23 October 1889, p. 2.

¹²² ‘Twinkler’, ‘Te Aroha Notes’, *Thames Advertiser*, 17 August 1897, p. 3.

¹²³ *Thames Advertiser*, 20 June 1881, p. 2.

¹²⁴ Death Certificate of John Wood, 17 June 1881, 1881/251, BDM.

¹²⁵ *Te Aroha News*, 15 January 1898, p. 2.

¹²⁶ *Te Aroha News*, 5 April 1898, p. 2.

¹²⁷ *Te Aroha News*, 11 January 1900, p. 2.

in some horse-play down by the river. One of the diversions was a mock-hanging of a jockey boy, which so nearly approached reality that the victim, when cut down, was black in the face. It took considerable rubbing to restore animation, and the boy says he has had hanging enough to last him the term of his natural life.¹²⁸

ILL HEALTH

Periodic epidemics endangered the health and even the lives of many children. In May 1881 a correspondent reported that, from Te Aroha to Thames, ‘there seems to be a prevalence of sickness amongst the children that takes the form of low fever, which, though hardly perhaps typhoid, is of a somewhat similar character’.¹²⁹ Another newspaper correctly identified it as scarlet fever, which was causing residents to be ‘much alarmed. The disease has attacked the child of a storekeeper, and fears are entertained that other members of the family will catch it. One resident has sent his children down to’ Thames ‘in order that they may be in safety’.¹³⁰ A doctor ‘was hurriedly sent for from Hamilton’ because ‘several families have nearly all their children down with fever’.¹³¹ A week later, the 15-year-old son of William Andrew, a miner, caught scarlet fever, from which he died two weeks later.¹³² ‘The lad had been suffering, it is presumed, from scarlatina, but had apparently got better, and his death may be attributed to the weakness induced by the disease’.¹³³ This uncertainty about the nature of the disease was typical of the earliest days of Te Aroha. When reporting the death of Andrew’s son, a correspondent noted ‘a good deal of sickness amongst the children of Te Aroha, but, in the absence of a medical man, it is difficult to determine its nature’.¹³⁴ A labourer’s baby died of ‘probably convulsions (uncertified)’,¹³⁵ meaning that a doctor had neither treated her nor certified the cause of death.

In 1882, ‘measles having broken out among the scholars’ of the Te Aroha school, it was closed for a fortnight.¹³⁶ Four years later, there was an outbreak of whooping cough.¹³⁷ In February 1889, the death of a Waiorongomai child from dysentery was ‘the

¹²⁸ *Observer*, 28 February 1903, p. 16.

¹²⁹ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 14 May 1881, p. 2.

¹³⁰ *Thames Advertiser*, 25 May 1881, p. 2.

¹³¹ *Auckland Weekly News*, 28 May 1881, p. 9.

¹³² Death Certificate of Henry Andrew [recorded as Andrews], 5 June 1881, 1881/248, BDM.

¹³³ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 7 June 1881, p. 2.

¹³⁴ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 7 June 1881, p. 2.

¹³⁵ Death Certificate of Elizabeth Neillson, 5 November 1883, 1883/2381, BDM.

¹³⁶ *Thames Advertiser*, 22 July 1882, p. 2.

¹³⁷ *Waikato Times*, 18 May 1886, p. 3.

third death within about six weeks, rather a big percentage for our small population'.¹³⁸ Just over two months later, a six-year-old died after an illness lasting two weeks that began as 'worm fever' (caused by a parasitic worm infection) and ended in 'congestion of the brain'.¹³⁹ In mid-year, when diphtheria and scarlet fever were prevalent at Te Aroha and Te Aroha West,¹⁴⁰ the local newspaper described the sufferings of the Methodist minister's four children:

During the past month all of Rev S[amuel] Lawry's children have been very ill, and between one and another the parents have had a most anxious and trying time, with scarcely a night's rest during the whole period. Just a fortnight ago to-day we recorded the death of the eldest child, a very bright intelligent child for her years. On Tuesday morning last the third child, an active little fellow, nearly four years of age, became very much worse, and gradually sank, passing away Wednesday afternoon. The remaining children were on Thursday visited by Dr Volckman (who happened to be at Te Aroha on a visit from Auckland), who pronounced them suffering from diphtheria, although now fairly convalescent. From the strongly marked symptoms the parents had come to the conclusion the disease was diphtheria in the case of the little boy who died this week, and also with regard to the other as well, but diphtheria was never suspected during the illness of the eldest daughter; although now, from what Dr Volckman says, there can be little room to doubt it was from that, complicated with croup, she died.... Much sympathy is felt for the parents in their double bereavement.¹⁴¹

After these deaths, Lawry was 'laid up with an attack of quinsy and general prostration'. It was 'not to be wondered that his strength has given out, seeing that for nearly a month prior to the death of his second child he has scarcely a night's rest, owing to the illness of his family'.¹⁴² His daughter was aged six and his son was nearly four years old.¹⁴³

In 1893, when measles spread 'at an alarming rate', the schools at Waiorongomai, Te Aroha, Te Aroha West, and Waihou were closed, not just because of 'the great falling off in attendance' but because teachers caught the disease also.¹⁴⁴ Six years

¹³⁸ *Te Aroha News*, 23 February 1889, p. 2.

¹³⁹ Waiorongomai Correspondent, *Te Aroha News*, 4 May 1889, p. 2.

¹⁴⁰ *Te Aroha News*, 22 June 1889, p. 2.

¹⁴¹ *Te Aroha News*, 22 June 1889, p. 2.

¹⁴² *Te Aroha News*, 26 June 1889, p. 2.

¹⁴³ Death Certificates of Happie Lavinia Lawry, 5 June 1889, 1889/1877; Walter David Lawry, 19 June 1889, 1889/5370, BDM.

¹⁴⁴ *Te Aroha News*, n.d., reprinted in *Thames Star*, 20 July 1893, p. 2; Te Aroha Correspondent, *New Zealand Herald*, 21 July 1893, p. 6.

later, attendance dropped from over 200 to 75 because of an epidemic of measles and whooping cough.¹⁴⁵ Such epidemics continued into the twentieth century, scarlatina occurring in 1908 and both diphtheria and scarlatina in 1910, for instance.¹⁴⁶

Some children lingered for years before finally succumbing to illness. Francis William Lipsey, a printer and agent,¹⁴⁷ lost four children before his own death, when he left five children.¹⁴⁸ The youngest to die, when nearly two-and-a-half, had suffered from whooping cough and bronchitis for a month.¹⁴⁹ The next to die, a son nearly 12 years old, died of heart failure after suffering for four years from rheumatic inflammation of the heart.¹⁵⁰ A daughter aged 18, suffering from inflammation of the kidneys, was transferred to the Hamilton hospital, where she died from a sudden drop in blood pressure.¹⁵¹ The other death, of a 28-year-old son, was as the result of an accident.¹⁵²

ATTEMPTS TO CONTAIN EPIDEMICS

The fear of contagion meant that extra precautions were required. In 1906 a solicitor argued that the sawdust scattered on the school floor and dampened every morning was spreading disease. He claimed that the many children with skin disease infected others, including their parents, because of this sawdust, combined with the floors being scrubbed only once a year. A doctor, however, ‘was emphatic against the idea that the sawdust had caused the disease. He was sure the disease had been brought from the children’s homes’. He did admit that, because the cleaner had been ill, the sawdust had not been removed for three months. ‘The head teacher said the disease had been in the school as long as he could remember’. In the light of these comments, the school committee ordered the sawdust removed, the floor and desks disinfected, common towels abolished for the time being, and the children inspected by the officer of health, who was to report on the sanitation.¹⁵³ Two years later, ‘in view of the

¹⁴⁵ *Thames Advertiser*, 7 July 1899, p. 2, 15 August 1899, p. 2.

¹⁴⁶ *Te Aroha News*, 3 September 1908, p. 2, 3 May 1910, p. 3.

¹⁴⁷ See *Te Aroha News*, advertisement, 4 August 1903, p. 3, 16 May 1917, p. 2, 28 February 1980, p. 4.

¹⁴⁸ Death Certificate of Francis William Lipsey, 12 November 1947, 1947/26080, BDM.

¹⁴⁹ Death Certificate of Kathleen Charlotte Lipsey, 13 October 1894, 1894/5725, BDM.

¹⁵⁰ Death Certificate of Ralph Huia Lipsey, 19 November 1914, 1914/9499, BDM.

¹⁵¹ Death Certificate of Dorothy Kathleen Lipsey, 29 May 1917, 1917/1919, BDM.

¹⁵² Death Notice, *New Zealand Herald*, 8 September 1930, p. 1.

¹⁵³ *Te Aroha News*, 7 August 1906, p. 3.

occurrence of a few isolated cases of scarlatina', the school committee arranged for the thorough fumigation of all the local schools.¹⁵⁴

DEATHS

In 1881 scarlatina caused the death of the six-year-old son of Peter Martin, a miner.¹⁵⁵ The family's grief was heightened by having to take his body to Thames for burial, there being no cemeteries at Te Aroha or Paeroa, but the sexton refused to bury him until shown a death certificate. As procuring this took several hours, 'the sexton had gone home before the party returned to the cemetery, and they were compelled to dig the grave and bury the body themselves'.¹⁵⁶ Another of Martin's children had caught the disease and was not expected to recover,¹⁵⁷ but did. As an instance of multiple deaths of children occurring in some families, in 1870 Martin had lost another son, aged 11 months, from 'inflammation of bowels',¹⁵⁸ and in 1882 was to lose another, aged two, from a combination of pneumonia, bronchitis and worms.¹⁵⁹

An examination of the Te Aroha register of deaths from 1883 to 1900 (earlier deaths were recorded elsewhere) reveals the variety of the causes of death. Accidents took several lives, but only deaths from illness are dealt with here. This source does not provide the names of all those who died at Te Aroha and Waiorongomai, for some deaths were registered at other offices. For example, in 1883 two Te Aroha deaths were recorded at Hamilton: a three-year-old who died of bronchitis and a baby whose 24 hours of life had been spent in convulsions.¹⁶⁰ It is clear from the register that premature babies were unlikely to survive, five deaths of such infants being recorded between 1889 and 1898. The shortest life of those whose cause of death was premature birth was one hour and the longest was 12 days.¹⁶¹ Of a set of twin boys, one lived for seven hours and the other for 41 hours before dying, in both cases, of 'Debility from

¹⁵⁴ *Te Aroha News*, 3 September 1908, p. 2.

¹⁵⁵ Death Certificate of Alexander Martin, 19 May 1881, 1881/2216, BDM.

¹⁵⁶ *Thames Advertiser*, 23 May 1881, p. 3.

¹⁵⁷ *Thames Star*, 21 May 1881, p. 2; *Thames Advertiser*, 23 May 1881, p. 3.

¹⁵⁸ Death Certificate of William Peter Martin, 10 February 1870, 1870/1558, BDM.

¹⁵⁹ Death Certificate of William James Martin, 19 August 1882, 1882/5564, BDM.

¹⁶⁰ Deaths Certificates of Herbert William Rane, 29 July 1883, 1883/3632; Elizabeth Neillson, 5 November 1883, 1883/2381, BDM.

¹⁶¹ Death Certificates of Ellen Ritchie, 16 January 1889, 1889/561; N.R. [no names recorded] Biggs, 18 May 1898, 1898/1529, BDM.

Birth; Premature'.¹⁶² Some full-term babies also lived for only a short time. In 1883, one lasted for four days before dying of 'Convulsion, fits'.¹⁶³ One born three years later lived for 16 hours, suffering 'fits from birth'.¹⁶⁴ Two more such children died in 1887, one suffering from 'debility from birth' and dying after 25 days, the other lasting for 12 before dying from a congenital deformity, an occlusion of the rectum.¹⁶⁵

In 1892, one girl lasted only four minutes because of 'insufficient nourishment before birth', and another lived for 24 hours before dying of 'debility'.¹⁶⁶ The following year another girl who suffered from debility from birth died, after eight hours of convulsions, aged six days.¹⁶⁷ Another girl died in 1895 after three days of life because of 'congenital malformation of the heart'.¹⁶⁸ Teething could also be fatal: one girl aged five months died in the same year 'of convulsions caused by teething'.¹⁶⁹ Two years later, a nine-day-old boy died after one day suffering from infantile diarrhea and convulsions.¹⁷⁰ The following year, a girl born with a hernia died after 12 days because of gangrene of the bowel.¹⁷¹

An illegitimate child born in Waiorongomai in 1890 lasted only nine days before succumbing to 'Severe Cold and debility from birth'; this was not a case of disguised infanticide, for the father was the informant and had been present at the death of his daughter.¹⁷² He acknowledged his paternity of two of the three other children he had by the same woman, who had been abandoned by her husband but could not marry her lover because she had not been divorced and her husband would not die until 1928.¹⁷³

¹⁶² Death Certificates of Lionel McIndoe, 27 August 1893, 1893/35012; Reginald McIndoe, 29 August 1893, 1893/3508; Charles Roycroft, 27 December 1893, 1893/5429, BDM.

¹⁶³ Death Certificate of Emily Anna Forsman, 7 August 1883, 1883/6298, BDM.

