

WAIORONGOMAI TOWNSHIP

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Abstract: *When gold was discovered at Waiorongomai, a settlement was quickly established, to the delight of the Thames High School Governors, who anticipated a good return from their swampy farmland. Shops, hotels, and a school were erected, but the growth soon tailed off, and apart from brief mining revivals the settlement declined steadily until totally vanishing in the twentieth century: so much for its hopes of being larger than Te Aroha.*

Typically, residents struggled with poor access, poor roads, and poor footpaths – although they did have one of the first telephone lines in New Zealand. There were regular complaints that the school board neglected the settlement, and for a time there was much debate about whether to join Te Aroha in a new borough. During the nineteenth century, pigs in particular were complained about, and in the next century noxious weeds spread across abandoned residence and business sites. When this happened, local farmers sought to acquire these sections, but as a few miners insisted that mining would revive, some were retained for the anticipated miners (who never came).

During its existence, residents enjoyed quite an active social life, with sports, meetings, ‘rinking’, dances, and concerts and other entertainments in the public hall. Locals organized most of these activities, but occasional visitors provided some – and as Te Aroha was so close it was easy to attend entertainments there. But by the early twentieth century this social life faded away as the settlement did.

FOUNDATION OF THE SETTLEMENT

A special meeting of the board of governors of the new Thames High School was held on 1 November 1880 at the request of one member, James Kilgour.¹ He had been a very small investor in Thames mining,² and would invest in one claim at Waiorongomai in 1882.³ He told the meeting he had

¹ See *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 2, p. 286; *Thames Advertiser*, 21 September 1897, p. 2.

² Thames Warden’s Court, Claims Register 1968, folio 361, BACL 14397/1a, ANZ-A; *Thames Advertiser*, 3 April 1874, p. 2, 25 May 1874, p. 2.

³ Te Aroha Warden’s Court, Register of Licensed Holdings 1881-1887, folio 6, BBAV 11500/9a, ANZ-A; *New Zealand Gazette*, 13 July 1882, p. 961.

been ‘informed on good authority’, probably Harry Kenrick, the warden,⁴ and his good friend,⁵ that the Te Aroha goldfield ‘was likely to be opened about the end of November’, and its ‘being around the High School reserve’ meant they should prepare ‘to take some action if necessary’. Members discussed how to take advantage of this development, for their ‘reserve’, an endowment, was intended to meet the school’s operating costs, but made no decision, partly because they were not in formal possession of this unsurveyed land.⁶ Two weeks later, William McCullough, editor of the *Thames Star*,⁷ urged the surveying of a settlement because ‘the endowment was central and they had a very good chance of establishing a township on it’.⁸ For years McCullough had invested in a large number of Thames and Ohinemuri mines,⁹ and one month later he applied for a business site at Te Aroha, but allowed the application to lapse.¹⁰ From 1882 onwards he invested in several Waiorongomai claims.¹¹ The board accepted his advice and resolved to advertise ‘that when a sufficient number of applications for sections’ received, it would ‘lay off a township’.¹² They were ‘prepared to deal liberally’ with anyone purchasing sections ‘for building or trade purposes’.¹³ In December, it opposed using the Waiorongomai Stream for a

⁴ See paper on his life.

⁵ For example, see *Thames Advertiser*, 15 July 1880, p. 3, 17 July 1880, p. 3, 21 June 1881, p. 2, 22 June 1881, p. 2, 24 June 1881, p. 2, 13 September 1885, p. 2.

⁶ Thames High School Board of Governors, Minutes of Special Meeting of 1 November 1880, Minute Book no. 1, High School Archives, Thames.

⁷ See *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 2, p. 96; *Ohinemuri Gazette*, 22 October 1892, p. 3; *Observer*, 1 August 1925, p. 4.

⁸ Thames High School Board of Governors, Minutes of Meeting held on 15 November 1880, Minute Book no. 2, High School Archives, Thames.

⁹ For examples of his investments in 1875, see *New Zealand Gazette*, 13 May 1875, p. 328, 10 June 1875, p. 402 (two companies), 24 June 1875, p. 429, 1 July 1875, p. 444, 2 July 1875, p. 452, 22 July 1875, p. 499, 29 July 1875, pp. 510, 511, 12 August 1875, p. 562, 2 September 1875, p. 591, 28 October 1875, p. 675.

¹⁰ Te Aroha Warden’s Court, Register of Applications 1880-1882, folios 73-74, no. 193, BBAV 11505/3a, ANZ-A.

¹¹ For example, Te Aroha Warden’s Court, Register of Licensed Holdings 1881-1887, folio 80, BBAV 11500/9a, ANZ-A; *AJHR*, 1907, C-3, p. 49.

¹² Thames High School Board of Governors, Minutes of Meeting of 15 November 1880, Minute Book no. 2, High School Archives, Thames; *Thames Star*, 16 November 1880, p. 2.

¹³ *Thames Star*, 27 November 1880, p. 3.

water race, believing all its water would be required for domestic purposes.¹⁴

With the first rush mostly concentrating on the hillside above Te Aroha and the first prospecting of the mouth of the Waiorongomai Valley failing to find gold, it was not until after Hone Werahiko's second discovery¹⁵ created a rush to Waiorongomai in October 1881 that a settlement was established. In January that year, after 'a long discussion' concerning 'the best manner of dealing with the endowment', Daniel Henry Bayldon¹⁶ was appointed surveyor to the board and instructed to survey 'about 1000 acres into small sections'.¹⁷ Its next meeting was told that Bayldon considered 'the land was not worth 6d per acre for farming purposes'.¹⁸ Josiah Clifton Firth, who would erect the first battery,¹⁹ observed on his first visit that it was 'covered in fern'.²⁰ When the first farm lots were auctioned in May, they were described as having good soil covered in fern, manuka, tupaki (otherwise tutu),²¹ and flax swamp, with 'some portions' of Lots 4 and 5, 'especially above the old track' being 'rather stony' and having 'a little bush' in addition to fern.²² The gold rush would mean that the original idea of establishing a settlement was more profitable than creating farms.

By early February 1882, Bayldon had pegged out 23 quarter-acre allotments and some had been applied for.²³ The settlement did not have a name yet, applications for business sites in March and April being for the

¹⁴ R.A. Heald (Secretary, Thames High School) to Warden, 4 December 1880, Te Aroha Warden's Court, Applications for Water Races 1880, 3/1880, BBAV 11289/8a, ANZ-A.

¹⁵ See paper on his life.

¹⁶ See *Observer*, 24 January 1903, p. 4.

¹⁷ Thames High School Board of Governors, Minutes of Meeting of 24 January 1881, Minute Book no. 2, High School Archives, Thames.

¹⁸ Thames High School, Minutes of Meeting of 8 February 1881, Minute Book No. 2, High School Archives, Thames.

¹⁹ See paper on the Battery Company.

²⁰ *Te Aroha News*, 4 October 1884, p. 2.

²¹ James Beever, *A Dictionary of Maori Plant Names* (Auckland, 1991), pp. 13, 68.

²² Thames High School Board of Governors, Minutes of Meeting of 20 June 1881, containing copy of advertisement published on 27 May 1881, Minute Book no. 2, High School Archives, Thames.

²³ *Thames Advertiser*, 7 February 1882, p. 3.

‘High School Reserve, New Town’.²⁴ On 15 May, the name ‘Waiorongomai’ was first recorded.²⁵ By early June, all the 24 sections laid off were taken up, ‘although only a few have been occupied. Whether the inquiry existing for other sections is for bona-fide occupation or mere speculative purposes’ the *Te Aroha Mail* could not say.²⁶ ‘A number of sections have been marked off and applied for ... in anticipation of an extension of the present site’ on the assumption that the warden would ‘be empowered to recognize such prior pegging off’.²⁷ The warden’s office received 14 applications for business sites in March, eight in April, nine in May (when the first eight applications were made for residence sites), and for 17 business and nine residence sites in June.²⁸

In late June, the board decided to lay off a ‘large township’ and negotiated with Samuel Cochrane Macky, who had leased section 13, for converting part of his land into building sites.²⁹ Macky, a former farmer, because of ill health had become a clerk at Thames,³⁰ and had no intention of farming the land himself. In 1881 and 1882 he acquired interests in seven claims and applied for a water race.³¹ In mid-1882, ‘only the front row, from 1 to 13’, had been ‘properly surveyed and laid off as business sites’. It was ‘intended to occupy all the flat land on sections 14 and 15 as township, and reserve the base of the hill as residence sites’.³² The board

²⁴ Te Aroha Warden’s Court, Register of Applications 1880-1882, folio 162, nos. 73, 75, folio 166, nos. 93-95, BBAV 11505/3a, ANZ-A.

²⁵ Te Aroha Warden’s Court, Register of Applications 1880-1882, folio 177, nos. 150A, 171, BBAV 11505/3a, ANZ-A

²⁶ *Te Aroha Mail*, 3 June 1882, p. 1; for details of the leasing of business and residence sites between March and the end of May, see Te Aroha Warden’s Court, Register of Applications 1880-1882, folios 152, 163, 161, 162, 166, 167, 169, 175-180, 185, 186, BBAV 11505/3a, ANZ-A.

²⁷ *Te Aroha Mail*, 10 June 1882, p. 2.

²⁸ Te Aroha Warden’s Court, Register of Applications 1880-1882, folios 152-191, BBAV 11505/3a, ANZ-A.

²⁹ *Thames Advertiser*, 27 June 1882, p. 2.

³⁰ See *Thames Advertiser*, 19 November 1878, p. 2; *New Zealand Gazette*, 23 March 1882, p. 490; *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 7 (Christchurch, 1898), p. 276.

³¹ Te Aroha Warden’s Court, Register of Licensed Holdings 1881-1887, folios 1, 46, 53, 54, 56, 88, 107, BBAV 11500/9a, ANZ-A; Plan of Water Right No. 2, Waiorongomai, applied for by Samuel Cochrane Macky, March 1882, Te Aroha Museum.

³² *Te Aroha Mail*, n.d., reprinted in *New Zealand Herald*, 11 July 1882, p. 4.

named Kilgour and Bagnall Streets after two of its members, Kenrick Street after the warden, McLaren Street after James Monteith McLaren, the mining inspector for Hauraki,³³ Wilson Street probably after George Wilson, underviewer at Thames, who would be appointed mining inspector for the Te Aroha district in October,³⁴ Grey Street presumably after Sir George Grey, and William Street possibly after William McCullough.³⁵

Shortly before this survey was produced, a man disguised as 'Waiorongomai' claimed the board was either 'playing into the hands of a clique' attempting to boost Lipseytown as the centre of the mining settlement or was 'so shortsighted' that it could not utilize its 'very valuable endowment'. As great efforts were being made 'to obstruct and prevent Waiorongomai from being *the* township, or even a township', it should

give instructions to lay off a township that would soon become the largest inland city of New Zealand, if not of the Australian Colonies. Everything depends on these instructions whether we are to have shabby allotments and narrow streets like those at Te Aroha, or to have the plan carried out as begun by Mr Bayldon at Waiorongomai. If the latter, the names of the Governors will be handed down to posterity as men possessed of sagacity and taste.³⁶

The board discussed with William Wilson, a farmer and draper,³⁷ and William Joy, a miner and farmer,³⁸ using their sections to extend the township, for it did not want men to 'peg off residence sites where they chose'. At its July meeting, it refused to permit Macky to sub-let portion of his land (his terms had been that he would give it 20 per cent of the

³³ See paper on Harry Kenrick.

³⁴ See paper on his life.

³⁵ *Thames Advertiser*, 18 July 1882, p. 2; D.H. Bayldon, Plan of Waiorongomai Township, Thames High School Endowment, Te Aroha, July 1882, Te Aroha Warden's Court, BBAV A485/38, ANZ-A. For other plans of the High School Endowment and the first township, see ML1968, DP154, DP179, DP241, DP1912B, Map Library, University of Waikato.

³⁶ Letter from 'Waiorongomai', *Thames Advertiser*, 10 July 1882, p. 3.

³⁷ See *Thames Advertiser*, 30 November 1880, p. 3, 12 August 1881, p. 3, 3 October 1881, p. 2; *Thames Star*, 3 July 1882, p. 2, 7 August 1882, p. 2.

³⁸ See *Thames Advertiser*, 21 June 1881, p. 2; *Te Aroha Mail*, 10 June 1882, p. 2; *Thames Star*, 24 October 1883, p. 3; *Waikato Times*, 29 January 1884, p. 3, 6 July 1884, p. 2; *Te Aroha News*, 20 March 1889, p. 7.

rents).³⁹ In July 21 business sites were applied for, and in the following month another seven were sought along with 26 residence sites.⁴⁰ In mid-July, the *Thames Star* reported that building was ‘going on in all directions’, and there were arguments about ‘where the city of the future’ would be, Waiorongomai or Te Aroha, a repeat of the rivalry between Grahamstown and Shortland at Thames, ‘only on a larger scale’. It also reported unfounded suspicions that the board wanted to resume land they had just sold to enable it to increase the price by another sale.⁴¹

In the first week of August, ‘a large number of residence sites’ were applied for. Men working on the battery, water-race, tramway, and mines all secured sites to erect small cottage residences. Wilson’s section, offered to the board ‘for the extension of the township, and refused, has been disposed of privately for the same amount’, £300 over the upset price.⁴² From September to December, six business sites and 13 residence sites were sought.⁴³

In August, a critic claimed ‘some land sharks of Waiorongomai’ were ‘trying to swallow streets’ and stressed that town sections had ‘no more right to be taken up and remain unoccupied than mines’. He accused a farmer, William Archibald Murray,⁴⁴ of trying to buy up all the land he could at Te Aroha and asked whether ‘the society of Morgantown and Tipseyville’, a play on Lipseytown, owned by George Lipsey,⁴⁵ was ‘so bad’ that Murray ‘should come amongst us, take up sections, build houses, and charge big rents’.⁴⁶ Murray and his brothers already owned 3,727 acres of freehold land in Piako, which, combined with leased Maori land, created an

³⁹ Thames High School Board of Governors, Minutes of Meeting of 3 July 1882, High School Archives, Thames.