¹⁶⁴ Death Certificate of Agnes Anne Samson, 3 March 1886, 1886/44, BDM.

¹⁶⁵ Death Certificates of George Earnest McLean, 27 January 1887, 1887/717; Edward John Goodman, 4 February 1887, 1887/718, BDM.

¹⁶⁶ Death Certificates of Daisy Cornes, 12 August 1892, 1892/3441; Lily Wild, 11 November 1892, 1892/4621, BDM.

¹⁶⁷ Death Certificate of Silvia May Hyde, 21 January 1893, 1893/364, BDM.

¹⁶⁸ Death Certificate of Arena Marjory Cassels, 9 November 1895, 1895/5751, BDM.

¹⁶⁹ St Mark's Church of England, Te Aroha, Burial Register 1889-1934, no. 56, Anglican Diocesan Archives, Hamilton; *Te Aroha News*, 31 August 1895, p. 2.

¹⁷⁰ Death Certificate of Harold Wallace, 7 March 1897, 1897/567, BDM.

¹⁷¹ Death Certificate of Lorn Aroha MacNicol, 3 April 1898, 1898/1527, BDM.

¹⁷² Death Certificate of Olive Jane Roffey, 27 May 1890, 1890/1971, BDM.

¹⁷³ Birth Certificates of John Henry Roffey, 27 September 1885, 1886/1512; Charles Ethelbert Roffey, 5 April 1888, 1888/12169; Ivy Myrtle Ann Roffey, 5 February 1894, 1894/17248, BDM; Te Aroha Magistrate's Court, Criminal Record Book 1881-1896, 12, 13/1884, BCDG 11220/1a, ANZ-A;

That healthy illegitimate children often died suddenly was stated or implied on several occasions by the *Observer*. For instance, in 1898 it noted that ‘the Auckland climate seems to be rather deadly at present for illegitimate infants. Rather strange, isn’t it?’¹⁷⁴ One year later, ‘the number of love-children who have been taking wing from this vale of tears lately needs some explanation’.¹⁷⁵

Five children who lived longer died because of debility from birth. The two youngest both lived from seven weeks, the others for six, nine, and 11 months. One also had a congenital heart disease, and three died in convulsions.¹⁷⁶ Convulsions caused the deaths of eight children aged between six weeks and nine-and-a-half months. The final fit normally lasted for several days: the shortest period was 12 hours and the longest was 12 days of intermittent convulsions.¹⁷⁷ A coroner’s jury considered the death of an 11-week-old illegitimate child because this death may have been considered to be convenient, but it agreed that the child had died from ‘internal Convulsions’.¹⁷⁸ One boy died of marasmus, or wasting away, at the age of four months, while another died of ‘general debility’ aged nine.¹⁷⁹

Between 1889 and 1896 seven babies died of diarrhea. The youngest were a set of twins aged three-and-a-half months and the oldest was 14 months, their illnesses lasting from a few days to three weeks.¹⁸⁰ There were two cases of dysentery leading to death

Magistrate’s Court, *Te Aroha News*, 7 July 1883, p. 3, 26 January 1884, pp. 2, 7; Death Certificate of Joseph Williams, 26 May 1928, 1928/1348, BDM.

¹⁷⁴ ‘They Say’, *Observer*, 5 February 1898, p. 3.

¹⁷⁵ *Observer*, 18 February 1899, p. 3.

¹⁷⁶ Death Certificates of Louis Edward Collins, 25 July 1885, 1885/3355; Thomas Casey, 11 May 1890, 1890/1968; Arthur Dennis Everitt, 10 January 1893, 1893/362; James Floyd Lawton, 16 August 1895, 1895/4259; Annie Nicolai, 31 October 1896, 1896/1602, BDM.

¹⁷⁷ Death Certificates of Henry Louis Bidois, 14 September 1888, 1888/5409; Ivy May Little, 8 October 1888, 1888/3923; Andrew Carroll, 14 February 1889, 1889/562; Evellyn Maud Little, 24 July 1892, 1892/3438; Augusta Louisa Roberts, 28 August 1895, 1895/4260; George Henry Percival Murdoch, 23 February 1896, 1896/2663; Kathleen Jessie Mulcahy, 20 August 1897, 1897/3907; Arnold George Burchell, 28 April 1900, 1900/2392, BDM.

¹⁷⁸ Death Certificate of Arnold George Burchell, 28 April 1900, 1900/2392, BDM.

¹⁷⁹ Death Certificates of George Henry Weal, 2 April 1900, 1900/2390; Henry James Emerson, 30 January 1885, 1885/822, BDM.

¹⁸⁰ Death Certificates of Ada Cuthbert Baskett, 18 February 1889, 1889/562; James Quinton, 7 January 1890, 1890/314; Curthbert Quinton, 12 January 1890, 1890/320; George William Cribb, 1 January 1895, 1895/81; Harold Wallace, 21 January 1895, 1895/83; Helen Marion Clara Evans, 13 February 1895, 1895/84; Dorothy Aroha Evaline Spooner, 25 February 1896, 1896/2664, BDM.

in 1891, a nine-month-old baby dying after three weeks of dysentery coupled with exhaustion, and a four-month-old boy dying after five days.¹⁸¹

Respiratory problems caused the highest death rate. Croup killed four children aged between one year nine months and four years three months.¹⁸² Bronchitis killed ten, eight of them aged under a year, the oldest being seven years and nine months: most died within days of becoming ill, the youngest, 57-days-old, dying within a day.¹⁸³ A one-year-old girl and a boy aged nearly two and a half died within two days of each other in August 1893 of bronchitis combined with measles.¹⁸⁴ The following year a boy aged seven and three quarters died after suffering from bronchitis for two weeks and diarrhea for three days.¹⁸⁵

Whooping cough was another scourge: at Thames, for instance, in 1884 five children died from it within two weeks.¹⁸⁶ At Te Aroha, this disease, combined with bronchitis, killed another child aged nearly two-and-a-half after an illness lasting four weeks in 1894, and an 11-month-old girl died after battling for three weeks against whooping cough, measles, and bronchial pneumonia.¹⁸⁷ ‘Congestion of the Lungs’ killed two children in 1884; the second of these, aged five months, another illegitimate child, also dying from ‘Debility from Birth’.¹⁸⁸ Pneumonia killed a three-and-a-half-month-old boy in 1887 in one day, and influenza and pneumonia killed an 11-month-

¹⁸¹ Deaths Certificates of Laura Christina Butler, 8 February 1891, 1891/251; Gerald Cribb, 5 June 1891, 1891/2332, BDM.

¹⁸² Death Certificates of Annie Nora McDevitt, 25 August 1888, 1888/5407; Alfred Gapes, 23 March 1891, 1891/838; Amelia Rebecca aka Rebecca Harrington Hazlett aka Sleight, 9 April 1893, 1893/2234; Kenneth Ivan Marsdon, 17 June 1894, 1894/2649, BDM.

¹⁸³ Death Certificates of Annie Bella Pennell, 8 March 1884, 1884/3867; Ellen Montague, 23 March 1886, 1886/1953; Florence Cecilia Lawless, 30 June 1886, 1886/6063; Henry Spencer Caudwell, 12 July 1891, 1891/3523; William Henry Everitt, 26 July 1891, 1895/3525; Charles Butler Johnson, 10 October 1892, 1892/4260; Gavin Quinton, 11 September 1894, 1894/4026; George Henry Bygrave, 25 November 1895, 1895/5752; Winifred Bennett, 23 October 1896, 1896/1600; Harold Joseph Ellery, 10 January 1897, 1897/553, BDM.

¹⁸⁴ Death Certificates of Gladys Irene Reid, 12 August 1893, 1893/3402; Arthur Edward Ewen Simpson, 14 August 1893, 1893/3403, BDM.

¹⁸⁵ Death Certificate of Gavin Quinton, 11 September 1894, 1894/4026, BDM.

¹⁸⁶ *Thames Star*, 4 September 1884, p. 2.

¹⁸⁷ Death Certificates of Kathleen Charlotte Lipsey, 13 October 1894, 1894/5725; Nellie Adeline Dorothy Sherlock, 22 July 1899, 1899/3886, BDM.

¹⁸⁸ Death Certificates of Albert Walter Young, 22 April 1884, 1884/1047; Maud Forsman, 24 September 1884, 1884/4260, BDM.

old boy in 1894.¹⁸⁹ Diphtheria killed the two children of the Wesleyan minister in 1889, as noted, although the death certificate incorrectly recorded the first death as being caused by croup.¹⁹⁰

Measles, a partial cause of death in two cases, as noted, led to the death of a three-year-old girl in 1893.¹⁹¹ A 13-year-old died of heart disease in 1888, after four and a half years of suffering.¹⁹² ‘Worm fever’ killed a five year old within two weeks in the following year.¹⁹³ A ten-year-old succumbed to meningitis within five days in 1896.¹⁹⁴ Peritonitis took four weeks to kill a four-month-old baby, but a girl aged nearly three died within three days from peritonitis combined with obstruction of the bowels.¹⁹⁵ The most unusual cause of death was sunstroke, which took six weeks to kill a two-year-old boy in 1891.¹⁹⁶ Clearly the doctor did not understand the cause of death of a four-month-old girl in 1900, for on the death certificate he recorded simply that she had died of ‘natural causes’.¹⁹⁷

Several families suffered multiple deaths, as noted in the papers about some miners: for instance, Henry Hopper Adams and Clement Augustus Cornes. Matthew Quinton, who mined at Coromandel before settling for a time at Waiorongomai,¹⁹⁸ left seven children when he died in 1903, aged 66,¹⁹⁹ but five others had died in childhood. The first to die were twin girls, who died aged three months in 1882, both having been ‘ill from birth’.²⁰⁰ Twin boys died from infantile diarrhea in 1890, aged three-and-a-half

¹⁸⁹ Death Certificates of Henry Walter Yate, 10 October 1887, 1887/4869; William George Dearle, 24 September 1894, 1894/5724, BDM.

¹⁹⁰ Death Certificates of Happie Lavinia Lawry, 5 June 1889, 18889/1877; Walter David Lawry, 19 June 1889, 1889/5370, BDM.

¹⁹¹ Death Certificate of Ida Wright, 21 August 1893, 1893/3495, BDM.

¹⁹² Death Certificate of Fanny Beatrice Cox, 13 May 1888, 1888/2047, BDM.

¹⁹³ Death Certificate of Christian Howland, 3 May 1889, 1889/1875, BDM.

¹⁹⁴ Death Certificate of Kenneth Duncan McKenzie, 25 October 1896, 1896/1601, BDM.

¹⁹⁵ Death Certificates of Frederick Trevenen James, 12 November 1887, 1887/4871; Elsie Dorothy Spooner, 19 December 1894, 1784/5726, BDM.

¹⁹⁶ Death Certificate of Patrick [John] Murphy, 10 May 1891, 1891/8175, BDM.

¹⁹⁷ Death Certificate of Daphne Brokenshire, 30 April 1900, 1900/2398, BDM.

¹⁹⁸ See paper on Billy Nicholl.

¹⁹⁹ Death Certificate of Matthew Quinton, 26 December 1903, 1903/7029, BDM.

²⁰⁰ Birth Certificates of Agnes Quinton, 1 November 1881, 1881/10946; Christina Filamena Quinton, 1 November 1881, 1881/10947, BDM; Death Certificates of Agnes Quinton, 22 February 1882, 1882/1038; Christina Quinton, 11 February 1882, 1882/1037, BDM.

months; one suffered for three weeks and the other for one.²⁰¹ The last to die, another boy, attained the age of seven years and nine months before succumbing to a combination of bronchitis and diarrhea.²⁰² At Thames, John Farrell lost three infants; the one who lived longest surviving until ten weeks old.²⁰³ After he became a Te Aroha draper and would-be builder,²⁰⁴ his 12-month-old daughter, who had been given the name of a deceased predecessor, also died, of diarrhea caused by teething.²⁰⁵ When he died in 1905, six of Farrell's children had survived.²⁰⁶ Henry John Hyde, a prominent miner at Te Aroha and elsewhere during the early twentieth century,²⁰⁷ lost three children in childhood. In mid-1893, a four-and-a-half-year-old died of pneumonia following measles, and five weeks later another died of convulsions, cause unspecified, aged almost two years.²⁰⁸ Another girl, also four-and-a-half-years-old, died in 1906.²⁰⁹ Four years before her death Hyde had lost his eldest daughter, aged 20, who had been the first Pakeha child born at Te Aroha,²¹⁰ and finally a son, aged 30, was killed by falling down a shaft at Karangahake.²¹¹ When Hyde died in 1926 he left seven children.²¹²

²⁰¹ Birth Certificates of James Quinton, 22 September 1889, 1889/12172; Cuthbert Quinton, 22 September 1889, 1889/12173; Death Certificates of James Quinton, 7 January 1890, 1890/314; Cuthbert Quinton, 12 January 1890, 1890/320, BDM.

²⁰² Birth Certificate of Gavin Quinton, 9 December 1886, 1886/15026; Death Certificate of Gavin Quinton, 11 September 1894, 1894/4026, BDM.

²⁰³ Birth Certificates of Benjamin Brown Farrell, 13 October 1873, 1873/37690; Bessie Farrell, 8 November 1874, 1874/199; Rebecca Hetherington Farrell, 11 November 1875, 1875/13438, BDM; Death Notice of Benjamin Brown Farrell, *Thames Advertiser*, 22 December 1873, p. 2; Death Notice of Bessie Farrell, *Thames Advertiser*, 23 November 1874, p. 2; Death Certificate of Rebecca Hetherington Farrell, 21 January 1876, 1876/439, BDM.

²⁰⁴ See *Te Aroha News*, 5 April 1884, p. 2, 10 August 1885, p. 2, 17 October 1885, p. 2, 11 December 1886, p. 2, 12 March 1887, p. 2, 7 May 1887, p. 3, 14 April 1888, p. 7, 25 July 1905, p. 2.

²⁰⁵ Death Certificate of Rebecca Hetherington Farrell, 8 April 1883, 1883/2402, BDM; Death Notice, *Thames Advertiser*, 9 April 1883, p. 2.

²⁰⁶ Death Certificate of John Farrell, 23 July 1905, 1905/4489, BDM.

²⁰⁷ See *Waikato Times*, 25 October 1926, p. 6; *Te Aroha News*, 30 March 1927, p. 8.

²⁰⁸ Death Certificates of Claud Albert Hyde, 15 June 1893, 1893/834; Laurel Dorothy Hyde, 21 July 1893, 1893/3473, BDM.

²⁰⁹ Death Certificate of Katie Evelyn Hyde, 8 July 1906, 1906/4102, BDM.

²¹⁰ Birth Certificate of Lily May Hyde, 20 April 1881, 1881/11169; Death Certificate of Lily May Hyde, 1902/1305, BDM; advertisement, *Thames Star*, 17 March 1902, p. 3.

²¹¹ Death Certificate of William Hyde, 28 March 1913, 1913/1571, BDM.

²¹² Death Certificate of Henry John Hyde, 24 October 1926, 1926/10332, BDM.

Far from children being shielded from the reality of death, its implication for their afterlife was stressed. For instance, Lawry's eldest daughter, aged seven, the first of his two children to succumb, was buried on a Friday after school hours.

Prior to the body being removed, about 60 or 70 of deceased's schoolmates, representing both day and Sunday School, proceeded to the house, and sang the hymn, "They are Gathered Homeward, One by One." The coffin was carried down Kenrick Street by several of deceased's former schoolmates. The school children referred to followed the body to the Cemetery singing several hymns on the way. Rev Mr Keal, from Thames, read the burial service, and gave a short address suitable to the occasion, in the course of which he stated the departed one had no fear whatever of death, and gave very clear and happy testimony of having given her heart to the Lord. At the close of the burial service the assembled children sang.²¹³

INDUSTRIAL SCHOOLS

There were few cases recorded in the Te Aroha district of children being abandoned by their parents, but for those thus treated the consequences could be harsh. One example, of three young children abandoned by both their father and stepmother and sent to industrial schools, is recounted in the life of Lucy Harriet Roffey/Williams/Hawkins/Trainer, recorded in the paper on women's lives. Another example, from the earliest days of Te Aroha, was John Allen's children. In January 1881, when he was a miner aged 41, he was arrested at Te Aroha for deserting his wife and children, who were living in Auckland, whence he was taken to answer the charge.²¹⁴ Before the hearing, his children, James, aged four, and Elizabeth Jane, aged three, were charged with being neglected children. Their mother, Jane, told the Auckland court that she was unable to support them because their father had deserted her. Both were sent to (separate) industrial school for five years.²¹⁵

When the charge against Allen was heard, Jane stated that she had been deserted three months previously. 'Left me no means, has sent me no means'. Under cross-examination by her husband, she denied having left their home in June. 'I would not go because you ill-used me, you left me'. After Allen claimed that Jane had left him, taking what money she could, the case of wife desertion was dismissed, but he was

²¹³ *Te Aroha News*, 8 June 1889, p. 2.

²¹⁴ Armed Constabulary Force, Report of Charges taken at Te Aroha Lock-Up 1880-1903, 4/1881, in private possession; *New Zealand Herald*, 20 January 1881, p. 5.

²¹⁵ Police Court, *New Zealand Herald*, 17 January 1881, p. 6.

ordered to pay maintenance of 3s 6d per child.²¹⁶ When his son James entered the industrial school, it was recorded that his father had deserted him, and that his mother, ‘having to work for her living, cannot control the boy’.²¹⁷

Three months later, when still mining at Te Aroha, Allen wrote to the Auckland *Observer*, which was shocked at ‘a most extraordinary story of ill treatment’. Allen had been ‘locked up for no less than *three nights*’ before the case of wife desertion was heard, when ‘there turned out to be no case against him, and the charge was dismissed’. The magistrate ‘told the unfortunate man he ought to be very much obliged to the police for their kindness to his wife’. Allen did not agree.

He declares, in point of fact, that some of the police were *too kind* to his wife, and that it would have suited them all to have got him safely locked up out of the way. One man he declares, under pretense of helping the good lady, took her to a bad house in --- street, and other active and intelligent constables also made overtures of a similar nature. The letter is too strong to publish, but Sergeant Parry can see it if he likes.²¹⁸

However, when the *Observer* investigated his claims, it found that the story was

a base fabrication. His wife (who bears an excellent character and is now in a respectable situation) was starving when the police took pity on her and her children, and, out of their own pockets, found them sufficient money to get a night’s lodging. Allen has a grudge against the police for arresting him for wife desertion and is trying to revenge himself by slander.²¹⁹

Despite his father’s exposure as a liar as well as a deserter of his children, James was discharged into his care at the end of August.²²⁰ His sister, in contrast, remained in St Mary’s Industrial School.²²¹

Uncontrollable children were sometimes sent to industrial schools; for example, Eliza Roycroft’s children.²²² In 1909, a 14-year-old girl ‘Who is Wandering about and frequenting the Streets at Te Aroha’ was sent to St Mary’s Industrial School in

²¹⁶ Auckland Magistrate’s Court, Criminal Record Book 1880-1881, p. 368, BADW 10254/3a, ANZ-A; Police Court, *New Zealand Herald*, 21 January 1881, p. 6.

²¹⁷ Auckland Industrial School, Admissions Register 1875-1882, p. 161, BAAA 1954/2, ANZ-A.

²¹⁸ *Observer*, 19 March 1881, p. 277.

²¹⁹ *Observer*, 9 April 1881, p. 315.

²²⁰ Auckland Industrial School, Admissions Register 1875-1882, p. 161, BAAA 1954/2, ANZ-A.

²²¹ St Mary’s Industrial School, Register of Inmates, Inmates in 1885, Child Welfare Department, CW 14/2, ANZ-W; reproduced in AREPRO 365, p. 14, ANZ-A.

²²² See paper on the Roycroft brothers.

Auckland.²²³ An illegitimate child, Harriet Burke, commonly known as Ettie, was born at Te Aroha in 1895 to Harriet, an Irish Catholic mother.²²⁴ Jane (sometimes Jean) Erasmus, who had been widowed for five years,²²⁵ was her guardian from birth, even though they were not related. It is not known why she took on this role, for apart from anything else she was married as an Anglican and would be buried as a Presbyterian; Ettie was brought up as a Catholic.²²⁶ (Although the mother may have hoped to marry with this indiscretion safely hidden away, she never did.²²⁷) In 1907, Ettie, aged 11, left school to become a servant.²²⁸ Two years later, Jane was ‘unable to control the girl, she being an old age pensioner 70 years of age’ and ‘feeble’. Ettie ‘was alleged to be going out at night and sometimes staying away all night with men’, her elderly guardian having ‘quite lost control of her’; consequently, she was sent to an industrial school.²²⁹ One month before Jane died, there was a happy ending; having returned to Te Aroha, Ettie was employed as a waitress, and at the age of 25 married a contractor.²³⁰

Another example of an uncontrollable child sent to an industrial school was Henry Collins, who in 1897, at the age of 13-years-and-one month, stole 1s 11d and three pocketknives.²³¹ His father, Charles, for some time had found Henry to be a great trouble, and at his request Henry was sent to the Burnham Industrial School, in the

²²³ New Zealand Constabulary, Report of Charges taken at Te Aroha Lock-Up 1903-1917, 126/1909, BADB 11355/1a; Te Aroha Magistrate’s Court, Criminal Record Book 1907-1913, 53/1909, BCDG 11220/2a, ANZ-A.

²²⁴ Birth Certificate of Harriet Burke, 11 April 1895, 1895/5867, BDM; Te Aroha School, Admissions Register no. 3 (1898-1904), no. 1417, Primary School Archives, Te Aroha; Auckland Industrial School, Particulars of Admission 1905-1912, p. 51, BAAA 1955/7, ANZ-A; Marriage Certificate of Harriet Burke, 28 December 1920, St David’s Presbyterian Church, Te Aroha, Marriage Register 1916-1921, no. 72, Church Archives, Te Aroha.

²²⁵ Death Certificate of John Erasmus, 27 March 1890, 1890/323, BDM.

²²⁶ Auckland Industrial School, Particulars of Admission 1905-1912, p. 51, ANZ-A; Thames Marriage Register 1869-1880, no. 112, Anglican Archives, Auckland; Death Certificate of Jean Erasmus, 26 January 1921, 1921/9816, BDM.

²²⁷ Index of Marriages 1895-1920, BDM.

²²⁸ Te Aroha School, Admissions Register no. 3 (1898-1904), no. 1417, Primary School Archives, Te Aroha.

²²⁹ Auckland Industrial School, Particulars of Admission 1905-1912, p. 51, BAAA, 1955/7, ANZ-A.

²³⁰ Marriage Certificate of Harriet Burke, 28 December 1920, 1920/11568; Death Certificate of Jean Erasmus, 26 January 1921, 1921/9816, BDM.

²³¹ Industrial Schools Nominal Rolls, Burnham Industrial School, Boys Admitted during 1897, Child Welfare Department, CW 14/14, ANZ-W; *Thames Advertiser*, 18 February 1897, p. 2.

South Island,²³² Charles contributing towards his maintenance.²³³ Henry ran away four times during his first five months at the school, but was always returned and was not discharged until six months after he turned 15.²³⁴

His parents had married in January 1880, when his father was aged 35 and his mother was 22.²³⁵ Henry was their second child.²³⁶ At the time of his marriage, Charles was a farm manager at Waitoa.²³⁷ During the Te Aroha rush he invested in several mines and was a director of the Waitoa Company;²³⁸ in the 1890s he was a leading mine manager at Waitekauri.²³⁹ A possible indication that his home life was unhappy was his being fined for being drunk in 1884,²⁴⁰ a year after his wife had her first epileptic fit.²⁴¹ These fits continued, in 1888 one resulting in her being sent to the Hamilton hospital because ‘whilst preparing food at the fire for her baby, she was seized with an attack and fell towards the fire, upsetting a kettle of boiling water over her face and neck, inflicting severe injuries’.²⁴² This baby, their third and last child, was 18-months-old, and her ‘paroxysm’ had resulted in the boiling water ‘severely burning the left side of her face, throat, and arm. She was discovered in a helpless state by her husband, who immediately applied restoratives and endeavoured to alleviate her suffering, which was intense’. During the week before being admitted to hospital she

²³² *Thames Advertiser*, 18 February 1897, p. 2, 19 February 1897, p. 2.

²³³ Thames Warden’s Court, Record of Maintenance Payments 1885-1910, folio 24, BACL 13825/1a, ANZ-A.

²³⁴ Industrial Schools Nominal Rolls, Burnham Industrial School, Boys Admitted during 1897, Child Welfare Department, CW 14/14; Nominal Roll for 1900, Child Welfare Department, CW 14/17, ANZ-W.

²³⁵ Marriage Certificate of Charles Collins, 20 January 1880, 1880/1185, BDM.

²³⁶ Birth Certificates of Edith Emma Collins, 19 September 1880, 1880/14758; Harry Collins, 20 March 1882, 1882/5940, BDM.

²³⁷ *Thames Advertiser*, 10 April 1876, p. 3, Own Reporter, ‘Tour in the Aroha, Waitoa, and Piako Districts’, 3 July 1880, p. 3; *Waikato Times*, 14 May 1881, p. 3; *Te Aroha News*, 19 January 1884, p. 2; *Brett’s Auckland Almanac ... for 1880* (Auckland, 1880), pp. 58-59; *Observer*, 5 March 1904, p. 4.

²³⁸ Te Aroha Warden’s Court, Register of Te Aroha Claims 1880-1888, folios 204, 223, 224, 228, BBAV 11567/1a, ANZ-A; *New Zealand Gazette*, 28 April 1881, p. 476, 9 June 1881, p. 744; *Thames Star*, 7 January 1881, p. 2, 4 March 1881, p. 2; *Thames Advertiser*, 16 March 1881, p. 3.

²³⁹ Avondale Asylum, Record Book of Investigation into Relatives’ Ability to Pay Maintenance 1890-1899, folio 41, YCAA 1044/1, ANZ-A; *New Zealand Mining Journal and Financial Guide*, vol. 4 no. 7 (September 1899), pp. 99, 101.