⁴⁰ Te Aroha Warden’s Court, Register of Applications 1880-1882, folios 191-212, BBAV 11505/3a, ANZ-A.

⁴¹ *Thames Star*, 13 July 1882, p. 2.

⁴² *Te Aroha Mail*, n.d., reprinted in *Thames Star*, 7 August 1882, p. 2; for details of those who acquired business and residence sites from June to December 1882, see Te Aroha Warden’s Court, Register of Applications 1880-1882, folios 182-184, 186-201, 203-205, 207-210, 212-218, 220, 226-228, BBAV 11505/3a, ANZ-A.

⁴³ Te Aroha Warden’s Court, Register of Applications 1880-1882, folios 213-228, BBAV 11505/3a, ANZ-A.

⁴⁴ See paper on his life.

⁴⁵ See paper on his life.

⁴⁶ ‘Snooks’, ‘The King of Piako’, *Thames Star*, 9 August 1882, p. 3.

estate of 10,000 acres.⁴⁷ In 1886 Murray would attempt to establish a township on his estate, without success.⁴⁸ He had three business sites under his own name, his brother Thomas had two, and another brother, John, was an owner, with two other men, of another five, giving him, directly and indirectly, the largest number of sites.⁴⁹ In addition, Murray may have been negotiating to acquire other sites from their owners. ‘Miner’, of Waiorongomai, defended Murray from a ‘scurrilous effusion’ in an anonymous broadsheet published in Te Aroha charging him with ‘going to make a fortune out of some small piece of land leased by him from the Thames High School by getting the goldfields town to be built on other parts of High School land, close to the mines and batteries, instead of at Morgantown or Lipseytown’.⁵⁰

In October, Murray argued with the board about the size of his three sections, upon which he wanted to erect shops and other buildings. He was told the original plan had been changed, with 20 sections re-surveyed to create 26.⁵¹ In December, it decided to reduce the depth of the allotments to 125 feet. Bayldon, who had been unable to survey these because of pressure of work, believed this decision ‘would spoil the appearance of the town altogether’, but the board agreed with the mayor of Thames that 125 feet by 50 feet would make ‘a splendid allotment’.⁵²

ACCESS

In its earliest stage, some miners lived at Waiorongomai but left their families in Te Aroha.⁵³ Just three miles from Te Aroha, it could ‘be reached

⁴⁷ Waitoa Correspondent, *Thames Advertiser*, 3 July 1880, p. 4, 19 July 1880, p. 3; *The Freeholders of New Zealand ... 1882* (Wellington, 1884), p. M 78.

⁴⁸ *Waikato Times*, 24 June 1886, p. 3.

⁴⁹ Te Aroha Warden’s Court, Register of Applications 1880-1882, folios 175, no. 142; folio 176, nos. 143, 144; folio 193, nos. 208, 209; folio 194, nos. 216-220, BBAV 11505/3a, ANZ-A.

⁵⁰ Letter from ‘Miner’, *Thames Advertiser*, 24 August 1882, p. 3.

⁵¹ High School Board, *Thames Advertiser*, 10 October 1882, p. 3.

⁵² Thames High School Board of Governors, Minutes of Meeting of 3 December 1882, High School Archives, Thames.

⁵³ *Te Aroha and the Fortunate Valley, or Pioneering in the Thames Valley*, ed. F.W. Wild (Te Aroha, 1930), p. 281.

by coach or on horse back in less than half an hour'.⁵⁴ In September 1882 the first coach service started between the two settlements 'at a nominal charge', enabling visitors to 'easily get out and back in about four hours'.⁵⁵ A second coaching company commenced in October 1883, both firms running coaches twice daily.⁵⁶ Waiorongomai's Premier Hotel was the terminus for Bradley and Co.'s coaches, the first coach for Te Aroha leaving at 6.30 in the morning.⁵⁷

By late 1882 one steamer company provided a regular service to the Waiorongomai landing,⁵⁸ where Denis Murphy, a local farmer and contractor,⁵⁹ provided storage.⁶⁰ In September, the county council authorised placing a punt there 'for the convenience of travellers'.⁶¹

As there were difficulties in obtaining an adequate road to the settlement from both landing and main road, in July Wilson and Joy offered to sell land for a road for £300 each. Settlers were using a track through their sections because it was 'the only means of getting to the township over dry land'. After threatening 'to fence it across', they had been induced to make this offer.⁶² When no agreement was reached, in September 'Waiorongomai No. 2' complained that providing an adequate road had been 'willfully ignored' by the board.⁶³ By early November, although the farms were beginning to 'look attractive, fencing and ploughing going on in every direction', a 'serious drawback' was 'the want of a really decent path from the main road to the battery'. The present road went through a ploughed field, and notices warned it was to be closed.⁶⁴ On the same day this was published, the board was informed that Wilson had agreed to cede his land;

⁵⁴ *Thames Star*, 14 February 1883, p. 2, 27 February 1886, p. 2.

⁵⁵ *Thames Advertiser*, 27 September 1882, p. 3.

⁵⁶ *Te Aroha News*, 22 September 1883, p. 2; *Thames Star*, 29 September 1883, p. 2.

⁵⁷ *Thames Advertiser*, 9 October 1883, p. 3; *Te Aroha News*, 20 October 1883, p. 2.

⁵⁸ *Thames Star*, 2 October 1882, p. 2.

⁵⁹ See paper on his life.

⁶⁰ Piako County Council, *Waikato Times*, 30 September 1882, p. 2; advertisement, *Te Aroha News*, 9 June 1883, p. 1.

⁶¹ Piako County Council, *Waikato Times*, 30 September 1882, p. 2.

⁶² Thames High School Board of Governors, Minutes of Meeting of 3 July 1882, High School Archives, Thames.

⁶³ Letter from 'Waiorongomai No. 2', *Thames Advertiser*, 18 September 1882, p. 3.

⁶⁴ *Thames Advertiser*, 7 November 1882, p. 3.

two members considered ‘the road could be of no possible use to either the property through which it passed or the township’.⁶⁵

Early in 1883 the board contributed £50 towards constructing this road.⁶⁶ It was then almost impassable for heavy traffic, and coach services were suspended until drier weather made it safe.⁶⁷ In July, bad weather made its condition ‘infamous’.⁶⁸ By then there were two roads, creating the loop that still exists, enabling the re-opening later that month of the old road through Wilson’s paddock while the newer one was being repaired.⁶⁹ The one replacing the Wilson’s farm route as the main access ran from the main road straight through the township, where it became Kilgour Street, to the battery.⁷⁰ Further repairs were approved in September, but a request for a tramway from the landing was ignored.⁷¹ At the end of that month, it was in a good condition,⁷² but two months later it was almost impossible to bring building material from the landing.⁷³ By December the road was ‘in a terrible state, and on the coach running a special trip yesterday the passengers had to alight twice when it became bogged’.⁷⁴ Kilgour Street was the worst portion, but the board refused to improve it.⁷⁵ As people used the best route possible, when some sections were fenced traffic was ‘confined to the surveyed road, which hitherto has not been much used’.⁷⁶

In March 1885, when asked by the council to dedicate land for a road through Wilson’s section to the landing and to contribute to its cost, the

⁶⁵ Thames High School Board of Governors, Minutes of Meeting of 7 November 1882, High School Archives, Thames.

⁶⁶ Thames High School Board of Governors, Minutes of Meetings of 7 February 1883, 5 March 1883, High School Archives, Thames.

⁶⁷ *Waikato Times*, 8 March 1883, p. 2.

⁶⁸ *Te Aroha News*, 14 July 1883, p. 2.

⁶⁹ *Te Aroha News*, 21 July 1883, p. 2.

⁷⁰ For maps showing Kilgour Street in relation to the township and the battery, see D.H. Bayldon, Plan of Waiorongomai Township Te Aroha, 12 August 1882, DP43052, DP454R, DP30178, Map Library, University of Waikato.

⁷¹ Piako County Council, *Waikato Times*, 15 September 1883, p. 2.

⁷² *Te Aroha News*, 29 September 1883, p. 2.

⁷³ *Te Aroha News*, 24 November 1883, p. 2.

⁷⁴ Special Reporter, *Thames Star*, 10 December 1883, p. 2.

⁷⁵ *Te Aroha News*, 15 December 1883, p. 2; *Waikato Times*, 16 February 1884, p. 2.

⁷⁶ *Te Aroha News*, 1 March 1884, p. 2.

board declined.⁷⁷ Forty residents then petitioned the council because this route would be 50 chains shorter and on level land ‘instead of the present hilly and swampy land’.⁷⁸ The council decided to ask the Commissioner of Crown Lands whether it could take this land under the Public Works Act.⁷⁹ As nothing eventuated, in October a petition asked the council to form it as the existing one was ‘impassable for heavy traffic. The cost was trifling as material was convenient’. The existing road ‘materially increased the cost of carting and made things dearer in the township than they ought to be’. The council agreed to investigate the cost,⁸⁰ and in January 1886 approved forming Kilgour Street ‘from the swamp’ at one farm to the Waiorongomai Hotel, work that was ‘badly needed’ according to one councillor.⁸¹ A *Te Aroha* correspondent was pleased:

Some attention has at last been given to the needs of the Waiorongomai people in the matter of street improvements. Residents there have had much cause to complain of the indifference to their wants displayed both by the County Council and the board of governors of the Thames High School, for in past winters, vehicular communication with the town has been almost impossible owing to the abominable condition of the main approach.⁸²

As the council decided to form and metal *Te Aroha*’s streets rather than fence and improve the access across Wilson’s land, it was asked to form and metal 15 chains of Kilgour Street.⁸³ After one storekeeper pointed out that in the three years he had lived at Waiorongomai nothing had been spent on it, the council agreed to spend £10 on condition that both the Battery Company and the residents contributed £5.⁸⁴ By May, the road between the two townships was ‘in a disgraceful condition’, with ‘dreadful

⁷⁷ Thames High School Board of Governors, Minutes of Meeting of 2 March 1885, High School Archives, Thames.

⁷⁸ *Te Aroha News*, 14 March 1885, p. 2.

⁷⁹ Piako County Council, *Te Aroha News*, 4 April 1885, p. 2.

⁸⁰ Piako County Council, *Waikato Times*, 17 October 1885, p. 3.

⁸¹ Piako County Council, *Waikato Times*, 19 January 1886, p. 3; Piako County Council, *Te Aroha News*, 23 January 1886, p. 2.

⁸² *Te Aroha* Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 26 January 1886, p. 3.

⁸³ *Te Aroha News*, 13 February 1886, p. 2, Piako County Council, 13 March 1886, p. 2.

⁸⁴ Piako County Council, *Waikato Times*, 13 March 1886, p. 2.

lumps and ruts'.⁸⁵ In September, a letter requesting 'the long promised road through Wilson's paddock' was merely 'received' by the council.⁸⁶

The following July, a number of residents wrote to the council about the 'impassable condition' of Kilgour Street, 'especially from the corner of the main county road to the corner of the Waiorongomai Hotel. Within two months hence fully 200 tons of dead weight' would pass over the road, and those who had 'put their hands in their pockets previously to contribute a moiety' were 'not now disposed to assist in making the county roads otherwise than by being compelled to do so by paying rates'. They urged 'immediate attention', but got an investigation of costs,⁸⁷ and no action during the remainder of the year.

In the following April, when the council was asked to metal the road from the landing, there were 'many sarcastic remarks from some of the bucolic Councillors as to the remarkable capacity of the miners in this riding for swallowing up the revenue of the Council in the construction of goldfields roads'.⁸⁸ When informed that a bridge at this landing to replace the punt would cost £500, 'the matter was allowed to drop', prompting 113 people to petition, unsuccessfully, for its construction.⁸⁹ A bridge was erected the following year, despite the government having refused to subsidise this work; being unauthorized, Parliament had to pass a special Act in 1892 to validate its construction.⁹⁰

The condition of Wilson's Road required its being re-formed and metalled in 1895, the government providing £100.⁹¹ Its condition continued

⁸⁵ *Waikato Times*, 8 May 1886, p. 2.

⁸⁶ Piako County Council, *Te Aroha News*, 4 September 1886, p. 2.

⁸⁷ Piako County Council, *Waikato Times*, 5 July 1887, p. 3.

⁸⁸ 'Piako County Council', *Thames Advertiser*, 17 April 1888, p. 2.

⁸⁹ Piako County Council, Minutes of Meetings of 12 April 1888, 11 May 1888, 15 June 1888, Matamata-Piako District Council Archives, Te Aroha; see also meetings of 13 July 1888, 10 August 1888, 13 September 1888, and 20 December 1888 for arrangements for leasing the punt.

⁹⁰ Piako County Council, Minutes of Meetings of 12 January 1889, 9 February 1889, 6 October 1891, Matamata-Piako District Council Archives, Te Aroha; Waiorongomai Bridge Bill, Legislative Department, LE 1, 1892/9, ANZ-W; *New Zealand Parliamentary Debates*, vol. 78 (1892), pp. 605-606.

⁹¹ Piako County Council, Minutes of Meetings of 14 February 1895, 11 April 1895, Matamata-Piako District Council Archives, Te Aroha; *Te Aroha News*, 16 March 1895, p. 2, 13 April 1895, p. 2.

to be of concern in later years, but declining mining meant it was not a priority for council spending.