²⁴⁰ *Thames Advertiser*, 15 March 1884, p. 2.

²⁴¹ Avondale Asylum, Register of Admissions 1885-1896, no. 1649, YCAA 1021/2, ANZ-A.

²⁴² *Waikato Times*, 2 August 1888, p. 2.

was ‘very low’.²⁴³ While in hospital the fits became ‘more serious’, and it was over three months before she could return home.²⁴⁴ Two years later, after an attack of ‘epileptic dementia’ lasting one month, she was admitted to the asylum, where she would die in 1902 of exhaustion caused by these fits.²⁴⁵ Previous to being admitted, she had been treated at Te Aroha, Waitoa, and the Hamilton hospital. On admission, she was noted as being dangerous to her children.

Incoherent and unable to tell her name, complains that worms are always crawling through her, and that a stream of water is always running through her. Charles Collins the patient’s husband informed Dr Murch that his wife required watching night and day, that she would lie on the floor rather than in bed, goes without food for days together and has a tendency to incendiarism.

Another doctor reported that she ‘tries to throw herself and her children into the fire, that she sleeps badly and frequently jumps up and runs about the house naked and that she is a marked subject of epilepsy’.²⁴⁶ With a hardworking father concentrating on earning money to support his family, and a mother who must have terrified her children before being committed, it was not surprising that Henry was beyond his father’s control.

Stepchildren were vulnerable when a parent remarried. For example, Thomas Neillie, a farmer at Papakura,²⁴⁷ married a widow in 1879.²⁴⁸ She had four children, and it must be assumed that he did not wish to be encumbered with them (they would not have their own child until 1891).²⁴⁹ For part of 1884 he ran the ‘Up-Hill Butchery’ and was sub-postmaster at Quartzville.²⁵⁰ In mid-year, his wife, Mary Jane, wrote to the

²⁴³ *Te Aroha News*, 1 August 1888, p. 2.

²⁴⁴ *Te Aroha News*, 22 August 1888, p. 2, 14 November 1888, p. 2.

²⁴⁵ Avondale Asylum, Register of Admissions 1885-1896, no. 1649, YCAA 1021/2; Casebook 1853-1892, folio 489, YCAA 1048/5, ANZ-A.

²⁴⁶ Avondale Asylum, Casebook 1853-1892, folio 489, YCAA 1048/5, ANZ-A.

²⁴⁷ Waikato Immigrants, Register of Crown Grants 1865-1882, folios 298, 299, Lands and Survey Department, BAAZ 1175/2, ANZ-A; *Auckland Provincial Government Gazette*, 28 November 1870, p. 433; *A Return of the Freeholders of New Zealand* (Wellington, 1884), p. N 5; *Auckland Star*, 23 August 1882, p. 3.

²⁴⁸ Marriage Certificate of Thomas Nealie [as recorded], 30 April 1879, 1879/914, BDM.

²⁴⁹ Birth Certificate of Martha Lillian Livingstone Neillie, 22 September 1891, 1891/12647, BDM.

²⁵⁰ *Te Aroha News*, 26 April 1884, p. 2, 5 July 1884, p. 7, 16 August 1884, p. 7; *New Zealand Gazette*, 8 May 1884, p. 782, 13 November 1884, p. 1584.

magistrate, Harry Kenrick,²⁵¹ ‘concerning My Children that is in the home’. These children, James, 13, Edward, 12, Charlie, 10, and Grace, whose age was not recorded, had been placed in homes by the Auckland magistrate, but she did not know his name nor how to apply to have them released. As ‘he Would not know me nor know withur I had a home for them or not’, implying that one reason they were sent to the homes was because of parental poverty, he asked for a note to send with her letter to give it ‘more Weight’,

I want to put the eldest to a trade and the other two can go to school at Waiorongomai until they are old enough to get a trade also James time was up in the home last September the other two will be up this September hoping you will kindly answer this as I am very anxious to get them home.²⁵²

Kenrick could not ‘interfere – it is outside my province’,²⁵³ but her efforts were successful, and Isabella (=Grace?), aged 9, and Charlie were enrolled at the Waiorongomai school later that year.²⁵⁴

Relatively minor criminal behaviour could result in committal to an industrial school. A 14-year-old schoolboy, in his self-produced newspaper about the life of his family and community, recorded one example in 1912:

The Maori boy, Jimmy Winter, well known in Te Aroha, and very popular among the juvenile portion of the town, was ... charged with stealing coppers [pennies] from the newly opened Amusement Parlour, to the value of about £5 or £6. The case has caused a great deal of excitement among the youngsters in the town.²⁵⁵

This report, mostly copied from the *Te Aroha News*, did not record that Jimmy had been sent to the Burham Industrial School. ‘Jimmy is now fourteen years of age, so will have a sojourn of about seven years in the South Island’.²⁵⁶

²⁵¹ See paper on his life.

²⁵² M.J. Neillie to Harry Kenrick, 11 June 1884, Te Aroha Warden’s Court, General Correspondence 1884, BBAV 11584/2b, ANZ-A.

²⁵³ Harry Kenrick to George Wilson (Inspector of Mines), 14 June 1884, Te Aroha Warden’s Court, General Correspondence 1884, BBAV 11584/2b, ANZ-A.

²⁵⁴ Waiorongomai School, Class Lists, November 1884, folios 182, 183, YCAF 4135/13a, ANZ-A.

²⁵⁵ *Burrator Weekly News*, 3 August 1912, printed in Tex Axford, *A Childhood in Te Aroha, 1907-1913* (Wellington, 1992), p. 54.

²⁵⁶ *Te Aroha News*, 1 August 1912, p. 2.

In October 1894, Agnes Quinton, daughter of Matthew, pleaded guilty to stealing a purse containing 3s 10d, and was imprisoned until the court rose.²⁵⁷ Because of this theft, in the following month, as she was a ten-year-old Catholic girl, she was sent to St Mary's Industrial School in Auckland until aged 15.²⁵⁸ Her father was obliged to pay for her maintenance, and when she turned 15 he was informed that she would be released once he had paid arrears amounting for about £5 or £6.²⁵⁹

Agnes' family circumstances partly explained her lapse into minor crime. Like her nearly two-years-younger brother, she was a habitual truant.²⁶⁰ As noted above, despite several deaths in the family, including one just a month before she committed her crime,²⁶¹ there remained seven children,²⁶² meaning that her family was never financially secure. Seven months before she stole the money, her father, who had to find work away from Te Aroha periodically,²⁶³ had been charged with leaving his wife and family without adequate means of support, and was ordered to pay maintenance for her and the four children aged under ten.²⁶⁴ In 1889, he had been forced into bankruptcy, even though his notional assets, in property, exceeded his liabilities.²⁶⁵

Another boy tempted into crime by poverty was William Charles Carter. In December 1885, two months away from his thirteenth birthday, he was charged with obtaining money by false pretenses, meaning that he had uttered a counterfeit sovereign. 'Convicted and in lieu of Penalty Boy ordered to be detailed in industrial School Kohimarama Auckland.²⁶⁶ Three days later, he pleaded guilty to stealing a silver watch guard and pendants, valued at 19s, from another man, and was sentenced to three months gaol before being sent to the school.²⁶⁷ He had been living with his

²⁵⁷ Te Aroha Magistrate's Court, Criminal Record Book 1881-1896, 15/1894, BCDG 11220/1a, ANZ-A.

²⁵⁸ Paeroa Magistrate's Court, *Thames Advertiser*, 1 December 1894, p. 2.

²⁵⁹ Clerk of Court to Matthew Quinton, 23 July 1897, Paeroa Warden's Court, Letterbook 1897-1899, p. 474, ZAAP 13842/1a, ANZ-A.

²⁶⁰ Te Aroha School, Class Lists for 1893, YCAF 4135/37a, ANZ-A.

²⁶¹ Death Certificate of Gavin Quinton, 11 September 1894, 1894/4026, BDM.

²⁶² Death Certificate of Matthew Quinton, 26 December 1903, 1903/7029, BDM.

²⁶³ For example, Magistrate's Court, *Te Aroha News*, 10 April 1886, p. 2.

²⁶⁴ Te Aroha Magistrate's Court, Criminal Record Book 1881-1896, 1, 2/1894, BCDG 11220/1a, ANZ-A.

²⁶⁵ Supreme Court, Bankruptcy Register 1888-1892, p. 254, BBAE 5639/1a, ANZ-A; *Mercantile and Bankruptcy Gazette*, 16 November 1889, p. 356.

²⁶⁶ Te Aroha Magistrate's Court, Criminal Record Book 1881-1896, 42/1885, BCDG 11220/1a, ANZ-A; Armed Constabulary Force, Report of Charges taken at Te Aroha Lock-Up 1880-1903, 20/1885, in private possession.

²⁶⁷ Te Aroha Magistrate's Court, Criminal Record Book 1881-1896, 43/1885, BCDG 11220/1a, ANZ-A.

mother and stepfather, who, being 'very poor', were not required to pay maintenance.²⁶⁸

BREAKING THE LAW

As in these examples, most of the juvenile crime was minor. In 1902, the three teenage sons of Joseph Bailiff Heathcote,²⁶⁹ a carpenter and contractor who had died in 1893,²⁷⁰ along with two other boys were charged with 'Disturbing Inhabitants'. After pleading not guilty, they were cautioned.²⁷¹ Sometimes obtaining food was a motivation for theft, as illustrated by a Waiorongomai correspondent in 1895:

The sensation of the week is the picnic of the seven worthies. These seven lads took advantage of the absence of Mrs Goldsworthy from her home to annex two valuable Pekin ducks, which they plucked and cooked along with some potatoes. Having gorged themselves they threw away what they could not eat. They have since however had the pleasure of paying 18d each for their fun, and lucky I think they were to get off so cheap. Another housewife also lost two but got them returned; and I hear a third complaining of fowls disappearing. I hear on the authority of one of these worthies that stealing poultry to sell to butchers is a fruitful source of pocket money to boys in Ponsonby.²⁷²

Three years later, a teenage boy was fined the value of two turkeys he had stolen from a farmer; charges against three others were dropped. His explanation that he was trying to shoot a hare that got amongst the turkeys was not accepted, the constable stating that he received 'frequent complaints from people about this sort of thing'.²⁷³

²⁶⁸ Auckland Industrial School, Admissions Register, Boys, 1882-1890, p. 204, BAAA 1955/2, ANZ-A.

²⁶⁹ Birth Certificates of Percival Bailiff Heathcote, 14 October 1883, 1883/15305; Herbert Bowen Heathcote, 2 September 1884, 1884/6220; Joseph Henry Heathcote, 28 January 1887, 1887/15038, BDM.

²⁷⁰ See *Waikato Times*, Te Aroha Correspondent, 16 August 1883, p. 2, Piako County Council, 15 September 1883, p. 2, 29 December 1883, p. 2; Magistrate's Court, *Thames Star*, 17 October 1884, p. 2; Domain Board, *Te Aroha News*, 13 June 1885, p. 2; Avondale Asylum, Register of Admissions 1885-1896, no. 1849, YCAA 1021/2, ANZ-A; Death Certificate of Joseph Bailiff Heathcote, 8 June 1893, 1893/2122, BDM.

²⁷¹ Te Aroha Magistrate's Court, Criminal Record Book 1896-1907, 17/1902, BCDG 11220/1b, ANZ-A.

²⁷² Waiorongomai Correspondent, *Te Aroha News*, 23 January 1895, p. 2.

²⁷³ Police Court, *Te Aroha News*, 26 July 1898, p. 2.

The convicted boy was aged 17; his brother was 20, and one of the other boys was only 13.²⁷⁴

In 1900, the *Te Aroha News* reported that ‘certain children’ were catching trout in Lipsey’s Creek. ‘We warn them that they are liable to a heavy fine, the fish being under regulation size. Furthermore no fishing licenses have been issued to Te Aroha residents, so no one is entitled to fish for trout’.²⁷⁵

A 15-year-old driver who worked on the Waiorongomai tramway stole £1 12s from a miner’s hut as well as 2s plus a purse valued at 2s from this miner’s brother’s hut. He was ordered to pay £2 for the first offence and convicted and discharged with a caution for the second.²⁷⁶ He was lucky to have been treated so leniently, as the punishment for theft could be a whipping, as in a Thames example when a 14-year-old was sentenced to 24 hours in gaol ‘and to be privately whipped by Constable Hogg by 10 strokes with a birch rod’.²⁷⁷ This punishment was sometimes delegated to fathers. In 1896, for example, a boy who pleaded guilty to stealing 12 goose eggs was ordered to pay ‘20/- amount of reward, 2/6 advertising reward, and 9/- value of the eggs, the father of accused undertaking to give him a whipping’.²⁷⁸

Henry Roland Harris, born in 1892,²⁷⁹ one of eight children of Robert,²⁸⁰ a Te Aroha merchant,²⁸¹ was a one-boy crime wave in the early twentieth century. In April 1904, when aged 12, he, along with three other schoolboys, one of the same age, the other two four years younger, was convicted of theft but not imprisoned.²⁸² In June 1905, the local newspaper reported the actions of these ‘juvenile burglars’:

On Wednesday last two boys, aged 12 and 13 years, left their homes shortly after 6 o’clock and stowed away till midnight in Mr J[ohn] Rowe’s stables. At midnight they sallied forth and came up the town and broke into Messrs Johnson and Wigg’s grocery and ironmongery establishment, and took

²⁷⁴ Birth Certificates of John Glen Cornes, 15 September 1877, 1877/6749; George Henry Cornes, 12 May 1881, 1881/2429; Alfred William Hyde, 30 May 1885, 1885/5772, BDM.

²⁷⁵ *Te Aroha News*, 27 January 1900, p. 2.

²⁷⁶ Armed Constabulary Force, Report of Charges taken at Te Aroha Lock-Up 1880-1903, 3, 4/1887, in private possession.

²⁷⁷ Thames Magistrate’s Court, Criminal Record Book 1881-1883, 50/1883, BA CL 13736/35a, ANZ-A.

²⁷⁸ Te Aroha Magistrate’s Court, Criminal Record Book 1896-1907, 22/1896, BCDG 11220/1b, ANZ-A.

²⁷⁹ Birth Certificate of Henry Roland Harris, 1892/5609, BDM.

²⁸⁰ For the names of his children, see Company Files, BADZ 5181, box 41 no. 259, ANZ-A.

²⁸¹ See *Te Aroha News*, 7 February 1885, p. 2, 10 March 1888, p. 2, 25 April 1888, p. 2, 5 February 1890, p. 2, 31 July 1909, p. 2.

²⁸² *New Zealand Police Gazette*, 18 May 1894, p. 137.

therefrom a single-barreled shotgun, a revolver, two flasks gun powder, half-a-dozen boxes gun cartridges, two tomahawks, seven boxes matches, six packets cigarettes, a packet candles and 2lb biscuits. In order to obtain these articles, the boys struck matches. After leaving the shop the two lads went down to the lemonade factory and stayed there till daylight. In the morning they went out shooting birds along the riverbank in Mr [George] Lipsey's paddock. At 2 o'clock they were joined by another lad about nine years old. By way of diversion the trio cut a rail off the fence about half a mile from Te Aroha, and put it across the railway line, fastening it on either side with pegs driven into the ground. After finishing this piece of work the party hid in the scrub nearby and awaited the arrival of the down train at 3.20 when the train appeared, and luckily the engine-driver saw the obstacle in the way and pulled up the train, just in time to avoid a mishap. The obstacle was removed, and after a delay of some five minutes the train proceeded on its journey.

The boys wandered about for the rest of the afternoon, and at night again returned to Rowe's stable, remaining in the loft until 2 o'clock on Friday afternoon. They next crossed the river and visited Mr Harris' farm in search of tucker, breaking into a storehouse thereon. Here they were captured the same afternoon by two young men ... who handed them over to the police.

The children, by their unseemly behaviour, caused their parents a great deal of anxiety. Notwithstanding the fact that search parties were out in search of the boys from the time they left home, they succeeded in evading capture until the hour named.²⁸³

At their trial, Harris was convicted of placing the obstruction on the railway line and of breaking and entering the ironmonger's shop and stealing goods valued at £7 16s. The youngest boy was 'discharged as too young', but although on one charge the other two were ordered to come up for sentence within six months if called upon, on the other they received nine strokes with a birch rod, in the presence of their parents 'if desired'.²⁸⁴ The actions of these 'desperados', as a Thames newspaper described them, were blamed on them being 'evidently carried away by the bloodthirsty tales in the "penny dreadfuls"'.²⁸⁵

In 1909, when aged 17 and a painter, Harris was charged with attempting 'to unlawfully carnally know' a 12-year-old girl but was discharged because there was 'not

²⁸³ *Te Aroha News*, n.d., reprinted in *Waikato Argus*, 27 June 1905, p. 2.

²⁸⁴ New Zealand Constabulary, Report of Charges taken at Te Aroha Lock-Up 1903-1917, 14, 15/1905, BADB 11355/1a; Te Aroha Magistrate's Court, Criminal Record Book 1896-1907, entry for 24 June 1905, BCDG 11220/1b, ANZ-A; *Waikato Argus*, 28 June 1905, p. 2; *New Zealand Police Gazette*, 19 July 1905, p. 256.

²⁸⁵ *Thames Star*, 27 June 1905, p. 2, 28 June 1905, p. 2.

sufficient evidence to send accused on trial'.²⁸⁶ The local newspaper chose not to report the court hearing, apart from a brief comment:

“It is a pity some of the parents could not be ordered a flogging,” such was the remark made at the Police Court on Tuesday, when the cases of juvenile depravity were being dealt with. Parents and guardians who allow children to roam about the streets and in the Domain after nightfall should be severely dealt with.²⁸⁷

(Although the report mentioned ‘cases’, only Harris was put on trial.²⁸⁸ The girl and her mother, a widow, subsequently moved to Auckland, where the latter established a tearoom and her daughter married a clergyman’s son.²⁸⁹) Harris was never in trouble with the law again, at least not in New Zealand.²⁹⁰

In the same edition that mentioned this ‘juvenile depravity’, the *Te Aroha News* published an editorial headlined ‘Parental Responsibility’, which hinting at these cases without spelling out what had occurred:

Unfortunately, the fact remains, as we have been so painfully reminded, that not all parents are fully alive to the stupendous importance of the part they have to play in preparing their children for their place in the nation’s life. The child is entrusted with an amount of liberty of action which too often imperils its moral wellbeing. It is allowed to be out on the streets at night, and to form companionships which are morally ruinous. And the huge pity of it all is that the child, if led into sin, is directly the victim of parental unwatchfulness. The child suffers moral undoing, but the parent incurs the blame.

The editorial urged parents to exert ‘a faithful vigilance, and a kindly but firm control, over the young with whose destiny providence has entrusted them’, and to safeguard children ‘as far as it is possible from all risk of contamination by evil influences’. To avoid the latter, ‘a thoroughly healthy mental and moral tone’ should be

²⁸⁶ New Zealand Constabulary, Report of Charges taken at Te Aroha Lock-Up, 1903-1917, 103/1908 [8 February 1909], BADB 11355/1a; Te Aroha Magistrate’s Court, Criminal Record Book 1907-1913, entry for 16 February 1909, BCDG 11220/2a, ANZ-A.

²⁸⁷ *Te Aroha News*, 18 February 1909, p. 2.

²⁸⁸ Te Aroha Magistrate’s Court, Criminal Record Book 1907-1913, entry for 16 February 1909, BCDG 11220/2a, ANZ-A.

²⁸⁹ Birth Certificate of Amalie Clausen, 1896/5208; Marriage Certificate of Amelia Clausen, 1916/10518, BDM; *Auckland Star*, 30 July 1913, p. 6, 31 July 1913, p. 6; Marriage Notice, *New Zealand Herald*, 7 April 1916, p. 1.

²⁹⁰ Marriage and Death Indexes, BDM; PapersPast.

encouraged ‘in the form of manly and womanly outdoor sports’ and by ‘furnishing their mental picture gallery with sweet and ennobling pictures from history, or from the records of present-day achievement’. By ‘keeping the young life around us immersed in wholesome and breezy interests and pursuits’, unspecified ‘ambushments may be passed in safety. Let us give the children wholesome games to keep them indoors of an evening. That will work far better than any prohibition to keep them off the streets’. Parents should always know ‘their doings and whereabouts’, and take precautionary measures:

Seeing the painful facts which continually come to light, regarding the evils to which our children are exposed, would it not be better to fore-warn them? Much as one may shrink from the idea of imparting, prematurely, knowledge which one feels ought not to be given to the child, yet seeing that the child every day runs the risk of having that knowledge imparted to it in a gross and perverted form, by evil companions, does it not appear almost necessary to forestall these evil communications by teaching the child at least the sacredness of the facts of life, and allaying curiosity with the promise of fuller light. This is the last course to suggest itself to a parent or guardian of keen sensitiveness, but extreme danger demands extreme precaution. Were it not better to acquaint the child with what we would for the time with-hold, rather than run the risk of allowing him to obtain a tainted knowledge of it.

The editorial directed its readers to books written by a ‘saintly and highly gifted churchwoman’, which treated ‘these most difficult matters in a delicate, yet intensely scientific spirit’. It concluded that ‘it devolves upon the parent to safeguard him against the peril to which his very ignorance exposes him’.²⁹¹ (That daughters should be safeguarded was never stated, ‘the child’ talked about being a male one.)

This under-age sexual experimentation led to repressive action by the school committee:

As a sequel to the recent cases which appeared before the local Court last week, a special meeting of the School Committee was held on Friday evening last, when it was decided that all children connected with the recent case be removed from School. – It was also moved and seconded “that the Committee deplores the present cases of juvenile depravity and consider that this is chiefly due to the gross apathy and carelessness of parents not exercising control over their children; particularly do they condemn the carelessness of parents in permitting their children to be roaming the streets after dark.” – It was unanimously resolved that the headmaster be requested to see the parents of those children who are known to be implicated in connection with the recent police court proceedings to remove their children from the school. – The Committee suggested that the headmaster

²⁹¹ Editorial, *Te Aroha News*, 18 February 1909, p. 2.

give certain instruction to the elder scholars. – It was decided that the Secretary write to the Board of Education urging the necessity of having the school grounds properly fenced.²⁹²

The ‘certain instruction’ must have been elementary sex education combined with appropriate moral exhortations. The latter was provided in the same issue of the newspaper, which printed a sermon preached in Te Aroha on ‘Parental Responsibility’. After deploring ‘the unpardonable apathy and carelessness of some parents who allow their children to be abroad in the streets after dark’, the clergyman wondered whether they were ‘oblivious’ of their children’s ‘moral well-being’ by allowing them ‘unprotected to wander at large’. He praised ‘the high moral tone’ of the editorial, and agreed that every father should

fit his boys for the battle of life by instructing them at a proper age, and in a proper way, on those moral and physiological questions, connected with the most sacred functions of life, and every mother should do the same with her daughters. To fail to do this is to give them over into the hands of some foul destroyer,

and parents ran the risk, after an experience of ‘juvenile depravity’, to hear their children ‘of remorse and shame say: “You never warned me”’. Throughout New Zealand, ‘because of the shameful neglect and laxity of some parents’, head-teachers were ‘being requested to wisely and judiciously impart that information which God intended should be given by loving parents to their children’. He applauded teachers for doing this, ‘for only good results may be expected to accrue from the matter being delicately and judiciously dealt with’.²⁹³

Although the Thames and Hamilton newspapers ignored these cases, a Paeroa one observed all this moral outrage dispassionately:

Te Aroha has been greatly agitated in consequence of startling disclosures lately made concerning improprieties committed by a number of young people attending both day and Sunday school. The scandal is not only the talk of the town but has even been accentuated by the delivery of pulpit homilies. There has also been a prosecution, the dismissal of which by a Bench of Justices was more than a nine-day’s wonder for a number of the local residents are so far dissatisfied that they are bringing matters under the notice of the Minister for Justice. Exactly how far the appeal to the Government is going to help the cause of social morality remains to be seen.²⁹⁴

²⁹² *Te Aroha News*, 23 February 1909, p. 2.

²⁹³ *Te Aroha News*, 23 February 1909, p. 2.

²⁹⁴ *Ohinemuri Gazette*, 6 March 1909, p. 16.

(There is no record in the Justice Department files of residents writing to the minister about this case.)

Illicit sex regularly occurred, as indicated in the papers on private lives and on women's lives in this district, but only rarely were children involved. In one example, in 1904, a 37-year-old labourer received two years imprisonment for indecently assaulting a girl aged under 16.²⁹⁵ Nearly five years later, another labourer, aged 29, was accused of indecently assaulting an 11-year-old.²⁹⁶

Not only young girls were in danger from sexual predators. In 1910, a miner aged either 32 or 33 was accused of indecently assaulting two nine-year-old boys in the domain, but before the charges could be proved he died on the train taking him to Thames, of an epileptic fit caused by chronic alcoholism.²⁹⁷

In all cases of under-age sex, the police faced the difficulty of obtaining proof. For instance, in 1911 the case against a 19-year-old apprentice of attempting to rape a 15-year-old girl on the road to Waiorongomai was dismissed because of lack of 'corroborative evidence'.²⁹⁸

CRUELTY

Physical punishment was common and was generally considered to be reasonable. In 1889, for instance, a Waiorongomai resident wrote that, if parents knew their children were stealing firewood, this knowledge 'should promptly lead to a healthy application of the proverbial birchwood'.²⁹⁹ No examples were reported of excessively harsh punishments of children in this district, but two 1883 cases of ill treatment by people who lived in it briefly illustrated that such actions were widely deplored. In early 1883, a Thames newspaper recorded a stepmother's brutality:

²⁹⁵ New Zealand Constabulary, Report of Charges taken at Te Aroha Lock-Up 1903-1917, 10/1904, BADB 11355/1a, ANZ-A.

²⁹⁶ New Zealand Constabulary, Report of Charges taken at Te Aroha Lock-Up 1903-1917, 101/1908 [8 January 1909], BADB 11355/1a, ANZ-A.