DEVELOPING WAIORONGOMAI DURING THE YEARS OF OPTIMISM

In January 1882, Thomas Lawless⁹² was granted a publican's license for the first hotel, the Waiorongomai, erected 'almost at the foot of' the proposed lower road up the valley.⁹³ The following month, a newspaper commented that his 'faith in the future of the new discovery cannot be questioned'.⁹⁴ By mid-April, the hotel stood out 'in bold relief to the surrounding country'.⁹⁵ When completed in May it contained 19 rooms exclusive of those used by his family.⁹⁶ Kenrick described it as 'large and comfortable',⁹⁷ and a visitor believed it was 'the claim bringing in the most immediate return'.⁹⁸ Hugh Rea,⁹⁹ 'the pioneer barman at the opening of the Thames gold field', had applied in May for a hotel 'containing eight rooms, exclusive of those required for the use of the family',¹⁰⁰ but then attempted to establish one at Quartzville,¹⁰¹ high in the valley,¹⁰² leaving Lawless with a monopoly.

In February 1883 the *Waikato Times* described the 'thriving infant township', whose most prominent feature was the battery:

⁹² See paper on his life.

⁹³ *Thames Star*, 14 December 1881, p. 3; Te Aroha Magistrate's Court, Publicans' Licenses 1880-1882, folio 9, BBAV 11494/1a, ANZ-A; *Waikato Times*, 25 February 1882, p. 2.

⁹⁴ *Waikato Times*, 25 February 1882, p. 2.

⁹⁵ *Thames Advertiser*, 19 April 1882, p. 3.

⁹⁶ *Thames Advertiser*, 4 May 1882, p. 3; *Thames Star*, 2 November 1882, p. 3.

⁹⁷ Harry Kenrick to Under-Secretary, Mines Department, 18 April 1882, *AJHR*, 1882, H-19, p. 12; for plan of this hotel, see 'Proposed Hotel for Mr Lawless', Te Aroha Warden's Court, BBAV 11590/5, ANZ-A.

⁹⁸ *Thames Advertiser*, 7 November 1882, p. 3.

⁹⁹ See Onehunga Magistrate's Court, *Auckland Weekly News*, 7 October 1876, p. 14; *Waikato Times*, Cambridge Magistrate's Court, 17 December 1881, p. 2, 12 July 1883, p. 2; *Te Aroha Mail*, 3 June 1882, p. 2; *Te Aroha News*, District Court, 20 December 1884, p. 7, 8 August 1940, p. 1.

¹⁰⁰ *Waikato Times*, 11 May 1882, p. 3.

¹⁰¹ *Te Aroha Mail*, 3 June 1882, p. 2, 10 June 1882, p. 2.

¹⁰² See paper on this settlement.

On nearing Waiorongomai from Te Aroha, the visitor may be over-impressed by the appearance of the township. At a distance it certainly looked a well laid out, and handsomely built township, in the streets of which pretentious buildings would be met with. However, this idea is likely to be somewhat disabused on entering the place. Nothing could be more like a mining township struggling in its youthful stages. The streets do not seem to have been laid out with much precision, and, with one or two exceptions, the buildings are all of a very primitive nature. The hotel is a very good building, as are two of the stores, notably that of Messrs Carr and Sons.¹⁰³ At intervals throughout the flat ... the other buildings are scattered. Large sign-boards, over tenements exceedingly small in comparison, give the general public to understand that “boots and shoes are repaired on the shortest possible notice, and with despatch;” that Peter Black¹⁰⁴ “retails miners’ outfits on easy terms;” that John White,¹⁰⁵ wheelwright and carpenter, “executes orders with promptness and attention,” together with numerous other accommodating intimations of a like character. A large number of miners have taken up their residences both in the town and on the side of the hill.¹⁰⁶

Because of demand for housing, in February some lessees of farms wanted to sell or sub-let part of their sections but this was forbidden.¹⁰⁷ The following month, the board did permit Macky to sub-let a ‘considerable portion’ of his section on condition it received one-third of the revenue.¹⁰⁸ During July, Macky’s section 13 was sub-divided into allotments expected to obtain ‘very high prices’. Two new streets, named after Josiah Clifton Firth

¹⁰³ See paper on Thomas William Carr.

¹⁰⁴ Not being an investor in mining, his life has not been traced.

¹⁰⁵ Not being an investor in mining, his life has not been traced.

¹⁰⁶ *Waikato Times*, 20 February 1883, p. 3.

¹⁰⁷ Thames High School Board of Governors, Minutes of Meeting of 7 February 1883, High School Archives, Thames.

¹⁰⁸ Thames High School Board of Governors, Minutes of Meeting of 19 March 1883, High School Archives, Thames.

and James McCosh Clark¹⁰⁹ of the Battery Company, were laid off to provide access.¹¹⁰

Several buildings were being erected in April, 'notably one of two storeys near the lower end of the main street'.¹¹¹ A storm in July damaged some new buildings. The shop of John Matthews, a painter,¹¹² was 'completely wrecked', and the framework of a partly erected hotel was blown down. The house of Henry Crump, a surveyor and architect,¹¹³ rolled 20 yards, ending upside down but without breaking any windows. One family was in bed when the roof of their small house was blown off just when the rain was at its heaviest, and the roof of one stable was also blown off. In another house the wind broke windows and blew embers around the room, but the resultant fire was extinguished.¹¹⁴

By August business sites had 'greatly increased in value'.¹¹⁵ Several new buildings were being erected,¹¹⁶ and late that month businessmen were making enquiries about building sites, which were likely to be occupied soon.¹¹⁷ Kenrick 'expressed astonishment at the rapid strides' made since his last visit.¹¹⁸ His forfeiture of three business sites and one residence site pleased the *Te Aroha News* because it forced owners to start building. 'We should like to see more permanent structures erected'.¹¹⁹ During September about 20 new buildings were constructed and the settlement bore 'a very healthy and prosperous appearance'.¹²⁰ That month, the council allocated £100 for drainage and street formation.¹²¹

¹⁰⁹ See paper on the Battery Company.

¹¹⁰ *Te Aroha News*, 7 July 1883, p. 2, 21 July 1883, p. 2; for plan of this new survey, see D.H. Bayldon, 'Township of Waiorongomai, Part of Section 13, Thames High School Endowment, Block 12, Te Aroha Survey District', 1883, DP241, DOSLI, Hamilton.

¹¹¹ *Waikato Times*, 1 May 1883, p. 2.

¹¹² See *Te Aroha News*, advertisement, 22 September 1883, p. 4, 27 October 1883, p. 2.

¹¹³ See advertisement, *Te Aroha Mail*, 10 June 1882, p. 1; *Thames Advertiser*, 31 October 1881, p. 3, 19 April 1882, p. 3, 2 April 1884, p. 3.

¹¹⁴ *Te Aroha News*, 28 July 1883, p. 2.

¹¹⁵ *Te Aroha News*, 4 August 1883, p. 2.

¹¹⁶ *Waikato Times*, 14 August 1883, p. 2.

¹¹⁷ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 28 August 1883, p. 2.

¹¹⁸ *Te Aroha News*, 1 September 1883, p. 2.

¹¹⁹ *Te Aroha News*, 1 September 1883, p. 2.

¹²⁰ *Te Aroha News*, 29 September 1883, p. 2.

¹²¹ Piako County Council, *Te Aroha News*, 15 September 1883, p. 2.

In October, with the completion of the battery and the near completion of the tramway, considerable competition for new sections was anticipated, a steamer leaving from Thames in time for the sale.¹²² £1,800 10s was paid for all 62 allotments, purchasers coming 'from all parts: Christchurch, Napier, Auckland, and the surrounding districts'.¹²³ There was one purchaser from Christchurch, Napier, Matamata, Hamilton, Shaftesbury, and Waiorongomai, two from Thames, four from Auckland, and eight from Te Aroha.¹²⁴ 'Very spirited' bidding produced an average price of £33; the lowest was £11, the highest £66.¹²⁵ 'Quite a number' of people wanted to purchase sections privately but were told that all would be auctioned.¹²⁶ The *Te Aroha News* considered the keen competition showed 'the confidence of the public in the future of this goldfield'.¹²⁷

All the remaining 112 allotments were sold in November for prices ranging from £4 5s to £33, a total price of £1,068 15s.¹²⁸ A steamer made a special trip, bringing several Auckland buyers.¹²⁹ So popular was Waiorongomai that the owners of the Shaftesbury settlement upstream proposed to re-erect some of their cottages there.¹³⁰ Kenrick wondered whether more residence sites might be needed in the Hori More Block, between Te Aroha and Waiorongomai and owned by the rangatira of that name, but George Wilson, the mining inspector, assured him these would not be needed. Not only were some sites still available at Waiorongomai, there was 'a growing desire' by miners 'to occupy land nearer to the mines than' it. There was 'room for a large number' to occupy residence sites in the bush land between Buck Reef and Waiorongomai Creek, and he expected 'the bulk' of the miners to live there because they would 'be able to walk from there to the mines much easier than if they camped on the flat'. The Hori More Block was too far from the mines 'for men to be able to walk to

¹²² *Thames Star*, 9 October 1883, p. 2.

¹²³ *Thames Star*, 15 October 1883, p. 2; *Waikato Times*, 16 October 1883, p. 2.

¹²⁴ *Thames Advertiser*, 15 October 1883, p. 3.

¹²⁵ *Thames Advertiser*, 13 October 1883, p. 3.

¹²⁶ *Thames Advertiser*, 18 October 1883, p. 2.

¹²⁷ *Te Aroha News*, 13 October 1883, p. 2.

¹²⁸ *New Zealand Herald*, 14 November 1883, p. 6; *Te Aroha News*, 17 November 1883, p. 2.

¹²⁹ *Thames Advertiser*, 8 November 1883, p. 2, 12 November 1883, p. 2.

¹³⁰ *Auckland Star*, 16 November 1883, p. 3; *Te Aroha News*, 17 November 1883, p. 2.

work daily', and seven or eight had taken sites there.¹³¹ Another four lived across the river at Te Aroha West.¹³²

The settlement required footpaths, a water supply, and adequate drainage,¹³³ but not until November did the council and the board both offer to meet a third of the cost of streets on condition that residents met the other third and the total did not exceed £50.¹³⁴ As this amount was insufficient, the following winter saw more complaints that there was 'not a street', merely 'tracks dotted with bogholes'.¹³⁵ Local initiative was praised because, unlike in Te Aroha, 'businessmen at Waiorongomai have put their shoulders to the wheel and constructed a four-foot footpath of a substantial and costly nature at their own expense'.¹³⁶

By February, six shops had opened.¹³⁷ In addition, arrangements were made to save people from having to travel to Te Aroha to shop. For example, a Te Aroha chemist advertised that twice a week he was at a Waiorongomai store for an hour.¹³⁸ Some storekeepers saved residents from having to visit their stores, one, for instance, who sold groceries, drapery, and ironmongery, advertising 'Goods delivered up the hill and to all parts of the township'.¹³⁹ The Bank of New Zealand opened an agency in early October,¹⁴⁰ and later that month two Cambridge merchants, Thomas Wells and John Lamb Soutter,¹⁴¹ bought a store and announced they would expand it and transfer their ironmongery store from Te Aroha.¹⁴²

¹³¹ George Wilson to Harry Kenrick, 12 November 1883, Te Aroha Warden's Court, Letterbook 1883-1900, pp. 9-10, BBAV 11534/1a, ANZ-A.

¹³² *Waikato Electoral Roll, 1884*.

¹³³ Editorial, *Te Aroha News*, 30 June 1883, p. 2.

¹³⁴ Piako County Council, *Waikato Times*, 2 November 1882, p. 2; High School Board, *Thames Advertiser*, 7 November 1882, p. 3.

¹³⁵ Editorials, *Te Aroha News*, 16 June 1883, p. 2, 30 June 1883, p. 2.

¹³⁶ *Te Aroha News*, 9 June 1883, p. 2; see also 23 June 1883, p. 2.

¹³⁷ *Thames Star*, 14 February 1883, p. 2.

¹³⁸ Advertisement, *Te Aroha News*, 9 June 1883, p. 1.

¹³⁹ Advertisement, *Te Aroha News*, 22 September 1883, p. 4.

¹⁴⁰ *Waikato Times*, 9 October 1883, p. 2.

¹⁴¹ For their partnership, see *Waikato Times*, 7 October 1882, p. 2, 10 October 1882, p. 2, 10 March 1883, p. 2, 24 May 1883, p. 2, Te Aroha Correspondent, 27 September 1884, p. 2, 10 March 1885, p. 3, 8 June 1886, p. 2; *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 2, p. 768.

¹⁴² *Te Aroha News*, 27 October 1883, p. 2.

Until the goldfield produced payable ore, uncertainty about the permanence of the settlement was indicated by a small butchery being erected 'on skids so as to be easily removable'.¹⁴³ In February 1883 the Premier Hotel was being built adjacent to Lawless' hotel; two-storeyed, it would fill 'a want much felt', as existing accommodation was 'insufficient'.¹⁴⁴ In response, Lawless made 'internal improvements', the additions including a billiard room.¹⁴⁵ Large additions were made to Alfred Tunstall Ashley's¹⁴⁶ Premier Hotel within months of its opening, a big increase in customers being expected when the tramway operated.¹⁴⁷ In October, he called tenders for adding 20 bedrooms and a billiard room.¹⁴⁸

In June, the licensing committee declined applications for hotel licenses from Johannes Bernadus Kilian¹⁴⁹ and Edwin Hadfield;¹⁵⁰ only if the population increased would more licenses be issued.¹⁵¹ Ignoring this decision, Kilian mortgaged his section to a Thames brewer, Louis Ehrenfried,¹⁵² 'on condition that he built a hotel on it', which Kilian would furnish. After his partially erected hotel was blown down, at a loss of £200, Ehrenfried arranged for him to take over Ashley's hotel.¹⁵³ In October, he announced that he had taken over this hotel 'in the rising township of Waiorongomai' and had 'thoroughly renovated' it and provided 'first-class accommodation'. His stock of wine and spirits was 'of the best, and particular attention is paid to the cuisine'. Livery and bait stables were attached, and it was the booking office for coaches.¹⁵⁴ Both hotels were described as fine buildings.¹⁵⁵ Lawless would have 40 bedrooms when his

¹⁴³ *Te Aroha News*, 1 September 1883, p. 2.