²⁹⁷ New Zealand Constabulary, Report of Charges taken at Te Aroha Lock-Up 1903-1917, 130, 131/1909 [21 January 1910], BADB 11355/1a, ANZ-A; Inquest on George William Penfold, Justice Department, J 46, COR 1910/127, ANZ-W.

²⁹⁸ New Zealand Constabulary, Report of Charges taken at Te Aroha Lock-Up 1903-1917, 1/1911, BADB 11355/1a, ANZ-A.

²⁹⁹ Letter from 'Floreat', *Te Aroha News*, 22 May 1889, p. 2.

A little girl was received into the hospital on Friday said to be suffering from the effects of shameful cruelty at the hands of her stepmother. The little one's body was covered with bruises, the shoulders in a similar state; the side of the head had been beaten almost to a jelly, and the eyes were swollen to such an extent that the little sufferer was temporarily sightless. The bruises to the head are alleged to have been administered by means of a hairbrush, and the weals on the body by a beating with the handle of a Japanese feather-duster. The injury to the eyes is believed to be from sympathetic affection with the neighbouring bruises on the head. It appears that the little one's father was at Te Aroha during the early part of the week, and on returning, missing his daughter, instigated [a] search, and found her in this pitiable plight underneath the house, wrapped in a blanket, with only a loaf of bread as food.³⁰⁰

Ada Elizabeth Greening, the assaulted child, was aged seven.³⁰¹ Her stepmother, Fanny Eliza Greening, was charged with aggravated assault.³⁰² Her father, Richard James Greening,³⁰³ who had remarried in 1879,³⁰⁴ had been at Te Aroha for five days, and when he returned had found his wife 'hopelessly drunk'. He discovered that she had previously dragged Ada along the street, pulled her ears, and then beaten her. Fanny 'was occasionally given to drinking habits, but when sober treated his child well, and appeared very fond of it'. Although neighbours had heard Ada's screams, 'as if being severely beaten' until 'suddenly the cries ceased', none had investigated. When he returned, he was told that Ada was at Tararu; he went looking for her that evening and the following morning before discovering her under his own house with a blanket and some bread. Fanny, who pleaded guilty, 'said she did not remember having ill-treated the child, having been under the influence of liquor'. The magistrate, Harry Kenrick, described the assault as being 'the most aggravated one that had ever come before him, and but for a merciful accident defendant might have been charged with a much more serious offence. When the child was brought to him, before being sent to the hospital, it was in a much worse state than now', and he had thought she might die. Being drunk was not an excuse but 'a great aggravation of the offence. If he were to punish her as she deserved the penalty would be a very heavy one, and though he trusted in her promises, he did not feel disposed to allow her to escape altogether the consequences of her action', and bound her over 'to come up for sentence when called upon'; in other words, she was placed on good behaviour, and would be called upon if she gave way to what she had called the 'accursed craving for drink'. A prohibition

³⁰⁰ *Thames Advertiser*, 19 February 1883, p. 2.

³⁰¹ Birth Certificate of Ada Elizabeth Greening, 1876/7309, BDM.

³⁰² *Thames Advertiser*, 20 February 1883, p. 2.

³⁰³ See Magistrate's Court, *Thames Star*, 13 January 1883, p. 2.

³⁰⁴ Marriage Certificate of Richard James Greening, 1879/7212, BDM.

order was issued against her for the Thames and Piako counties ‘in case her residence should be at Te Aroha, as in the past’.³⁰⁵ Two weeks later, Ada’s father applied for her to be admitted to the Thames orphanage once she was fit enough to leave hospital; clearly he did not trust his wife not to mistreat her again. His request was agreed to on condition he paid the quarterly payments for her maintenance in advance.³⁰⁶

Later that year, the actions of Elizabeth Wall, wife of a Hamilton labourer, Edward, who had briefly participated in the Te Aroha rush,³⁰⁷ were revealed in what the *Waikato Times* described as ‘A Painful Case’:

Sergeant McGovern yesterday made application to the Resident Magistrate, sitting in the Court at Hamilton, for an order to commit a little boy named Rysdale, aged seven years, to the Industrial Home. He explained that some time ago the mother of the boy died, and, the father handed him, together with the baby, over to the care of a woman named Elizabeth Wall, wife of Edward Wall, a labourer residing near No. 1 bridge. For some time past the police had been receiving anonymous letters concerning the manner in which the little boy was being treated by Mrs Wall. On going to Mrs Wall’s cottage, he found the accounts had not been exaggerated. The boy had to all appearances been shamefully ill-used, and hence he made the present application. His Worship, after seeing the boy, at once made the necessary order, whereupon Mrs Wall commenced to pour forth a torrent of abuse at the magistrate, who told her that if she did not behave herself the remaining child would also be taken from her. At this announcement she became furious and dared His Worship to do anything of the sort. Mr [Henry] Northcroft [the magistrate] directed police to lock Mrs Wall up till the afternoon, when he would have her brought up on a charge of contempt of court. A few hours incarceration had the desired effect, and when at 3 o’clock the offender was placed in the dock, she expressed her sorrow for what she had said and begged to be let off. His Worship severely cautioned and discharged her.

The little boy Rysdale is really an object of pity. The poor little fellow’s face is covered with bruises evidently inflicted with a heavy blunt instrument, while he has a bruise on his left side, which is clearly the result of a kick. He, moreover, is timid and frightened, and shrinks from strangers, crying at the expression of a kind word. When we saw him yesterday afternoon, he was somewhat improved. It seems a pity that such inhuman treatment as the unfortunate child has been subjected to cannot meet with proper recompense, but in the absence of any evidence the police are powerless, as the woman accounts for every sore and bruise in the most ingenious fashion.³⁰⁸

³⁰⁵ *Thames Advertiser*, 21 February 1883, p. 3.

³⁰⁶ *Thames Advertiser*, 7 March 1883, p. 2.

³⁰⁷ Te Aroha Warden’s Court, Miner’s Right no. 427, issued 25 November 1880, Miners’ Rights Butt Book 1880, BBAV 11533/1b; Register of Te Aroha Claims 1880-1888, folio 217, BBAV 11567/1a, ANZ-A.

³⁰⁸ *Waikato Times*, 3 July 1883, p. 2.

Clearly Elizabeth Wall had been paid for 'looking after' the children, whose mother had died at Hamilton in the previous year,³⁰⁹ and was angered by losing some of her income. It should be noted that she was permitted to retain the baby and there were no later reports of its being maltreated; perhaps its father rescued it. That there was general condemnation of her actions was illustrated by a gossip columnist being serious for a moment and commenting that she had 'met her just deserts' for abusing the magistrate. As the boy was 'a mass of bruises', it was 'a great pity that such brutal conduct cannot meet with its proper recompense' because of the lack of evidence; 'the woman accounted for every sore and bruise in a most remarkable way'.³¹⁰ That this childless family³¹¹ was unsuitable to look after young children was indicated by her being assaulted by her husband, who later in the decade was charged with failing to support her, by her assaulting neighbours on at least two occasions, and by both of them being drunkards.³¹²

ORGANIZED ACTIVITIES

A feature of Te Aroha (as with most towns) was its annual New Year's Day children's picnic with entertainments and sports for both adults and children, which attracted participants from around the district. In 1887, for instance, the children's feast and sports was held on New Year's Day in a 'paddock below the bridge'. Children were instructed to be at the school by 9 o'clock, bringing a pannikin or mug.³¹³ 'A representative committee appointed by the various Sunday and Day Schools' made the arrangements, and their work was praised by the local newspaper. 'The weather being fine there was a large muster of children at the school at 9 o'clock, and they very shortly afterwards marched in procession bearing large banners and flags, accompanied by teachers and others and headed by the Te Aroha Brass Band'. After marching through 'the principal streets', they arrived at the paddock which, bordering the river, was a site

³⁰⁹ Death Certificate of Ellen Rysdale, 1882/2239, BDM.

³¹⁰ 'Waikato Whisperings', *Observer*, 7 July 1883, p. 248.

³¹¹ Death Certificate of Elizabeth Wall, 18 January 1897, 1897/407, BDM.

³¹² Hamilton Police Station, Warrant Book 1877-1912, entry for 25 October 1881, BADB 11344/1a, ANZ-A; *Waikato Times*, 20 April 1882, p. 2, 2 November 1882, p. 2, 6 September 1883, p. 2, 24 June 1886, p. 2, 8 June 1889, p. 2.

³¹³ *Te Aroha News*, 1 January 1887, p. 2.

in every way suitable for the occasion. A number of swings had been erected on the grounds, and were at once in demand, while various games and amusements were speedily started by some members of the committee, while others set about arranging and preparing the eatables, etc. There was an abundance of good things for all, including sandwiches, cakes, buns, lollies, strawberries, tea, *ad lib* etc, which during the day were being continuously served out, not only to the children but to the parents and others who assembled in large numbers during the afternoon. Sports consisting of footraces, obstacle races, sack races, and other novel races were run for prizes during the day and caused much competition and amusement. Altogether a thoroughly enjoyable day was spent by all present, and the committee who worked hard to make the affair so successful should congratulate themselves on the result.³¹⁴

At the end of that year, the annual treat held for Waiorongomai's schoolchildren commenced with their being led through the settlement by the local fife and drum band, with banners and flags flying. After playing games and being given sweets and similar treats, the band marched them back at 5 o'clock.³¹⁵

These events became even more elaborate in the 1890s. The 1894 'fete' was marred by 'very unfavourable weather', steady rain falling by the time the children assembled in the domain. 'A good deal of shelter is to be found under the trees, and so the children could enjoy a number of games without getting wet'. Two members of the school committee were present, along with the head teacher and 'a large number of ladies and young men' who

did their utmost to make the children enjoy themselves and were very successful in their efforts. A programme of races had been drawn up, and the different events were keenly contested. After the children had partaken of a substantial dinner, the weather being still wet, the Town Hall was engaged, and a general adjournment was made to that building, in which the youngsters enjoyed themselves thoroughly all the afternoon, finishing up with a splendid tea before going to their respective homes. In the evening the elder ones spent several happy hours in tripping the light fantastic and went home feeling that a wet New Year's Day may yet be made a very enjoyable one.³¹⁶

In the following year, the 'annual children's picnic' in the domain was particularly well organized by an enthusiastic committee.

The weather was all that could be desired, and the settlers came pouring into the township during the morning from all the surrounding districts.

³¹⁴ *Te Aroha News*, 8 January 1887, p. 2.

³¹⁵ *Te Aroha News*, 24 December 1887, p. 2.

³¹⁶ *Te Aroha Correspondent*, *Auckland Weekly News*, 6 January 1894, p. 23.

There must have been fully 500 adults and children present during the day. A lengthy programme of sports had been prepared by the committee appointed for that purpose, into which the young people of both sexes and all ages entered with the greatest enthusiasm.

A new feature was ‘the swimming competition, which took place in the new swimming bath, more than 250 paying to enter the bath-house. Some capital diving and swimming was exhibited’. The town’s brass band ‘played a large number of pieces’, and a cricket match held between Te Aroha and Morrinsville men.³¹⁷

In the following year, ‘the Domain was the scene of a most animated and enjoyable social function. The occasion was the children’s annual fete, and favoured by splendid weather, one of the largest gatherings of pleasure-seekers which has been seen for many a day assembled in our beautiful Domain’. Once again, ‘a few of our leading townspeople’ organized the children’s ‘annual New Year’s treat’. Both residents and visitors had been canvassed for subscriptions, ‘and within a very short time a substantial sum was collected, which enabled the committee to make generous provision for prizes and refreshments’. There were sports for both adults and children, the band ‘was in attendance, and materially added to the day’s enjoyments’, and a ‘large number of prizes’ were distributed. ‘The wants of the children in this matter were particularly attended to, for scarcely one of them left the ground without bearing with them a souvenir of the day’s sport’.³¹⁸

In addition, the Wesleyan Sunday School held an annual treat. In March 1882, for instance, plenty of food was provided, there were lots of games, and races were held in ‘Lipseys’ paddock’. The prizes were ‘dolls, work and paint boxes, etc, and keenly did the scholars compete for these. Ere they separated they gathered round the church door, and at the request of the circuit minister sang the National Anthem’.³¹⁹ Two years later, 150 children participated in this festivity.³²⁰

Occasionally organized trips away were arranged. A schoolboy described one such trip, held in 1912:

Yesterday about a hundred pupils of the Te Aroha School, accompanied by some of their teachers, visited the Hamilton Show. The children enjoyed themselves immensely, as is usual on such occasions. There was plenty of fun to be had and plenty of good things to eat, and the cake and lolly stalls were extraordinarily patronised all the day long. Then there was the “Merry-go-round” with the wooden horses upon the backs of which the

³¹⁷ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 5 January 1895, p. 9.

³¹⁸ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 11 January 1896, p. 23.

³¹⁹ *Thames Advertiser*, 22 March 1882, p. 3.

³²⁰ *Te Aroha News*, 2 February 1884, p. 2.

riders gracefully sat. How sweet were the twirling sensations as the Merry-go-round spun round, and how melodious were the sounds of the barrel organ. Another great attraction was a moving-picture show which the notices said was “going all the time.” Of course there was a full house in less than no time, but after waiting for half-an-hour in that evil-smelling “hall,” as the place was called, the announcement was made that the machine had broken down. So, their money being returned, they sought other amusements of which there were plenty.

At about 1 p.m. the children assembled at the station to wait for the Te Aroha train and it was not long before a train did come in. Immediately there was a scramble for seats, but it was not known that the train was bound for Rotorua until too late. Some children, however, managed to jump off in time but the rest had to keep to the train until Morrinsville was reached. Here they got out and waited about an hour till the next train, with the rest of the party aboard, arrived. The remainder of the journey was minus such incidents, and so they arrived at Te Aroha thinking that going to the Hamilton Show was very much better than being in school.³²¹

Children were encouraged to perform musical and theatrical items. In 1886, the Waiorongomai postmaster assisted the young people there to form a band.³²² Nothing further was heard of this, but presumably it performed at Band of Hope meetings. The following year, when Thames ‘juveniles’ visited to perform a play and other theatrical entertainments, it was reported that ‘the Te Aroha popular midgets will assist their Thames friends’;³²³ presumably the ‘midgets’ were pre-teenagers.

The first ‘children’s carnival’ was held in Te Aroha in 1887, organized by the schoolteacher, his wife, and Pietro Faes, a draper,³²⁴ a great organiser of amusements for both adults and children.³²⁵ Only schoolchildren performed, having been trained in their acts over the previous two to three weeks. As was usual with local newspapers, the *Te Aroha News* printed a most enthusiastic report. ‘Thursday seemed an unusually long day to the juveniles, who were all impatience for the long looked-for evening to arrive, and put in an early appearance’. The hall ‘was well filled, many’ coming from Waiorongomai, Te Aroha West, Waitoa, ‘and the various outlying districts’, making it ‘literally cram full’ by the time the entertainment commenced.

³²¹ *Burrator Weekly News*, 8 June 1912, in Axford, pp. 37-38.

³²² Letter from ‘A Resident’, *Te Aroha News*, 2 October 1886, p. 2.

³²³ *Te Aroha News*, 11 June 1887, p. 2.

³²⁴ *Thames Advertiser*, 7 August 1882, p. 2; advertisement, *Te Aroha News*, 9 June 1883, p. 1.

³²⁵ For example, Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 23 June 1887, p. 2, 25 September 1888, p. 2; *Te Aroha News*, 16 July 1887, p. 3, 5 November 1887, p. 2, 31 December 1887, p. 3, 4 April 1888, p. 2, 29 September 1888, p. 2, 24 August 1889, p. 2, 21 September 1895, p. 2; ‘Te Aroha’, *Observer*, 26 October 1895, p. 21, 15 February 1896, p. 21.

A few minutes past eight the chairman of the evening, (Master Erasmus) a little fellow of about eight summers, but who evinced all the *sang froid* of an octogenarian, advanced to the front of the platform and amidst much applause opened the proceedings by expressing the great pleasure it afforded him to see such a goodly gathering at this, the occasion of the first entertainment by Te Aroha School children.³²⁶

(John James Erasmus, son of John Erasmus, a miner,³²⁷ had been born in April 1878,³²⁸ making him nine years old. He would attend the Thames High School, become a law clerk before being a journalist and property developer in South Africa.³²⁹) The programme was ‘gone through without a hitch, occupying about two hours and a half after which the hall was cleared for a dance for the Juveniles’. The singing included solos, duets, and choruses, with the formal part of the evening ending with a maypole dance. ‘The children, without exception, reflected great credit on their instructors, and each performed their allotted part admirably’. Before departing ‘the children were provided with refreshments in great variety, the materials for which were kindly given by several of the townsfolk’. Afterwards, a dance held for adults lasted until one o’clock in the morning.³³⁰

Arbor Day, strongly supported by leading citizens,³³¹ was another annual festivity. At Waiorongomai in 1895, for example, this day involved much more than just planting trees, or in this case a very spiky hedge:

The Waiorongomai people with their usual liberality and consideration for the young people provided an excellent day’s sport for the school-children last Wednesday. The business of the day was first disposed of, the children planting barbery plants for a hedge inside the fence on the school front. They then sat down to enjoy and cake, sandwiches, etc, which had been prepared by Mrs [Mary] Jennings [a miner’s wife]³³² with her usual skill; oranges were also distributed in the afternoon and the balance of the day was devoted to a programme of sports, numbering some sixteen events, with prizes ranging from half-crowns [2s 6d] downwards. All the races were keenly contested, and in most the finishes were so close that picking the winners was no sinecure. The boys’ hurdle races brought about the

³²⁶ *Te Aroha News*, 23 July 1887, p. 2.

³²⁷ See Mines Department, MD 1, 87/1298, ANZ-W; *Te Aroha News*, 21 March 1885, p. 2, 8 August 1885, p. 2, 29 August 1885, p. 2, 29 March 1890, p. 2.

³²⁸ Birth Certificate of John James Erasmus, 10 April 1878, 1878/8011, BDM.

³²⁹ See *Ohinemuri Gazette*, 6 May 1896, p. 2, 3 June 1896, p. 2, 2 November 1903, p. 3; *Observer*, 19 March 1904, p. 4; *Te Aroha News*, 5 December 1911, p. 2; *New Zealand Herald*, 8 March 1934, p. 12.

³³⁰ *Te Aroha News*, 23 July 1887, p. 2.

³³¹ For instance, see paper on James Mills.

³³² See *Te Aroha News*, 19 March 1887, Warden’s Court, 24 August 1895, p. 2.

usual number of falls incidental to most country events, but the girls showed wonderful aptitude over the small sticks.

Parents had subscribed the money for the prizes. After the races ended, attendance certificates were distributed, and ‘an enjoyable dance in the schoolhouse wound up a highly successful day’.³³³

Similar polite activities continued into the twentieth century. Ted Axford, the 14-year-old doctor’s son, in recording a garden party held in the domain in 1912 revealed both that the highlight was the food and that not all the behaviour was as polite as adults would have hoped:

The Garden Party, held in honour of the opening of the new Post Office, was a great success, at least the children thought so. Immediately the Post Office was opened these small individuals made a rush for the Domain. (It is reported that this “rush” was greater than the goldminers’ “rushes” in Australia.) There they indulged, for the next hour, in cramming cakes and sandwiches (which, you must remember, are most delicious) into their mouths. After that they had a feast of “lollies” which were served out to them in bags. And to put a finishing touch to all this they had some grand games. For instance the small boys with their projecting stomachs played at Red Indians, and yelled and raced about in a manner quite astonishing considering their late cake-cramming business. This racing about and taking short cuts across flower beds became so serious that Mr Dalton, the head gardener, had to chase the Red Indians out of his dominions. And so the warriors ran out of the Domain as fast as they possibly could (considering the cakes) and went home feeling rather sick. On arriving at their homes they greatly astonished their mothers by saying that they would rather not have any tea. This (of course) was unusual.

The next day the school attendance was considerably low.³³⁴

Food and games were also the highlights of parties held in family homes, as illustrated by Ted Axford’s account of his sister’s birthday party:

Last Wednesday, 22nd May, an important event in the history of our family occurred – namely, little Miss Mavis Axford’s twelfth birthday. A little trouble was experienced at first as to whether a party should be given. Of course, the small people considered a birthday not a birthday unless a party is held. In this case the elders refused to give a party. At the conclusion of the debate which accordingly followed this statement, it was decided to invite just a few little girls. Invitations were sent, and in many cases answered in a very polite manner.

At last, the day of the great event dawned. It was a Wednesday and therefore a school day. Also, it was extraordinary to see the large number of

³³³ *Te Aroha News*, 10 August 1895, p. 2.

³³⁴ *Burrator Weekly News*, 4 May 1912, in Axford, p. 24.

times the little girls had their names put on the blackboard for chattering in school. And when school was over and they had to stay behind they showed remarkable boldness when making faces at the master. But at last they were dismissed and arriving at the site of their ambitions spent the remainder of the afternoon playing games in the garden.

At 5 p.m. the company assembled round the tea-table. The delights of that tea cannot be described here. Everybody enjoyed themselves deliciously. The happy operation being completed they retired to the sitting-room, which, at that particular time might have been called the romping-room. The first item on the programme was a guessing competition of the jumbled names of town in New Zealand. The result was a tie between Miss Nora Taylor and Miss Marjorie Paterson. A toss resulted in the first prize being presented to Miss Taylor and the second prize to Miss Paterson. Numerous games followed and so the evening was concluded happily. Little Miss Mavis received presents, which, as a local paper says, "were both numerous and costly." Chief among these presents was a tennis racket presented by her parents.³³⁵

In addition to the temperance society the Band of Hope,³³⁶ there were several organizations devoted to the moral uplift of children. By 1912 there was a Busy Bee Society for girls, which during that year was 'working in order to raise funds to buy a cot for a Presbyterian Mission Hospital in one of the Eastern countries', Ted Axford reported. After 'working hard for some months', the girls had 'enough work to put on sale. One or two side shows are to be installed at the sale. Edward Axford intends giving exhibitions of his new model locomotive, and it is to be hoped this will help in attracting people'. Their sewing would be sold 'at very low prices'.³³⁷ To attract customers, Ted provided another 'side show' of mineral specimens collected when visiting Rotorua; another incentive was the provision of afternoon tea.³³⁸ The sale was 'very successful, better, indeed, than was expected. It was very well attended, and everyone praised the work of the Busy Bees. All the money has not yet come in but it is expected that altogether £5.15.0 will be got', enough to purchase a cot for a mission hospital in India 'and to support an incurable child for one year'.³³⁹

The *Te Aroha News* encouraged moral improvement by publishing a 'Children's Column' written by 'Uncle Arthur'. In January 1900, for instance, he stressed the need to speak the truth at all times and to be a good Christian, using earnest tales from Britain and the Bible as examples of how to live according to the wishes of the 'God of Truth'. To emphasize his point, he cited the cases of two people who were struck dead

³³⁵ *Burrator Weekly News*, 25 May 1912, in Axford, pp. 31-32.

³³⁶ See paper on the temperance movement in the Te Aroha district.

³³⁷ *Burrator Weekly News*, 20 July 1912, in Axford, p. 49.

³³⁸ *Burrator Weekly News*, 27 July 1912, in Axford, p. 51.

³³⁹ *Burrator Weekly News*, 3 August 1912, in Axford, p. 53.

after lying to Saint Peter. ‘Remember, dear children, that God cannot be mocked, and as He has plainly told us in His Word that “all liars” shall have their portion in the lake of fire, let us try to stick to truth’.³⁴⁰

In 1912, Ted Axford recorded a letter being published in the *Te Aroha Mail* (now lost) called for a branch of the boy scouts to be formed.

Now I quite agree with the writer and think that his suggestion should be carried out without loss of time. Te Aroha is in much need of Boy Scouts among its boys, and the sooner a troop is formed the better. Te Aroha boys have plenty of time to spare, indeed, far too much. Right up to ten o’clock at night many boys are found hanging about the street and making themselves a nuisance. If Boy Scouts were formed here perhaps it would give these boys something to do. Not all the work of Boy Scouts need be done during the daytime. A good deal can be done in the evenings and no doubt by doing so these boys will fill in their now wasted time in doing something of use.³⁴¹

‘Entertainments’, usually held to raise money for worthy causes, involved children as well as adults. In 1897, for instance, ‘the members of the Boys’ Guild, assisted by “our girls,” gave an entertainment’ in the town hall ‘in aid of the funds for the new Reading Room and Gymnasium which it is proposed to build and devote to the exclusive use of “our boys”’.

The first item on the programme was a grand procession by the juveniles, who went through a series of intricate movements very nicely. Some tableaux were also provided for the amusement of the audience and were very effective and pleasing.

At the end, of this entertainment the Anglican clergyman ‘briefly addressed the meeting on behalf of the boys and their new club room’.³⁴²

In addition to the usual running races and team sports, in September 1884 Louis Kalman, a Waiorongomai shopkeeper,³⁴³ offered to give children gymnastic lessons in his home.³⁴⁴ Previously an instructor to the Thames Athletic Club, in April that year he had convened a meeting to establish a Waiorongomai Athletic Club.³⁴⁵ How many

³⁴⁰ ‘Uncle Arthur’, ‘Children’s Column’, *Te Aroha News*, 20 January 1900, p. 2.

³⁴¹ *Burrator Weekly News*, 27 July 1912, in Axford, p. 51.

³⁴² ‘Twinkler’, ‘Te Aroha Notes’, *Thames Advertiser*, 25 May 1897, p. 3; Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Argus*, 27 May 1897, p. 2.

³⁴³ See District Court, *Thames Advertiser*, 4 February 1885, p. 3; *Te Aroha News*, 16 May 1888, p. 2.

³⁴⁴ *Te Aroha News*, 6 September 1884, p. 7.

³⁴⁵ *Thames Advertiser*, 28 September 1882, p. 2; *Te Aroha News*, 19 April 1884, p. 2.

children responded to his offer was not recorded, and any involvement was very brief, because after the decline in mining forced him into bankruptcy in November he returned to Thames.³⁴⁶ In 1890, ‘the rising generation of Te Aroha are arranging to have boxing matches. A few practices have already been held, and every other fellow you meet is a Sullivan or a Donovan’,³⁴⁷ the names of current boxing champions.