¹⁴⁴ *Thames Star*, 14 February 1883, p. 2; *Waikato Times*, 8 March 1883, p. 2.

¹⁴⁵ *Te Aroha News*, 9 June 1883, p. 3.

¹⁴⁶ For his relationship with Louisa Forsman, see paper on private lives in the Te Aroha district.

¹⁴⁷ *Te Aroha News*, 21 July 1883, p. 2.

¹⁴⁸ *Thames Advertiser*, 8 October 1883, p. 2, 9 October 1883, p. 3.

¹⁴⁹ See paper on the Kilian family.

¹⁵⁰ See papers on the New Find mine and on Alexander Mackay.

¹⁵¹ *Thames Star*, 7 June 1883, p. 2.

¹⁵² See paper on Harry Kenrick.

¹⁵³ District Court, *Thames Star*, 3 September 1884, p. 2; *Te Aroha News*, 28 July 1883, p. 2, 25 August 1883, p. 2.

¹⁵⁴ *Waikato Times*, 25 October 1883, p. 2.

¹⁵⁵ *Thames Star*, 10 December 1883, p. 2.

additions were completed, but ‘even this liberal supply’ was ‘not expected to meet requirements’.¹⁵⁶ Kilian would have over 30 bedrooms, a commercial room, and a billiard room, and, when completed, he would ‘mark the event with a grand spread to the miners’.¹⁵⁷

In November, a visitor noted buildings ‘being erected in every direction’. The two hotels were being ‘considerably enlarged’, and another was being built. Thomas Bradley, a coach proprietor,¹⁵⁸ was ‘having a range of livery and bait stables erected’ between the existing hotels. An omnibus ran between Te Aroha and Waiorongomai every half hour.¹⁵⁹ The following month, ‘a large amount of building’ was going on and the population was ‘fast increasing’ with people ‘coming from all parts of the peninsula’.¹⁶⁰ By the end of the year, it had grown ‘from a mere cluster of houses into quite a respectable little town, with large hotels, Post and Telegraph offices, Public Hall, capacious stores’, and would soon have a schoolhouse.¹⁶¹

A post office had opened on 1 January 1883.¹⁶² As Firth wanted telegraphic links between his battery, his estate at Matamata, and Auckland, he guaranteed the £100 necessary before the government would extend the telegraph line to Waiorongomai. Once revenue reached that amount, he would not have to provide this subsidy.¹⁶³ His son, William Thornton Firth,¹⁶⁴ had brought back from the United States of America New Zealand’s first telephones, first erected on the Matamata Estate and later linked to Waiorongomai.¹⁶⁵ By the end of June, it was linked by telephone to Te Aroha, ‘a source of great convenience to businessmen and others’.¹⁶⁶ The *Te Aroha News* reported that the telephone had been

¹⁵⁶ *Te Aroha News*, 1 December 1883, p. 2.

¹⁵⁷ *Te Aroha News*, 15 December 1883, p. 2.

¹⁵⁸ See *Auckland Weekly News*, Own Correspondent, 2 January 1886, p. 6, Own Correspondent, 7 April 1888, p. 29, Te Aroha Correspondent, 18 September 1897, p. 30.

¹⁵⁹ Travelling Correspondent, ‘Te Aroha and Waiorongomai’, *Bay of Plenty Times*, 17 November 1883, p. 2.

¹⁶⁰ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 8 December 1883, p. 20.

¹⁶¹ Editorial, *Te Aroha News*, 29 December 1883, p. 2.

¹⁶² *New Zealand Gazette*, 5 April 1883, p. 419.

¹⁶³ *Te Aroha Mail*, n.d., reprinted in *Thames Star*, 2 January 1883, p. 2.

¹⁶⁴ See *Auckland Weekly News*, 20 August 1887, p. 21; *Te Aroha News*, 26 July 1935, p. 4.

¹⁶⁵ *Auckland Weekly News*, 20 August 1887, p. 21; *New Zealand Herald*, 24 July 1935, p. 14; *Te Aroha News*, 26 July 1935, p. 4.

¹⁶⁶ *Thames Star*, 22 June 1883, p. 2; *Waikato Times*, 10 July 1883, p. 2.

particularly useful during bad weather. 'A number of experiments' had been tried, 'with the greatest success, and the tones of those conversing together are as audible to each other almost as if they were in the same room'. The Waiorongomai office was in a store, 'every possible accommodation' being made by the storekeeper 'for facilitating intercourse and at the same time preserving the necessary privacy'.¹⁶⁷ By October, the line between Waiorongomai and Matamata was completed under the supervision of Firth's son.¹⁶⁸ As it linked his estate with the battery manager's house, Firth had paid for it.¹⁶⁹ In November, at the council's request, the government agreed to open a post and telegraph office, replacing the telephone to Te Aroha with a telegraph.¹⁷⁰ Firth permitted others to use his line to Matamata, and by the end of the year about 1,000 messages were sent. He paid £25 for the government to employ 'a boy - a very small boy too - with a voice like a tin whistle, which falls upon one's ears like the chirrups of a blackbird'. As this 'diminutive official' was 'mostly engaged in outside work of the office and very often' was 'not "on hand" when required', a better arrangement was required.¹⁷¹

As residents wanted a school,¹⁷² in June 1883 Lawless on their behalf complained about delays in erecting one. The chairman of the Te Aroha school committee was uncertain whether a permanent school should be erected but considered a temporary building should be provided because it was 'too much' to expect children to walk to Te Aroha.¹⁷³ After the inspector investigated the proposed site, in July a schoolroom was erected, but a storm shifted it 30 feet off its foundations.¹⁷⁴ The following month many people attended the opening, featuring speeches, songs, and the first dance.¹⁷⁵ The school's use for dances was short-lived, for in September the schoolmaster announced that as those using it 'had so abused the privilege by upsetting the desks, greasing the floor, and injuring the school property,

¹⁶⁷ *Te Aroha News*, 14 July 1883, p. 2.

¹⁶⁸ *Te Aroha News*, 20 October 1883, p. 2; *Auckland Weekly News*, 20 October 1883, p. 6.

¹⁶⁹ *Thames Star*, 10 December 1883, p. 2.

¹⁷⁰ *Te Aroha News*, 24 November 1883, p. 3; *Waikato Times*, 29 November 1883, p. 2; 'Waiorongomai', *Observer*, 15 December 1883, p. 16.

¹⁷¹ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 11 December 1884, p. 2.

¹⁷² For example, 'Te Aroha', *Observer*, 12 May 1883, p. 112.

¹⁷³ *Te Aroha News*, 9 June 1883, p. 3.

¹⁷⁴ *Waikato Times*, 16 June 1883, p. 2; *Te Aroha News*, 28 July 1883, p. 2.

¹⁷⁵ 'Waiorongomai', *Observer*, 18 August 1883, p. 12.

besides leaving the place in a very dirty state, etc', he would 'refuse them the key'.¹⁷⁶

Preparatory steps were taken to erect churches, in March 1883 a Baptist minister announcing he planned one on Macky's section.¹⁷⁷ Two months later, after receiving a letter from Kenrick concerning applications by several churches to build on the section set aside for religious purposes, the board resolved that it would be granted to the first denomination whose plans met its approval.¹⁷⁸

In November 1883, officers were elected for a branch of the Orange Order.¹⁷⁹ This body was never mentioned again, and no other lodge was established, instead members participating in Te Aroha ones.

THE MID-1880s

Decline commenced with unsatisfactory returns from the first battery crushing followed by the strike of January 1884.¹⁸⁰ In mid-January, the *Te Aroha News* wrote that Waiorongomai had 'a disgusted and disconsolate appearance'. Ichabod, meaning 'the glory has departed',¹⁸¹ was 'inscribed on the doors of the hotels and the publicans' muscles, which had been hardened by incessant pulling at the beer engines are getting flabby again'. Business was 'utterly stagnant, and every soul one meets is listless, languid, and Micawberish'.¹⁸² In his annual report, written on 8 April, George Wilson recorded that from 1,800 to 2,000 people lived at Te Aroha, Waiorongomai, and Quartzville and other hill camps combined; Te Aroha had 200 houses whereas Waiorongomai had 100.¹⁸³ The electoral roll of June recorded 72 male residents at the latter, 36 of them miners. The next largest occupational group was five labourers, and there were a range of jobs appropriate for this settlement: a battery manager and two amalgamists, three carpenters, two blacksmiths, three storekeepers and a storeman, a

¹⁷⁶ *Te Aroha News*, 8 September 1883, p. 2.

¹⁷⁷ Thames High School Board of Governors, Minutes of Meeting of 19 March 1883, High School Archives, Thames.

¹⁷⁸ *Thames Advertiser*, 8 May 1883, p. 3.

¹⁷⁹ *Te Aroha News*, 17 November 1883, p. 2.

¹⁸⁰ See paper on the Waiorongomai strike of 1884.

¹⁸¹ *Concise Oxford Dictionary*, 5 ed. (Oxford, 1964), p. 600.

¹⁸² *Te Aroha News*, 19 January 1884, p. 2.

¹⁸³ George Wilson to Harry Kenrick, 8 April 1884, *AJHR*, 1884, H-9, p. 21.

builder, a joiner, a plumber, a shipwright, two bakers and a bakery hand, a hotelkeeper, a timber dealer, a coachman, three farmers and one farm employee, a surveyor, and a commission agent.¹⁸⁴

By March both enlarged hotels presented ‘a very creditable appearance’.¹⁸⁵ A feature of Kilian’s hotel was each bedroom having a rope attached inside the window to enable guests to escape ‘that scourge of all colonial towns, fire’.¹⁸⁶ Despite not having a license, Edwin Hadfield had erected a hotel and was granted a license in June.¹⁸⁷ Both publicans were bankrupted before the end of the year, in large part because of their hotels.¹⁸⁸ Kilian explained that his hotel ‘paid well at first, but business fell off during the miners’ strike, and boarders did not pay up’, which, combined with being pressed for old debts, forced him into bankruptcy.¹⁸⁹

Macky leased a site for a new school building in March,¹⁹⁰ and the new schoolhouse was opened in May with ‘a feast for the children and a concert and the inevitable dance for the grown-up folks. The day was fine and the youngsters had a jolly time, there being an abundance of things, both solid and liquid, to gratify the juvenile appetite’.¹⁹¹ The community assisted in providing basic facilities, up to 120 attending a September concert to raise money to clear the grounds, erect swings, and meet other needs.¹⁹²

Also in March, a site was leased for a Wesleyan Church.¹⁹³ As no churches were built, the school was used for services. In July, because of the state it was left in, only the Church of England attempting to clean up, the headmaster imposed a ‘cleaning fee’.¹⁹⁴ In November a Wesleyan meeting

¹⁸⁴ *Waikato Electoral Roll, 1884.*

¹⁸⁵ *Waikato Times*, 15 March 1884, p. 2; for details of the additions to Kilian’s hotel, see *Te Aroha News*, 8 March 1884, p. 2.

¹⁸⁶ *Te Aroha News*, 8 March 1884, p. 2.

¹⁸⁷ *Te Aroha News*, 1 March 1884, p. 2; Te Aroha Magistrate’s Court, Register of Publican’s Licenses 1882-1892, folio 13, BBAV 11493/1a, ANZ-A.

¹⁸⁸ For Hadfield’s explanation of his bankruptcy, see District Court, *Thames Star*, 6 August 1884, p. 2.

¹⁸⁹ *Thames Star*, 3 September 1884, p. 2.

¹⁹⁰ *Thames Advertiser*, 4 March 1884, p. 2.

¹⁹¹ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 8 May 1884, p. 2.

¹⁹² *Te Aroha News*, 6 September 1884, p. 2.

¹⁹³ *Thames Advertiser*, 4 March 1884, p. 2.

¹⁹⁴ *Te Aroha News*, 19 July 1884, p. 2.

sanctioned the erection of a church to seat 200,¹⁹⁵ but nothing came of this because the opening of the public hall in that month meant all denominations could use it.¹⁹⁶

There was still hope in the first half of 1884 that growth would continue, and in May some of the houses built for the failed special settlement at Shaftesbury¹⁹⁷ were moved to Waiorongomai.¹⁹⁸ In July, a leading local miner, Peter Ferguson,¹⁹⁹ erected several new houses for his battery workers, and others erected some as well.²⁰⁰ Late that month, creditors in one bankrupt's estate considered his property 'would probably be worth considerably more in six months time than at present'.²⁰¹ An indication of the presumed good prospects was high rents.²⁰² However, a *Te Aroha* correspondent warned, when Hadfield's Commercial Hotel was granted a license in June, that the trade was 'altogether insufficient to support three such large establishments'.²⁰³ A rumour that a Waiorongomai newspaper was to be launched in opposition to the *Te Aroha News* prompted him to ponder whether this idea resulted from 'a spirit of opposition' or to a section of the community being jealous 'of the ascendancy of its rival'. Although Waiorongomai might 'be destined to assume larger proportions at some future time', it was 'hardly in a sufficiently advanced stage yet to maintain a paper of even the most modest pretensions'.²⁰⁴

When one storekeeper, Louis Kalman,²⁰⁵ went bankrupt in November, he claimed this was 'chiefly due to the depression existing in the district, and the efflux of population'. His property had depreciated by about £120 in value; the building and land had cost £170 but were now worth only £50.²⁰⁶

¹⁹⁵ *Thames Star*, 1 November 1884, p. 2.

¹⁹⁶ *Te Aroha News*, 15 November 1884, p. 2.

¹⁹⁷ See paper on special settlements in the *Te Aroha* district.

¹⁹⁸ *Thames Advertiser*, 10 May 1884, p. 2; but *Te Aroha News*, 8 August 1885, p. 2 suggests they were not moved until then.

¹⁹⁹ See paper on Peter Ferguson and his New Era.

²⁰⁰ *Te Aroha News*, 5 July 1884, p. 2.