By the twentieth century, a naval cadet corps had been formed. In April 1900, it was reported that the ‘Te Aroha Cadet Navals’ were to attend an Easter Camp.³⁴⁸ Aged from six to 16, they were ‘full of enthusiasm’, according to a Thames newspaper. ‘At present they are armed with anything from a wooden gun to a Mauser and are as game as their forefathers. It is the intention to attach a tin-whistle band to the corps. Strict discipline is observed by the members, who are a promising lot’.³⁴⁹ Nearly five months afterwards, late one afternoon a miner was in Te Aroha when ‘The cadets belonging to the Te Aroha School came marching back from Waiorongomai, there were about twenty of them dressed in white & blue Naval uniform and armed with wooden guns, one small boy about Frank’s age [five]³⁵⁰ carried a small drum, the little fellow had marched all the way out and back with them’.³⁵¹

This corps was ‘affiliated with a Thames National Unit and a Territorial Unit which was recognized in the National School Drill Scheme. These primary school units used real guns and live ammunition’, which was stored in a classroom. On one evening in 1905, when a fire broke out, some of the ammunition exploded.³⁵² But in 1911 one parent criticized the corps:

A great deal has been said about the necessity of establishing the scout movement in all centres in this Dominion, but there is the evil side of the movement which presents unpleasant features. Take for instance some cadets that we know. Little soldiers spend their spare time in cigarette smoking. If they are to establish the basis of our future defence forces, well I am afraid that the great national good which was expected of the movement will deteriorate and eventually the scheme will prove worthless – the country will be undefended, and the lives of thousands of boys

³⁴⁶ *Thames Star*, 28 November 1884, p. 3; *Te Aroha News*, 6 December 1884, p. 7, District Court, 7 February 1885, p. 7; *Thames Advertiser*, 6 February 1885, p. 2.

³⁴⁷ ‘Te Aroha’, *Observer*, 6 September 1890, p. 17.

³⁴⁸ For a photograph of 22 uniformed Te Aroha boys at an undated camp, proudly posing with their flag, bugle, and miniature rifles, see Loris Priest, *Te Aroha Primary and District High School 1881-1981* (Te Aroha, 1981), p. 14.

³⁴⁹ *Thames Star*, 3 April 1900, p. 2.

³⁵⁰ Birth Certificate of Frank Deacon Holt, 1895/5911, BDM.

³⁵¹ T.F. Holt to Nell Holt, 28 September 1900, Holt Papers, p. 30, Te Aroha Museum.

³⁵² Priest, p. 14.

sacrificed. Greater care should be exercised over these boys by the officers.³⁵³

Children were encouraged to learn arts and crafts. In 1895, for instance, prizes were awarded to those aged up to 16-years-old participating in the Te Aroha Flower Show with flowers, 'Flax whip', pressed ferns, birds' eggs, 'Collection of woods', pot fern, single foliage plant, hand bouquet, bridal bouquet, and button-hole bouquet. Handcrafts comprised sewing (pinafores, hemmed handkerchiefs, and dressed dolls), crochet work, knitted booties, woollen mats, and needle books. Artistic talent was shown in freehand drawing of an arum lily, model drawing (a kettle), the ground plan of the school, landscapes, a shaded drawing of a horse's head, a sketch of the school, small hand-written copies of the Ten Commandments, and a map of New Zealand. On a more scholastic note, there were prizes for 'Business account, receipted', 'Business account, receipted, by deputy, in two different ways', and essays. Collections of coins and postage stamps were also entered in the show, and there was a boot-cleaning competition for boys and a potato peeling competition for both boys and girls.³⁵⁴

Some children were taught music. In the early twentieth century, Ivy Greening, born in 1895,³⁵⁵ the only child of Walter Greening, mine manager for Hardy's Mines,³⁵⁶ 'attended the first local Convent in Te Aroha, learning all the things a young lady should know, such as playing the pianoforte, singing and embroidery'.³⁵⁷ And not just nice young ladies learnt to play the piano. The wife of Charles Henry Albert Tonge, a drunken carpenter,³⁵⁸ had a piano that she leant out for social gatherings.³⁵⁹ In an 1881 concert at Waihou, 'Master and Miss Tonge creased a pleasing sensation by their duet on the pianoforte', this 'fine instrument having been provided by their parents.'³⁶⁰

MAKING THEIR OWN FUN

³⁵³ Letter from 'A Twenty-years Parent', *Te Aroha Mail*, 31 January 1911, in Press Cutting Book, Government Spa, Te Aroha Hot Pools, held in Te Aroha Library.

³⁵⁴ Te Aroha Correspondent, *New Zealand Herald*, 13 November 1895, p. 6.

³⁵⁵ Birth Certificate of Ivy Greening, 4 February 1895, 1895/2482, BDM.

³⁵⁶ See paper on this company.

³⁵⁷ 'Jean Heather', 'The Late Ivy Greening, Karangahake', *Ohinemuri Regional History Journal*, no. 26 (November 1982), p. 28.

³⁵⁸ See paper on women's lives in the Te Aroha district.

³⁵⁹ Recollections of Reuben Parr, *Te Aroha Mail*, 29 October 1910, p. 3.3

³⁶⁰ *Waikato Times*, 5 May 1881, p. 3.

Fun organized spontaneously by children without the involvement of adults was often much less respectable and much more dangerous. For instance, the oldest pupil at the 1967 jubilee celebrations of the Te Aroha West school, Weston Hughes, who was aged nine when he had attended it in 1892,³⁶¹ recalled some of what went on when adults were not looking:

Just a few things that we got up to that might be of interest to you.

Miss Russell the teacher would not let us play Football or Cricket, so we had to find some other things to do. The biggest trouble we got into was when one of the boys stole some of his father's explosives and brought them to school, so we decided to blow up a small bridge close to the school on Mace's Road, we made a mess of the bridge, Miss Russell never found out who it was as nobody would tell so all the older boys were lined up and got the cuts [with a cane], but nobody would tell.

Another time we worked for days clearing a patch in the tall ti-tree to build a hut. The big boys used to make the smaller boys fight there till one bright boy proposed to steal some eggs and cook them in the hut. We wrapped the eggs in wet clay and lit a fire, but the sparks set the roof on fire and that was the end of the hut. Jack Sheat one of the boys bet another that he could go right to the top of the swing; the result, he turned a flip when he got high and landed on his belly, we got a terrible fright, we all thought he was dead for a while, but he was only winded and was alright as soon as he got his wind back.³⁶²

One boy, born in 1869,³⁶³ who attended the Waihou school, recalled the school playground consisted of the whole district:

Four games came to his mind – baseball, in the ring, tinga shine³⁶⁴ and free fights (laughter). The first encounter he could remember took place between two girls in the upper form of Standard II, between the hotel and the store. After they had been banging each other about for half an hour, he thought one of them was getting the best of it and having plenty of pluck and chivalry dived in. He caught the girl who was getting the best of it by the ankle. Word came that the teacher was coming so they picked up their books and went home.³⁶⁵

³⁶¹ Te Aroha West School, Class Lists for 1892, p. 74, YCAF 4135/34a, ANZ-A.

³⁶² Recollections of Weston Hughes (1967), in *Te Aroha West School 85th Jubilee 1882-1867: Te Aroha West district 1879-1967* (Te Aroha, 1968), no pagination [p. 40].

³⁶³ Birth Certificate of Christopher James Parr, 18 May 1869, 1869/11772, BDM.

³⁶⁴ Not traced (misprinted?): Brian Sutton-Smith, *The Games of New Zealand Children* (Berkeley, Calif., 1959), and dictionaries of New Zealand slang.

³⁶⁵ Recollections of Christopher James Parr, *Te Aroha News*, 2 July 1930, p. 5.

Sometimes children exploited adult celebrations for their own purposes, as when, in 1895, ‘Te Aroha juveniles celebrated Guy Fawkes’ Day with bonfires, squibs, and crackers’.³⁶⁶ Some would have been under parental control, but it is most unlikely that all were. Children used adult facilities in ways that were contrary to adult expectations; for instance, in January 1895 ‘numerous complaints’ continued to be made ‘re children romping about the Te Aroha Domain Buildings’.³⁶⁷ Four months later, because of children making nuisances of themselves, the domain board resolved to bar all children under 13 from the reading room after sundown unless in the charge of their parents.³⁶⁸ Late one afternoon in 1900 a gang of small boys carried a black swan into the cold swimming bath on the domain, where its swimming and diving was admired by 40 children.³⁶⁹

Children enjoyed exploring the mountain and its mining areas. In 1937, Robert Raue, who had been aged six when his father, Edward Hugo Ross Raue,³⁷⁰ joined the Te Aroha rush,³⁷¹ recalled ‘joining in the fun with other children who played round the prospectors’ camps’. When his family moved to Waiorongomai, ‘he, with his brothers, used to climb up to the top of the Buck Reef, which in those days was the favourite camping place for a herd of wild goats. Many a thrill they had, and he marvels that in scaling the steep sides they did not meet with an accident’.³⁷²

A remarkable feat of fitness by two boys was recorded in 1898:

Mr Cousins, Surveyor Inspector, and party are at present at Waiorongomai engaged on Government work. Two members of the party paid a flying visit to Te Aroha on Wednesday, walking in; after taking a bath and seeing the sights they made a start on the return journey at half-past four, by way of the Bald Spur and the Trig, arriving in camp on the Waiorongomai hill at seven o’clock, after a thoroughly enjoyable day. We should add that the parties in question were aged nine and ten.³⁷³

³⁶⁶ *Te Aroha News*, 9 November 1895, p. 2.

³⁶⁷ *Te Aroha News*, 19 January 1895, p. 2.

³⁶⁸ *Te Aroha News*, 10 April 1895, p. 2.

³⁶⁹ *Te Aroha News*, 11 January 1900, p. 2.

³⁷⁰ See *Waikato Times*, 9 December 1880, p. 3; Magistrate’s Court, *Te Aroha News*, 11 August 1883, p. 3, 17 May 1884, p. 2.

³⁷¹ Te Aroha Warden’s Court, Miner’s Right no. 426, issued 25 November 1880, Miners’ Rights Butt Book 1880, BBAV 11533/1c; Register of Te Aroha Claims 1880-1888, folio 217, BBAV 11567/1a, ANZ-A.

³⁷² Recollections of R.J. Raue, *Te Aroha News*, 9 January 1937, p. 5.

³⁷³ *Te Aroha News*, 12 February 1898, p. 2.

In late May 1912, Ted Axford had ‘an expedition’ with his younger brother and a friend to the summit of Te Aroha. He described the ‘very pretty’ climb, with its good views and ‘beautiful bush’. At the top, ‘a bitterly cold wind swept over it and in the shady places a white frost was experienced. So cold was it that the mountaineers had to light fires in order to keep warm. Lunch was had and then the magnificent view was admired’.³⁷⁴ A photograph was taken of the brothers standing at the trig.³⁷⁵

As Francis (Frank) Montague, son of Bernard,³⁷⁶ born in 1889,³⁷⁷ recalled in 1938, ‘there was no money’ when he was young:

Children when they wanted playthings manufactured them. They were happy with small simple things and appreciated Christmas for the bag of blackballs which came their way. People today may have thought they were hard done by but looking back you realize that they were the most carefree and happiest days of his life.³⁷⁸

Sometimes toys could be dangerous; for instance, in 1897, catapults, which were illegal, were becoming a nuisance, and the police were ‘looking out for boys using them’.³⁷⁹

For children living on farms, it could be a lonely life. One man, Charles Garlick, a contractor based at Waiorongomai in the 1880s,³⁸⁰ recalled that ‘so isolated ... were some of the settlers that it was an occasion of general rejoicing when they did find opportunity to bring their families into town’.³⁸¹

CONCLUSION

Surviving records suggest that most children’s lives were, in general, happy ones, but there were potential dangers, notably illnesses that could not be cured and, consequently, the possibility of an early death. Most children were well behaved, and many participated in ‘improving’ entertainments, but in their free time some enjoyed themselves in ways that their parents and other adults would not have approved of. Criminal behaviour was generally minor, but some children engaged in precocious

³⁷⁴ *Burrator Weekly News*, 25 May 1912, in Axford, pp. 32, 34.

³⁷⁵ Axford, p. 33.

³⁷⁶ See paper on Bernard Montague.

³⁷⁷ Birth Certificate of Francis Montague, 1889/12177, BDM.

³⁷⁸ Recollections of Francis Montague, *Te Aroha News*, 1 August 1938, p. 5.

³⁷⁹ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Argus*, 20 April 1897, p. 2.

³⁸⁰ See advertisement, *Te Aroha News*, 27 July 1889, p. 2; *Bay of Plenty Beacon*, 25 August 1944, p. 4.

³⁸¹ Recollections of Charlie Garlick, *Te Aroha News*, 7 April 1937, p. 5.

sexual activity, and some were treated harshly, at least on occasions, by those who were supposed to care for them. Wakefield's rhapsody about childhoods on the goldfields was a superficial one.