²⁰¹ *Te Aroha News*, 26 July 1884, p. 2.

²⁰² *Te Aroha Correspondent*, *Auckland Weekly News*, 17 May 1884, p. 22.

²⁰³ *Te Aroha Correspondent*, *Waikato Times*, 10 June 1884, p. 2.

²⁰⁴ *Te Aroha Correspondent*, *Waikato Times*, 14 June 1884, p. 2.

²⁰⁵ See *Te Aroha News*, 19 April 1884, p. 2, 6 September 1884, p. 7, 16 May 1888, p. 2.

²⁰⁶ *Thames Star*, 28 November 1884, p. 3; District Court, *Thames Advertiser*, 4 February 1885, p. 3; District Court, *Te Aroha News*, 7 February 1885, p. 7.

Declining fortunes prompted a request that all rents of business sites used for residences be reduced from £5 to £1.²⁰⁷ The following March, a correspondent wrote that holders of business sites used for houses had ‘long had a grievance in the high rental they have had to pay’, failing to see why they should pay £5 when holders of similar sites in Te Aroha paid £1. Kenrick had received a petition in a ‘favourable manner’;²⁰⁸ not agreeing with the request but also considering ‘far too many’ business sites had been laid off.²⁰⁹ In transmitting the petition to the board, he sought ‘discretionary power’ to make reductions, which was agreed to, but only for that year.²¹⁰ Those petitioning were

mostly holders of sections at present either unoccupied, or used only for purposes of residence, upon whom the effects of the existing depression is very severe. They are not desirous of giving up possession of the properties, or of changing the nature of the tenure, but simply a reduction of rental during the period of dullness.²¹¹

The quality of some houses was modest. For instance, in December one man sold his ‘whare and residence site’ for £1 10s.²¹² The state of parts of the township was revealed in a miner’s letter to Kenrick in January:

Sir I most respectfully beg leave to ask you before you sign my application for a business Lisence iff you cald-not Sir grant me a residence lisance instead for allotment No. 101 as I find now that I have made a great mistake in my Selection Sir I may say that at present nor untill their is one of the two Streets laid out & made is it possable to get a horse and dray near this place. as it is I would try and make it do as a residence Site if your Worship cannot grant it as a residence Site you may Sir be pleased to allow me to have my money back again for truthfully this place is

²⁰⁷ *Te Aroha News*, 6 December 1884, p. 2.

²⁰⁸ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 5 March 1885, p. 3.

²⁰⁹ *Te Aroha News*, 7 March 1885, p. 2.

²¹⁰ Thames High School Board of Governors, Minutes of Meeting of 13 April 1885, High School Archives, Thames; R.A. Heald to Harry Kenrick, 21 April 1885, Te Aroha Warden’s Court, General Correspondence 1885, BBAV 11584/2c, ANZ-A.

²¹¹ *Thames Advertiser*, 6 March 1885, p. 2.

²¹² Assignment of John Bright to Adolph Krause, 22 December 1884, Te Aroha Warden’s Court, Certified Instruments 1884, BBAV 11581/5a, ANZ-A.

no earthly use for a Bussiness Site you will see Sir that all the allotments from 91 to 101 is nothing but a perfect Swamp -

Sir I Respectfully beg leave to State that I would come over to the court but I would loose a Shift and I shall be Satisfied With your decision which ever way you may be pleased to deside this Mutch I cannot kept it as a business Site the present way it is.

Wishing your Worship a Happy New year

I remain Sir your Very humble Servant

Henry Danke²¹³

PS I hope your Worship may be pleased to take my humble application into your Kind considération²¹⁴

Ferguson made a seven-and-a-half chain footpath and ditch through a swampy part of Brodie Street, for which he sought payment because it had 'been greatly availed of'.²¹⁵ In December, a leading mine manager, Hugh McLiver,²¹⁶ complained that the board 'never spent one penny of the large revenue they derived from this land, on improving the roads, etc'.²¹⁷ A large meeting to discuss local issues was held in July 'with a view of determining what action should be taken at the forthcoming election' to the council,²¹⁸ reflecting concerns about being neglected. It called for an 'early extension' to Waiorongomai of the railway line being built from Hamilton to Te Aroha, and for opening up of more Maori and endowment land for settlement.²¹⁹

As part of its desire for independence from its larger neighbour, in December 1884 a petition to the Education Board requested its own school committee.²²⁰ Permission was granted, and 14 people stood for election, creating 'considerable excitement'.²²¹ Even great excitement created after Ferguson lost the election for chairman through not voting for himself.

²¹³ His life has not been traced.

²¹⁴ Henry Danke to Warden, 1 January 1884, Te Aroha Warden's Court, Applications 1884, BBAV 11591/1a, ANZ-A.

²¹⁵ Piako County Council, *Te Aroha News*, 13 February 1886, p. 7.

²¹⁶ See Mines Department, MD 1, 87/491, ANZ-W; *Thames Advertiser*, 10 May 1875, p. 3, 13 February 1891, p. 2, 11 November 1892, p. 3, 16 November 1892, p. 2, 2 December 1892, p. 3, 30 July 1898, p. 2.

²¹⁷ *Te Aroha News*, 6 December 1884, p. 2.

²¹⁸ *Te Aroha News*, 5 July 1884, p. 7.

²¹⁹ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 15 July 1884, p. 4; *Te Aroha News*, 28 August 1884, p. 2.

²²⁰ *Waikato Times*, 23 December 1884, p. 2.

²²¹ *Te Aroha News*, 31 January 1885, p. 2.

‘Probable result? An appeal to the Board of Education: perhaps a dissolution, and fresh appeal to the country.... The view held by the *other party*: “Possession is nine parts of the law”’.²²² The meeting revealed a split between Henry Hopper Adams, the battery manager,²²³ Samuel Tozer Smardon,²²⁴ a carpenter who was about to become the licensee of the Premier Hotel,²²⁵ and George Robert Beeson,²²⁶ another carpenter who had just been appointed tramway clerk,²²⁷ and their opponents, Ferguson, Edward Gallagher, coach proprietor,²²⁸ Bernard Montague, miner and contractor,²²⁹ and James Munro, blacksmith;²³⁰ this division suggests pro- and anti-Battery Company feelings. After walking out of the first meeting because they refused to accept Smardon as chairman, the four dissidents held their own meeting and decided to appeal to the board.²³¹ In the meantime, no business was done. A correspondent doubted whether ‘the antipathies’ would ‘ever permit much harmony to prevail’, and some people considered a new committee should replace them.²³² When ‘Outsider’ of Waiorongomai explained to an Auckland newspaper the sequence of voting, with Ferguson claiming that his rival could not vote for himself, and asked for its opinion, the editor replied that Ferguson had ‘acted in a very foolish manner’ and was to blame for the outcome.²³³ At the next meeting ‘the majority obstructed all the proper business, and passed a resolution calling on the Chairman to resign’, which he declined to do. Ferguson was then elected chairman.

²²² *Te Aroha News*, 7 February 1885, p. 2.

²²³ See paper on his life.

²²⁴ See *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 2, p. 831; *Observer*, 16 December 1905, p. 3.

²²⁵ Te Aroha Magistrate’s Court, Register of Publicans’ Licenses, 1882-1892 folio 12, BBAV 11493/1a, ANZ-A.

²²⁶ See *Te Aroha News*, 27 May 1909, p. 2.

²²⁷ See *Te Aroha News*, 7 July 1883, p. 2, 17 January 1885, p. 2.

²²⁸ See paper on his life.

²²⁹ See paper on his life.

²³⁰ See *Te Aroha News*, 31 January 1885, p. 2.

²³¹ *Te Aroha News*, 7 February 1885, p. 2; Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 5 February 1885, p. 3.

²³² Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 5 February 1885, p. 3.

²³³ Letter from ‘Outsider’, with editorial comment, *Auckland Weekly News*, 14 February 1885, p. 15.

After some hours spent in discussing the deadlock, the Committee agreed to a dissolution, and an appeal to the country will be made. In the meantime the school must necessarily suffer through the conduct of men who have shown themselves totally unfit for the work the householders have entrusted them with.²³⁴

The board resolved this squabble by deciding that Ferguson was the legally elected chairman.²³⁵ Thus ended the most publicity the school committee ever received.

Even the *Observer* Man mentioned economic worries in March 1885, with his usual opaqueness: 'The butcher is jobbing on the match. He says the business will not keep him in tobacco'. As well, 'times must be bad here when a publican wants someone to take a borrowed five pounds out in kai'.²³⁶ In May, one of the hotel buildings was removed.²³⁷ The following month, a licensing meeting was told that although 'a considerable portion' of the Waiorongomai Hotel 'was locked up', there was still 'ample accommodation' for the settlement. This meeting agreed that, although there was more accommodation than needed, because of 'a possible influx of population during the year' no change would be made.²³⁸ Two months later, a publican was quoted as saying 'that 'hif times don't himprove 'e will 'ave to take 'hin washing'.²³⁹ At the end of October, larrikans were smashing windows in unoccupied houses.²⁴⁰

Because mining was in decline, an association asked for permission to form a semi-military settlement in the King Country, but was informed that the government neither desired the services of military settlers nor had acquired title to the land.²⁴¹ Later that year it was agreed to establish a settlement comprising mainly Waiorongomai residents at Gordon, further upstream.²⁴²

²³⁴ Waiorongomai Correspondent, *Thames Advertiser*, 4 March 1885, p. 3; *Te Aroha News*, 7 March 1885, p. 2.

²³⁵ *Te Aroha News*, 18 April 1885, p. 7.

²³⁶ 'Waiorongomai', *Observer*, 21 March 1885, p. 10.

²³⁷ *Thames Advertiser*, 6 May 1885, p. 3.

²³⁸ *Te Aroha News*, 27 June 1885, p. 2.

²³⁹ 'Waiorongomai Whispers', *Observer*, 5 September 1885, p. 4.

²⁴⁰ *Te Aroha News*, 31 October 1885, p. 2.

²⁴¹ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Thames Advertiser*, 5 June 1885, p. 2.

²⁴² Piako County Council, *Waikato Times*, 26 November 1885, p. 2.

Despite the gloomy outlook and a declining population, at least two new businesses, a butchery and a boot- and shoe-maker, were established in 1885.²⁴³ In January, a daily 'express cart' carrying goods and parcels started running between Te Aroha and Waiorongomai.²⁴⁴ Competition, possibly combined with residents' weaker financial state, meant the rival coaching companies charged people 'the very low fare' of sixpence to travel between the two settlements.²⁴⁵

In the March 1886 census, 284 people were recorded living at Waiorongomai, 168 males and 116 females. This compared with 671 living at Te Aroha and another 23 at Stoney Creek, close to that township.²⁴⁶ That month, the board agreed to the mining inspector's suggestion that reduced rents for business sites should continue 'consequent on the continued depression in mining matters'.²⁴⁷ In June, Maria Taylor, wife of a blacksmith, Daniel George,²⁴⁸ and occupying a business site in Grey Street, informed the board she was

carrying on a small Business consisting of Toy's Lollies etc ... but owing to the depressed state of the place & being at the extreme end of a Back St. no longer pays me to do so & would respectfully beg that you will reduce my rent during the depression if you cannot do so I shall be compelled to close & fall back upon the residence terms.²⁴⁹

When the council was asked to repair the main road, it was told residents could not contribute to the cost, 'as the people were doing very badly'. Despite Murphy referring to the 'impecunious condition of the

²⁴³ *Te Aroha News*, 31 January 1885, p. 2, 18 July 1885, p. 7.

²⁴⁴ *Te Aroha News*, 31 January 1885, p. 2.

²⁴⁵ *Te Aroha News*, 7 February 1885, p. 2, 14 February 1885, p. 2.

²⁴⁶ *Results of a Census of the Colony of New Zealand taken on the night of the 28th March 1886* (Wellington, 1887), p. 37.

²⁴⁷ R.A. Heald to George Wilson, 12 March 1886, Te Aroha Warden's Court, General Correspondence 1886, BBAV 11584/3a, ANZ-A.

²⁴⁸ See *Waikato Times*, 22 January 1890, p. 2, 25 January 1890, p. 2; *Eden Electoral Roll, 1899*, pp. 74, 75; *Te Aroha News*, 30 May 1919, p. 3; Death Certificates of Daniel Taylor, 12 November 1918, 1918/7264; Maria Taylor, 28 May 1919, 1919/3754, BDM; Death Notice, *New Zealand Herald*, 13 November 1918, p. 1.

²⁴⁹ Mairea Taylor to Chairman, Thames High School Board of Governors, 21 June 1886, Te Aroha Warden's Court, General Correspondence 1886, BBAV 11584/3a, ANZ-A.

people' and stating that 'Waiorongomai did not have £5 to give', council insisted this amount be provided.²⁵⁰ By May, several people wanted to remove their buildings.²⁵¹ In June, the Commercial Hotel closed without permission because of being unprofitable,²⁵² and the following month the Waiorongomai Hotel did likewise when its license expired. Residents petitioned the owner of the Waiorongomai and Premier hotels, Louis Ehrenfried, to keep both open, but as he declined the Premier remained the only hotel.²⁵³ A visiting reporter later 'noticed three large hotel establishments, but the brewer had, good naturedly, closed up a couple of them, and thus given the hard-working miners a show of getting out of the gully with at least a portion of their earnings'.²⁵⁴ The reality was that whereas three hotels had once done 'a flourishing trade', the one remaining was 'quite equal to the requirements'.²⁵⁵

Another visiting reporter wrote in August that Waiorongomai appeared to have 'seen better days', although residents were 'hopeful that things will brighten again'. Complaints about 'dull times' were 'pretty general'.²⁵⁶ A miner who filed as bankrupt in October was an example of the poverty experienced by many: although his liabilities were only £45, he had no assets, his house having been bought by his wife with her own money.²⁵⁷ In December a meeting about the intended closing of the telegraph office led to a petition being signed by 115 residents and sent to Firth and other Aucklanders to sign.²⁵⁸ It caused the inspector of telegraphs to recommend the office remained open for at least for some months 'in the expectation of business increasing'.²⁵⁹

²⁵⁰ Piako County Council, *Waikato Times*, 13 March 1886, p. 2; Piako County Council, *Te Aroha News*, 13 March 1886, p. 2.

²⁵¹ *Te Aroha News*, 29 May 1886, p. 2.

²⁵² Te Aroha Magistrate's Court, Register of Publican's Licenses 1882-1892, folio 3, BBAV 11493/1a, ANZ-A; *Te Aroha News*, 27 March 1886, p. 2; *Waikato Times*, 13 May 1886, p. 2.

²⁵³ Te Aroha Warden's Court, Register of Publican's Licenses 1882-1892, folio 13, BBAV 11493/1a, ANZ-A; *Te Aroha News*, 3 July 1886, p. 2; *Waikato Times*, 10 July 1886, p. 3.

²⁵⁴ Special Reporter, *Auckland Weekly News*, 30 July 1887, p. 29.

²⁵⁵ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Thames Advertiser*, 8 October 1886, p. 3.

²⁵⁶ Travelling Correspondent, *Thames Advertiser*, 2 August 1886, p. 2.

²⁵⁷ *Waikato Times*, 2 October 1886, p. 3, 9 October 1886, p. 2.

²⁵⁸ *Te Aroha News*, 4 December 1886, p. 3, 11 December 1886, p. 2.

²⁵⁹ *Te Aroha News*, 22 January 1887, p. 2.

In March 1885 a meeting asked the board to spend £500 forming streets and to set aside a public cemetery, but it claimed to have no road-making functions nor could it establish a cemetery.²⁶⁰ When the Minister of Lands, John Ballance, visited in November, a deputation complained that it 'had expended nothing whatsoever on roads or in improvements of any kind', but Ballance explained that he had no power to intervene.²⁶¹ Early the following year, because of 'much dissatisfaction' about the board doing 'nothing' for the settlement, local representation was sought, unsuccessfully, in an attempt to ensure some of the money received from its endowment was spent on its needs.²⁶²

In April, residents appealed to the council for drains and other 'urgently needed repairs' in two of the main streets, and the chief postmaster at Thames drew its 'attention to the necessity of improving the approach to the Post-Office'. A petition signed by 19 residents asked for £12 to be spent on repairs, especially a footpath to the post office. Nothing was granted, despite Murphy pointing out that it had spent only about £65 on the settlement since its establishment; other councillors were mindful of their overdraft of £2,914. Also at this meeting the county engineer referred to 'the great need for some sanitary measures being brought into force'.²⁶³ Adequate drainage was never provided, but one improvement was made: the tramway manager repaired a bridge near the post office because it was 'liable at any moment to cause a broken leg'.²⁶⁴

Two governors who visited in May were told by Ferguson that he had been deputed to request that a quarter of the revenue received from Waiorongomai should be spent on improvements. Urgent repairs were needed to roads, gutters, and culverts, and a domestic water supply was required.²⁶⁵ A 'very largely attended' meeting at the end of May elected a progress association to work in harmony with the Te Aroha Improvement Committee. 'Considerable discussion took place with respect to the selfish

²⁶⁰ Thames High School Board of Governors, Minutes of Meeting of 2 March 1885, High School Archives, Thames.

²⁶¹ *Waikato Times*, 10 November 1885, p. 2.

²⁶² Waiorongomai Correspondent, *Thames Advertiser*, 8 January 1886, p. 2; *Te Aroha News*, 9 January 1886, p. 7, 13 February 1886, p. 2.

²⁶³ Piako County Council, *Waikato Times*, 10 April 1886, p. 2; Piako County Council, *Te Aroha News*, 17 April 1886, p. 2.

²⁶⁴ *Waikato Times*, 11 May 1886, p. 3.

²⁶⁵ *Te Aroha News*, 29 May 1886, p. 2.

course being adopted by the Board of Governors ... in doing nothing whatever to assist the place'.²⁶⁶

Winter increased the number of complaints, the council being informed by two residents that the streets were 'almost impassable'.²⁶⁷ They were supported by a report from the county engineer on their 'wretched condition', and the postmaster's request 'for a few loads of gravel for mending the footpath was granted'.²⁶⁸ A later request for a wire footbridge over the battery creek was ignored.²⁶⁹

DECLINE, PARTIAL RECOVERY, AND DECLINE ONCE MORE

In May 1887, a visitor described Waiorongomai as being 'as dull as it possibly can be. Two of the three pubs are shut up, and the other, I should say, is not clearing expenses. Half of the houses are unoccupied, and the place presents a most dismal appearance'.²⁷⁰ Its appearance had not been helped by a gale earlier that month which unroofed some houses.²⁷¹ The electoral roll of August revealed an incomplete total of 70 male residents, 33 of them miners. The next largest categories were farmers and blacksmiths, with six each, carpenters with five, and amalgamators with three. There were two painters and two labourers and one each of battery manager, butcher, carter, coach driver, coachman, beekeeper, settler, teacher, plumber, farm employee, hotelkeeper, baker, and commission agent.²⁷²

The reduction of rents on business sites continued, as the reason, 'the poverty of the Residents', still existed.²⁷³ Thirty-two miners petitioned the government for land for settlement further upriver.²⁷⁴ In October, the

²⁶⁶ *Te Aroha News*, 5 June 1886, p. 2.

²⁶⁷ Piako County Council, *Te Aroha News*, 10 July 1886, p. 3.

²⁶⁸ Piako County Council, *Waikato Times*, 6 July 1886, p. 2.

²⁶⁹ Piako County Council, *Te Aroha News*, 4 September 1886, p. 2.

²⁷⁰ M.T. Case, 'In the Reporters' Room', *Observer*, 28 May 1887, p. 11.

²⁷¹ *Waikato Times*, 12 May 1887, p. 2.

²⁷² *Tauranga Electoral Roll, 1887; Tauranga Supplementary Electoral Roll, 1887*.

²⁷³ Warden to Thames High School Board, 2 June 1887, Thames Warden's Court, Letterbook 1886-1893, folio 123, BACL 14458/2b; R.A. Heald to Warden, 23 May 1888, Te Aroha Warden's Court, General Correspondence 1888, BBAV 11484/3c, ANZ-A.

²⁷⁴ Warden to Hugh McLiver, 23 May 1887; Warden to Minister of Lands and Native Department, 23 May 1887, Thames Warden's Court, Letterbook 1886-1893, folios 123-124, BACL 14458/2b, ANZ-A.

warden forfeited ten business site and 12 residence site licenses.²⁷⁵ Two two-roomed shops advertised for sale in December had ‘ample window space’ and were ‘in excellent repair’.²⁷⁶

In January a meeting discussed obtaining a water supply, ‘so needful for the health of the residents’.²⁷⁷ The most popular proposal was to erect a dam and reservoir where there were ‘some excellent springs, and convey the water into the township by an 1 1/2 iron pipe, as far as the Post Office corner, and thence in 1 inch pipes’. Residents would make connections at their own expense. A committee was to draw up plans and to canvass for subscriptions.²⁷⁸ At the first council meeting for 1887, Murphy argued that the board should ‘contribute something’ towards improvements, and his motion that the council ask for £100 was carried.²⁷⁹ The response was that it had no funds to spend on streets.²⁸⁰ Thirteen months later, the board was told that, because of ‘the failure of the rents’ of their endowment, their school would have to close unless the government gave a grant.²⁸¹ The government did provide £300 to make up for lost revenue.²⁸² Three months later, the governors agreed to permit the warden to let all allotments as residence sites at an annual rent of £1 except for Kilgour Street, the main thoroughfare, where allotments would remain business sites but rents on any used for houses would be reduced to this amount.²⁸³

In October, ‘in numerous instances’ residents ‘had a hand to mouth struggle’, but with the purchase of the main mines by the Te Aroha Silver and Gold Mining Company²⁸⁴ they hoped for better times.²⁸⁵ The appearance of this company created a ‘great stir’ in March, with ‘quite a rush’ for allotments. All available labour was employed on five contracts,

²⁷⁵ *Te Aroha News*, 23 October 1887, p. 3.

²⁷⁶ *Te Aroha News*, 3 December 1887, p. 3.

²⁷⁷ *Te Aroha News*, 15 January 1887, p. 2.

²⁷⁸ *Te Aroha News*, 22 January 1887, p. 2.

²⁷⁹ Piako County Council, *Waikato Times*, 25 January 1887, p. 2.

²⁸⁰ *Te Aroha News*, 12 February 1887, p. 2.

²⁸¹ *Thames Advertiser*, 14 February 1888, p. 2.

²⁸² *Thames Advertiser*, 17 February 1888, p. 2.

²⁸³ R.A. Heald to Warden, 23 May 1888, Te Aroha Warden’s Court, General Correspondence 1888, BBAV 11584/3c, ANZ-A.

²⁸⁴ See paper on this company.

²⁸⁵ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Thames Advertiser*, 2 October 1888, p. 2.

and it was rumoured there was work for an additional 100 men.²⁸⁶ That month, Duncan Edward Clerk (later an Auckland sharebroker)²⁸⁷ bought stores at Waiorongomai and Quartzville and, 'being very sanguine of the future', intended 'laying in a very large new stock of general merchandise'.²⁸⁸ A baker, confectioner, and biscuit maker set up in business,²⁸⁹ and by early June the company's spending had 'quite transformed the place, and infused new life into the district generally', two new butchers opening along with several small shops.²⁹⁰ A Waiorongomai correspondent reported that having three butchers meant meat was 'cheap, thanks to competition. What with two stores, two bakers, three butchers, a proverbial shoemaker and blacksmith, we ought to be a contented lot'.²⁹¹ Three applications were made for publicans' licenses, but two were withdrawn, and John Mace, a carpenter and farmer at Te Aroha West,²⁹² re-opened the former Commercial Hotel as a temperance boardinghouse.²⁹³ New houses were being built,²⁹⁴ and one section was sold for £20.²⁹⁵

By the beginning of August, 19 new children had been enrolled at the school since the beginning of the year, making the total enrolment 91.²⁹⁶ In September, there were no houses to let and rents were high. 'For two or three roomed places six to eight and nine shillings per week' was charged. The hotels were 'in full swing', and Mace's temperance house was 'doing a very fair trade'.²⁹⁷ Residents were 'giving much attention to their house property, and improvements in the way of fencing' were 'noticed on all sides'. More three-roomed cottages were brought down from Shaftesbury because houses were 'likely to be in demand ere long'.²⁹⁸ For the first time

²⁸⁶ *Waikato Times*, 27 March 1888, p. 2.

²⁸⁷ See *Thames Star*, 1 June 1897, p. 4, 9 August 1898, p. 2.

²⁸⁸ *Te Aroha News*, 31 March 1888, p. 2.

²⁸⁹ *Te Aroha News*, 19 May 1888, p. 2, 2 June 1888, p. 7.

²⁹⁰ *Te Aroha News*, 9 June 1888, p. 2.

²⁹¹ Waiorongomai Correspondent, *Te Aroha News*, 7 June 1888, p. 2.

²⁹² See *Thames Advertiser*, 8 November 1882, p. 3; *Te Aroha News*, 14 June 1884, p. 7, 15 May 1886, p. 2, 17 December 1887, p. 3.

²⁹³ *Te Aroha News*, 9 June 1888, p. 2, 13 June 1888, p. 2, 16 June 1888, p. 2.

²⁹⁴ *Te Aroha News*, 23 June 1888, p. 2.

²⁹⁵ *Te Aroha News*, 4 August 1888, p. 2.

²⁹⁶ *Te Aroha News*, 1 August 1888, p. 2.

²⁹⁷ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Thames Advertiser*, 6 September 1888, p. 2.

²⁹⁸ *Te Aroha News*, 1 September 1888, p. 2.

for several years, the settlement acquired a house, land, and general commission agent.²⁹⁹ By November, 'a large number' of leases had been granted to residents, while 'several' had 'changed hands at a considerable advance on their annual rentals'. Talk of a building society being formed was considered to be premature, although there was 'not a single house to be had'.³⁰⁰

The revival prompted renewed calls for improvements. The June council meeting declined to act on another complaint from the chief postmaster at Thames about the state of the footpaths outside the post office.³⁰¹ It was told that the hillside end of Graham Street needed draining to enable packhorses to reach the upper road to the mines and because the children of four families 'had to be carried on their parents' backs over the worst portion of this road to be able to go and return home from school'. Council agreed to drain about 50 chains of this street.³⁰² Two months later, a small sum was voted to repair the 'very bad state' of Kilgour Street.³⁰³

Growth continued during 1889, the extensive alterations made in January to a butcher's shop showing confidence in 'good times coming'.³⁰⁴ In February, a new general store opened despite Waiorongomai having 'proved a tough place', as former storekeepers had 'found to their cost'.³⁰⁵ By that month every house was occupied because of new arrivals since the start of the year, many from Thames.³⁰⁶ In June, there was 'scarcely an idle man in our promising township'.³⁰⁷ The following month, 'what between flax mills, roads, mines, and the Company's works', everybody had work, and a correspondent wondered where miners would be found for a new mine.³⁰⁸

Suddenly, in September, the Te Aroha Silver and Gold Mining Company reduced its workforce from 50 or 60 to 16. A Waiorongomai

²⁹⁹ *Te Aroha News*, 22 September 1888, p. 7.

³⁰⁰ Waiorongomai Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 29 November 1888, p. 2.

³⁰¹ Piako County Council, Minutes of Meeting of 15 June 1888, Matamata-Piako District Council Archives, Te Aroha.

³⁰² Piako County Council, *Te Aroha News*, 16 June 1888, p. 2.

³⁰³ Piako County Council, *Te Aroha News*, 11 August 1888, p. 2.

³⁰⁴ *Te Aroha News*, 16 January 1889, p. 2.

³⁰⁵ Waiorongomai Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 12 February 1889, p. 2.

³⁰⁶ *Te Aroha News*, 6 February 1889, p. 2, Waiorongomai Correspondent, 13 February 1889, p. 2.

³⁰⁷ Waiorongomai Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 11 June 1889, p. 2.

³⁰⁸ Waiorongomai Correspondent, *Te Aroha News*, 27 July 1889, p. 2.

correspondent wrote that, ‘during the whole of my experience here for the past seven years, I never remember such a surprise as this dismissal of men occasioned, as it was quite unexpected’.³⁰⁹ By December some shops had closed and people were leaving, either permanently or to find temporary work.³¹⁰ In particular, men sought work in the flax industry, then booming. One flaxmill owner entered ‘a neighbouring mill in working hours, and deliberately walked up to one of the hands, and offered him a shilling or two more a week to go and work for him’.³¹¹

January had started with a drought, some of the wells going dry and water being carted to some houses.³¹² Late that month ‘many’ wells were ‘perfectly dry’ and hotels carted water from the creek; the water shortage was made all the more difficult by the days being ‘scorchingly hot’.³¹³ In February, some residents wanted to use Army Creek for domestic water but failed because of concerns about the battery’s supply and the warden discovered other sources of water.³¹⁴ One of the men who proposed using Army Creek claimed that ‘during the summer people had to go miles to get water for washing purposes, etc’,³¹⁵ and later in the year it was repeated that a water supply was much needed.³¹⁶

In mid-year, the *Te Aroha News* argued that the council should provide, immediately, ‘a little more comfort and safety’:

In the matter of roads, footpaths, and drains, the township is in a most neglected state. The streets have never been properly formed and metalled. Nothing approaching a decent footpath has ever been made, and it is really almost impossible to get from one portion of the township to another in wet weather without being ankle-deep in mud; whilst with respect to drains, the state of affairs could not be much worse, as such few drains as there are

³⁰⁹ Waiorongomai Correspondent, *Thames Star*, 19 September 1889, p. 2.

³¹⁰ *Te Aroha News*, 4 December 1889, p. 2, 21 December 1889, p. 2.

³¹¹ Waiorongomai Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 21 December 1889, p. 21.

³¹² *Te Aroha News*, 5 January 1889, p. 2.

³¹³ Waiorongomai Correspondent, *Te Aroha News*, 26 January 1889, p. 2.

³¹⁴ Te Aroha Warden’s Court, Memorandum by George Wilson, 8 February 1889, with accompanying petitions, Water Right Applications 1889, BBAV 11591/1a, ANZ-A; *Te Aroha News*, 6 February 1889, p. 2 (especially report on the Warden’s Court), Warden’s Court, 20 February 1889, p. 2.

³¹⁵ Warden’s Court, *Te Aroha News*, 20 February 1889, p. 2.

³¹⁶ *Te Aroha News*, 31 August 1889, p. 2.

have no proper outlet, and need cleaning out and connecting with the outfall drains to be of any service. One drain in particular, crossing the side walk between the two hotels, emits a most abominable stench, and at night forms a regular trap into which the unsuspecting may suddenly step, with the risk of a sprained ankle or perhaps worse; whilst in front of the Post Office, and the approaches leading thereto, matters are in a very bad state indeed.... The time of year is not favourable for doing much in the direction of street formation, still the streets might be greatly improved by a little metal here and there, and filling up and levelling the worse places. But good footpaths might be formed and gravelled along the principal streets, the most urgently needed drains constructed, and the condition of the township vastly improved by the judicious expenditure of a small sum, say £25 or £30.³¹⁷

At the council's June meeting, a shopkeeper, on behalf of several residents, asked it to improve the drains and footpaths of the street leading to the post office. A petition from 23 residents sought the same improvements, and another from 64 spoke of the 'very bad state of the roads, footpaths, and drains', which 'in many places' were 'absolutely dangerous'. Kilgour and Kenrick Streets especially needed attention, being 'the most frequented' because they led to the post office, hall, and battery. The council agreed to spend £20 on drains and footpaths in these two streets.³¹⁸ At its next meeting, it received a petition from 27 residents asking for the footpaths in Grey Street to be repaired, 'and stating that the whole of the water for domestic use had to be fetched from the northern end of the street'. A farming councillor 'exclaimed: "Waiorongomai again! The Council used to be called the Te Aroha Town Board years ago, but I think the name should now be altered to Waiorongomai"'. Murphy responded that 'the street was in a very bad state; a perfect creek ran down the centre of it', and he wanted a large sum voted to 'put pipes in and fill it up, or typhoid fever would be about when the hot weather came'. After the chairman said 'the street should never have been laid out in such a position', the engineer said other works would remove most of the water. 'The inhabitants wanted the footpaths made, so their children could go to school, and they could fetch water'; it was decided to repair the footpaths.³¹⁹ A contractor immediately started work and soon the 'mass of mud' that composed the footpaths was

³¹⁷ *Te Aroha News*, 5 June 1889, p. 2.

³¹⁸ Piako County Council, *Te Aroha News*, 12 June 1889, p. 2.

³¹⁹ Piako County Council, *Te Aroha News*, 10 July 1889, p. 2.

gravelled.³²⁰ During this work ‘heaps of soft slushy mud banks’ on the footpaths made them ‘fifty per cent worse than they were before’. This was ‘not altogether the contractor’s fault, as the traffic is heavy, and the weather has been bad since he commenced work’.³²¹ In a letter to the editor a resident referred to ‘the city of Mudville’ with its ‘Mudwalks’ for footpaths.³²² In August, minor improvements were made to the post office, with the verandah boarded in and turned into a conservatory and the letterbox covered to protect it from the weather.³²³ As Waiorongomai appeared to be expanding, the Catholic Church obtained the church reserve.³²⁴

In January, a butcher had to shoot dogs worrying his sheep,³²⁵ and during that month a correspondent referred to ‘the number of cattle, and pigs especially, wandering about the township, together with fowls, geese, and stray dogs’.³²⁶ Four months later, he complained that, with the creeks totally drying up, ‘the swine, which, to the disgrace of this place, are allowed to wander in our streets, appear to protest by their gruntings’ against the lack of water. He quoted a man from County Kerry proclaiming that ‘thim fat divils is a grate nuisance in our streets, but they’re very handy hung up in your kitchen in the winter toime’. Every householder had ‘a pig, and, as a rule, a litter of them pottering about the streets’, which provided ‘comfortable assurance of the prosperity of the place’.³²⁷ In August, in referring to the improved footpaths he wrote that ‘so long as residents tolerate their four-footed porcine friends to the freedom of the city, this improvement cannot be expected to be permanent’.³²⁸

In November the council was told that the publican of the Waiorongomai Hotel kept from 30 to 40 pigs, and one councillor noted that ‘many people’ had pigs ‘running about the township’.³²⁹ A local

³²⁰ *Te Aroha News*, 13 July 1889, p. 7, Waiorongomai Correspondent, 20 July 1889, p. 2;

Waikato Times, 16 July 1889, p. 3, Waiorongomai Correspondent, 3 August 1889, p. 3.

³²¹ *Waikato Times*, 16 July 1889, p. 3.

³²² Letter from ‘Joe Softly’, *Te Aroha News*, 24 July 1889, p. 2.

³²³ *Te Aroha News*, 28 August 1889, p. 2.

³²⁴ Waiorongomai Correspondent, *Te Aroha News*, 20 July 1889, p. 2.

³²⁵ Waiorongomai Correspondent, *Te Aroha News*, 26 January 1889, p. 2.

³²⁶ Waiorongomai Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 29 January 1889, p. 2.

³²⁷ Waiorongomai Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 27 April 1889, p. 2.

³²⁸ Waiorongomai Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 3 August 1889, p. 3.

³²⁹ Piako County Council, *Te Aroha News*, 30 November 1889, p. 2.

correspondent wrote in December that it was an ‘incredible’ fact that ‘our porkers have one of the loveliest and dirtiest baths situated in nearly the centre of our main street. The bath is free, well patronised, and in wet weather the water is fresh’.³³⁰ Both council and residents believed they made the drainage problem worse. A shopkeeper whose premises were almost opposite the hotel complained that all its refuse ‘was lying in the middle of the road, the stench being very bad in the warm weather’, and asked for repairs even offering to meet part of the cost. Others promised money or labour to repair the broken drain pipes that were the primary cause of the problem the pigs exacerbated, for, in one councillor’s words, ‘in its present state there was a very objectionable nuisance’. The council directed the publican ‘to at once cease causing the nuisance at present arising through the offensive matter flowing from his premises on to the public road or into the road drain’.³³¹

THE BOROUGH CONTROVERSY

At the end of June 1883, 80 people attended a meeting in Lawless’ hotel to discuss the best form of local government. A motion to form a town board was passed unanimously, and a committee was formed to draw up a petition and collect signatures.³³² At a subsequent meeting, Lawless suggested it was premature to form either a road district or a borough, and some warned of the costs a borough would incur, especially because of the tramway. Lawless’ motion that the meeting ‘strongly protests against Waiorongomai, or any other portion of the goldfield being included in the proposed Borough of Te Aroha’, and that Waiorongomai should remain part of the county, was carried unanimously. A committee was formed to defend Waiorongomai’s interests.³³³ It comprised Lawless, Nathaniel Baskett, a local farmer,³³⁴ Samuel Tozer Smardon, then a carpenter,³³⁵ storekeeper

³³⁰ Waiorongomai Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 7 December 1889, p. 2.

³³¹ Piako County Council, Minutes of Meeting of 27 November 1889, Matamata-Piako County Council Archives, Te Aroha; Piako County Council, *Te Aroha News*, 30 November 1889, p. 2.

³³² *Thames Advertiser*, 6 July 1883, p. 2, 16 July 1883, p. 2; *Te Aroha News*, 7 July 1883, p. 2.

³³³ *Thames Advertiser*, 16 July 1883, p. 2.

³³⁴ See *Te Aroha News*, 1 September 1883, p. 2, 8 September 1883, p. 2, 29 September 1883, p. 2.

George Hubert Applegate,³³⁶ Harry Hopper Adams, Hugh McLiver, and Peter Ferguson. The *Te Aroha News* felt that ‘a fear of being in some way wronged, or sustaining some injury’, from a borough caused the opposition. It was ‘not to be wondered if, after being so liberally dealt with’ by the council, ‘people should naturally be averse to change’.³³⁷

In October, Ferguson convened a meeting to consider forming the township and part of the endowment into a town district. He argued that only about 30 people attended because ‘nearly every one was unanimous as to the advisability of forming a Town District, and ready to sign the petition for such’.³³⁸ Local government would mean they could construct a better access road and link a pipe with the water race to fight fires. The motion to form a town district was carried. James Munro, a blacksmith,³³⁹ likened forming a borough with Te Aroha to ‘the Siamese Twins, and if we take in Te Aroha we should then be hanging on to a dead carcass’.³⁴⁰ Two more meetings about forming a town district were held in October and November. Murphy, newly elected to the Aroha Riding, opposed this proposal. ‘But three residents’ had ‘paid any rates at all since they came here, and how then could they expect the County Council to come and make first-class roads for them’. At the second meeting, a motion to join a borough was defeated by nine votes to 16.³⁴¹ Shortly afterwards, a song performed at the concert celebrating the opening of the public hall ‘caused much amusement’. Two singers held ‘a large card each, labelled “Waiorongomai” and “Te Aroha” respectively, and sang the following verses’:

WAIORONGOMAI

We’re part and parcel of the two who are called the Siamese
Twins
Although ’twas said that one was dead yet we’re both still on our

³³⁵ See *Thames Advertiser*, 5 April 1881, p. 2; *Te Aroha News*, 7 July 1883, p. 2.

³³⁶ See *Te Aroha Mail*, n.d., cited in *Waikato Times*, 29 May 1883, p. 2; *Te Aroha News*, 23 June 1883, p. 2, advertisement, 22 September 1883, p. 4, 27 October 1883, p. 2, 3 November 1883, p. 3.

³³⁷ Editorial, *Te Aroha News*, 14 July 1883, p. 2.

³³⁸ *Te Aroha News*, 25 October 1884, p. 2.

³³⁹ See *Waikato Times*, 13 January 1880, p. 2; *Thames Advertiser*, 12 November 1883, p. 3; *Te Aroha News*, 31 January 1885, p. 2.

³⁴⁰ *Te Aroha News*, 25 October 1884, p. 2.

³⁴¹ *Te Aroha News*, 1 November 1884, p. 2, 8 November 1884, p. 2.

pins,
 'Tis needless then to bury one until they both shall die,
 For Te Aroha is the brother twin of Waiorongomai.

TE AROHA

So now my dearest brother twin my carcass is still sound,
 I'll join you in a boroughship a *mayor* to trot around,
 And when your gold is all worked out and you are weak and old,
 I'll bathe you in the sulphur springs to keep you from the cold.

CHORUS

Then, oh my! - anybody want to form a borough council,
 Anybody want to be elected mayor, &c.³⁴²

According to a Te Aroha correspondent, talk of separate town districts reflected local jealousies. 'The acrimonious spirit and the petty jealousies' which were 'so frequently the bane of small rival communities' seemed 'to be exceptionally rife'.³⁴³ At yet another meeting there was unanimous opposition to forming a borough to include Waiorongomai, and a committee was elected to look after its interests.³⁴⁴

In February 1885 a largely attended meeting about council aid for the goldfield included some people from Te Aroha. Almost everyone spoke in favour of Te Aroha, Waiorongomai, and Quartzville uniting in one borough.³⁴⁵ This was 'quite a change of opinion', those who formerly 'could see nothing but evil in a union with Te Aroha' now thinking that 'only by union' could 'ruin' be averted. 'The jealousy that formerly existed has given place to a more friendly feeling'.³⁴⁶ By mid-1886 the 'jealousies' that had once existed had 'almost disappeared', both townships being agreed that a municipality should include both.³⁴⁷ At the second meeting to consider the best form of local government, a resolution, 'That Waiorongomai and Quartzville join Te Aroha in forming a Borough' passed by 'an overwhelming majority', only three voting against it.³⁴⁸

³⁴² *Te Aroha News*, 15 November 1884, p. 2.

³⁴³ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 4 November 1884, p. 2.

³⁴⁴ *Waikato Times*, 6 December 1884, p. 2; *Te Aroha News*, 6 December 1884, p. 2.

³⁴⁵ *Te Aroha News*, 7 February 1885, p. 7.

³⁴⁶ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 3 February 1885, p. 2.

³⁴⁷ *Waikato Times*, 17 June 1886, p. 3.

³⁴⁸ *Te Aroha News*, 3 July 1886, p. 2, 10 July 1886, p. 2, 24 July 1886, p. 3.

A few people made another move in July 1888 to form a borough with Te Aroha, but a larger meeting decided, by one vote, to delay a decision for six months to permit proper consideration.³⁴⁹ Between July and October 1889, there was acrimonious debate about whether or not to join it, the majority being opposed.³⁵⁰ ‘Joe Softly’ of Waiorongomai mocked the proponents of the borough:

As I stood at the door of my residence on Saturday night about 7 p.m., I noticed a lunar rainbow, a rare phenomenon, and one which “Sages who wrote and Priests who sung” used to associate with presaging woe to man, etc. I strolled up into the township, thinking I might hear some original comments on the subject at “Our Corner.” Judge of my astonishment when, instead of the usual conclave of Philosophers, I observed people hurrying along in a sort of stampede, to the battle cry of “to the Hall, to the Hall.” I was sucked into the vortex of rushing humanity and whirled along, despite the danger of being lost to sight in “Barney’s sludge,” on the new promenade [mud on the footpath caused by Bernard Montague draining the street].³⁵¹ On arriving in the Forum I beheld the urbane looming face of “our Chair,” looking every bit Sir Maurice O’Rorke [Parliament’s Speaker], and I at once settled myself to hear sapient things from his lips, but his mellifluous cadences were pitched rather “sotto,” and consequently I was deprived of much learning. However, by dint of straining my tympanum I gathered, in short, that the minds of our local frogs, being much exercised by reason of glaring misgovernment, desire to implore the Wellington Jove to enable them to have a kind of their own, in the person of a Mayor – no less!... It soon appeared from the somewhat diffuse, not to say disjointed speech of the principal speaker [James Mills]³⁵² – or I might say the only speaker for a couple of hours or so; a well-meaning man I doubt not, but who, unfortunately for those present who really desired some sound tangible information, in fact, who needed education on the great question, and who formed

³⁴⁹ *Te Aroha News*, 7 July 1888, p. 2, 18 July 1888, p. 2, 21 July 1888, p. 7.

³⁵⁰ *Waikato Times*, 16 July 1889, p. 3; *Te Aroha News*, 6 July 1889, p. 2, 10 July 1889, pp. 2, 7, 13 July 1889, p. 7, 17 July 1889, p. 2, 24 July 1889, p. 2, 31 July 1889, p. 2, 3 August 1889, p. 2, 10 August 1889, p. 2, 24 August 1889, p. 2, 14 September 1889, p. 2, 12 October 1889, p. 2, 23 October 1889, p. 2; *Observer*, 27 July 1889, p. 17; note C.T. Harris, *Settlement and Development of the Upper Thames Valley, 1877-1937: Diamond Jubilee of the Piako County* (Te Aroha, 1937), p. 124.

³⁵¹ See paper on Bernard Montague.

³⁵² See paper on his life.

a large and respectable proportion of those present – forgot to bring with him all the figures necessary to carry conviction. I say it soon became evident that he had a strong animus against some printer’s devil – or his boss [John Ilott, the editor]³⁵³ – and being promptly supported by one or two equally minded partisans in the Hall, gathered courage, and with it – wind, for to many precisely similar questions, of an abtruse nature, for instance, as to the exact result arising from the subtraction of one farthing from three halfpence of ratepayer’s money, gave the required information, each time accompanying it with a fresh speech, each just the same in purport, but differing in construction from the preceding one. When these tactics had been pursued for some time I caught myself yawning severely from sheer weariness of spirit – “Hope deferred, etc.” Hope of hearing facts in their true light, figures, etc, in all their grim reality, presented to my mind to lead me to vote for the Stork – but no. At this stage I was suddenly aroused by a great noise, one of the corner-stones of our intellectual edifice fell heavily on the head of our King of the Mudwalks, for some interruption implying a reflection more or less opaque, but mercy tempered wrath, and the monarch of wrath escaped. Anon the fray became more general along the line, attack, in all sorts of formations being now made on the P.D. [Printer’s Devil = John Ilott]: feints in front, real attacks being attempted on his flanks and rear, but he coolly employed very old and sound strategy and belched out upon his opponents a withering fire from the ink pot, with the result that he remained master of the field of common sense, as all commanders must who oppose the artillery and fact and logic to the brick walls of bottomless sentimentality. About this period my superior moiety came into the Hall and sternly rasped into my ear that I had better be at home rocking the cradle than listening to a number of visionaries endeavouring to prove that it is not well to leave well alone. I quietly asked her to allow me to remain all night on the off chance of hearing just one little proof that we really needed a Borough arrangement, free from the ultimate fate of borrowing or being taxed out of existence to promote a fad – but she would not listen, charmed I ever so wisely – she stamped her foot (size about 9) and said if I did not leave this Millsey-Murphy [James Mills and Denis Murphy] business alone and go at once, she would “go at the meeting on Woman’s Rights” – I went.³⁵⁴

‘Rore O’More’ of Waiorongomai claimed to be so indignant at the council’s oppression that he was tempted to kiss his mother-in-law ‘out of sheer vexation’, and suggested the membership of the new administration:

³⁵³ See paper on Te Aroha in the 1880s.

³⁵⁴ Letter from ‘Jose Softly’, *Te Aroha News*, 24 July 1889, p. 2.

‘Well, first and foremost, there’s miself for the billet of Prime Minister and Chancellor of the Exchequer (that sounds better nor Colonial Treasurer anyhow) and yourself, Jimmy [Mills], are just the doetail for a rippin Minister of Publick Houses – no, I mane Public Works, and Woods and Forests’. After mocking Mills for seeking ever greater power, ‘Rore O’More’ was alarmed that all ‘our boys’ were ‘crying out for some billet or other’ and for an end of tendering for work or even an end to work altogether. Some wanted to tax the ‘Respectable Minority’ who opposed the borough. ‘Thin there’s a few want the jail shifted out here, to save being taken in to Te Aroha every pay-day – or the day after I should say’. There would have to be an inspector of nuisances ‘(that’s tha pigs you know, poor desarving brutes, oime sorry for thim)’ and a poundkeeper, a post he suggested should go to a Te Aroha supporter of the borough ‘for oime sure there’s no one here would loike the job of restricting the innocent liberties of the poor cows and horses’. ‘Rory O’More’ offered to collect the taxes, and had someone in mind as inspector of roads and ditches who had ‘a head on him longer than many a horse’. The hotel closest to the post office could be used as the municipal buildings.

The ideas for our new business are chasing each other that fast through my head that I can hardly catch them long enough to string them on paper for you (I must have a private secretary, I feel that – *you* can have one too). My concluding notion on this occasion is that Gladstone and Parnell will be sending to us for a copy of our Constitution, as a model for the new Home Rule Government in the Ould Country.³⁵⁵

With such mockery the borough concept was buried, and Te Aroha would form a borough that did not include Waiorongomai.

THE EARLY 1890s

In February 1890, a local correspondent reported ‘more departures - ten more of our dwindling population will have taken their leave of this place on Monday en route for Broken Hill, under a six-month engagement to the Proprietary Company’ (as arranged by the former manager of the battery).³⁵⁶

³⁵⁵ Letter from ‘Rore O’More’, *Te Aroha News*, 31 July 1889, pp. 2, 7.

³⁵⁶ See paper on the Te Aroha Silver and Gold Mining Company.

They are mostly hands who have been engaged in smelting, the others being experienced miners. The pay stipulated for, is at the rate of ten shillings per day, and as a further inducement to leave debt, poverty, and consequent duns, the company have arranged the men's passage to their destination, where the advance can be repaid by small regular instalments from their pay. It is hardly to be wondered at that these men are continually being drawn away, the most of them leaving wives and families behind them - when one looks at the bad state things have been in ever since the reduction works were closed down, and the want of any hopeful information as to the future. The fact is, the bulk of the men who have gone have been starved out of the place, and until the Government takes a more personal interest in the mining resources of this end of the colony, the country will continue to lose the services of all these sturdy fellows.³⁵⁷

This typical appeal for government aid to cure an economic problem was ignored, also typically, forcing people to leave, sometimes with their debts unpaid. That same month, at the railway station 'a Waiorongomai butcher pronounced maledictions on the head of a debtor who would not square up, and he might have given greater force to this funny sort of prayer by the imposition of his wiry hands, but the bobbies were too close'.³⁵⁸ Protection granted to mining companies meant most of the goldfield was closed to individual prospectors and miners, and Waiorongomai was 'becoming depopulated, large numbers of working men have been compelled to leave, several storekeepers have had to succumb, and others must inevitably and speedily follow in their wake, unless prompt action is taken'. Allotments were being forfeited, and property was 'practically unsaleable'.³⁵⁹ At the end of April, the post office closed, all future postal business, including the telephone, being conducted at a store. All bank business now had to be done at Te Aroha.³⁶⁰ In June, the last license was issued for the Premier Hotel, which closed within the year.³⁶¹ In September, a member of the Waikato Hospital and Charitable Aid Board

³⁵⁷ Waiorongomai Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 11 February 1890, p. 2.

³⁵⁸ 'Te Aroha', *Observer*, 1 March 1890, p. 14.

³⁵⁹ Letter from 'Fair Play', *Thames Star*, 3 May 1890, p. 2.

³⁶⁰ *Waikato Times*, 3 May 1890, p. 2.

³⁶¹ Te Aroha Magistrate's Court, Register of Publicans' Licenses 1882-1892, folio 21, BBAV 11493/1a; Rent Register 1881-1900, folio 163, BBAV 11501/1a, ANZ-A.

commented that unless mining improved it ‘might expect a large increase in the number of applications for relief’.³⁶²

When the census was taken in April 1891, Waiorongomai was described as a ‘village’ and its population had declined to 270.³⁶³ The electoral roll of June listed 65 men with occupations: 32 were miners, a metallurgical chemist and two amalgamators worked in the battery, and the remainder provided the normal services. There were still two butchers, a draper, a baker, a bootmaker, and a storekeeper.³⁶⁴ The *Te Aroha News* wrote that the depression caused by mining ceasing was a ‘very serious calamity’ for businessmen and settlers as well as miners. Te Aroha and Waiorongomai residents had ‘been very patient and forebearing, considering what the stoppage of mining’ had cost them.³⁶⁵ When Adams commenced mining in a small way in late 1891 with 20 men, he had to obtain another ten experienced miners from Thames.³⁶⁶ As this renewed mining provided only a modest economic recovery, tenants were permitted to take up any number of allotments for gardening or similar purposes at half the current rentals, these allotments to be relinquished if needed for housing.³⁶⁷

In mid-1892, several tenants were granted permission to remove shops and houses.³⁶⁸ By 1893, excluding farmers, a street directory listed 38 families remaining; a year later there were four less.³⁶⁹ In that year, there was a butcher, a grocer, a storekeeper, a blacksmith, a bootmaker, a publican, a woodworker, two carpenters, and two carters. There were 13 miners and three battery hands.³⁷⁰ The electoral rolls of October gave a total of 59 males, 23 being miners, plus two mine managers, one

³⁶² *Waikato Times*, 4 September 1890, p. 2.

³⁶³ *Results of a Census of the Colony of New Zealand taken on the night of the 5th April 1891* (Wellington, 1892), p. 381.

³⁶⁴ *Te Aroha Electoral Roll, 1891*.

³⁶⁵ *Te Aroha News*, n.d., reprinted in *Thames Star*, 20 April 1891, p. 2.

³⁶⁶ *Thames Advertiser*, 8 September 1891, p. 2.

³⁶⁷ R.A. Heald to Warden, 4 December 1891, Te Aroha Warden’s Court, General Correspondence 1891, BBAV 11584/4c; R.A. Heald to Warden, 27 June 1892, Te Aroha Warden’s Court, General Correspondence 1892, BBAV 11584/4d, ANZ-A.

³⁶⁸ R.A. Heald to Warden, 27 June 1892 (second letter), Te Aroha Warden’s Court, General Correspondence 1892, BBAV 11584/4d, ANZ-A.

³⁶⁹ *Cleave’s Auckland Directory, 1893* (Auckland, 1893), p. 304; *Cleave’s Auckland Directory, 1894* (Auckland, 1894), pp. 314-315.

³⁷⁰ *Cleave’s Auckland Directory, 1893*, p. 304.

amalgamator, and a battery hand. That some listed as living at Waiorongomai worked and in most cases probably lived elsewhere was indicated by the 12 farmers, two settlers, two bushmen, and one millhand.³⁷¹ With fewer schoolchildren, the pupil teacher was removed.³⁷²

Decline was hastened by a storm in February 1893 when ‘nearly every building’ was ‘more or less damaged’. The hall and one store were ‘completely wrecked’, and many buildings lost roofs and chimneys; ‘the whole place’ was ‘like a wreck’.³⁷³ ‘One cottage, with its two occupants, was blown completely over twice, but no one was hurt’.³⁷⁴ The wreckage was sold, some buildings were removed, and miners’ cottages were sold for housing elsewhere.³⁷⁵ The damaged hall was re-erected in Te Aroha, where it became an auction mart and then a printing office before burning down in 1909.³⁷⁶

Declining mining prompted a meeting at the beginning of December 1893 to induce the government ‘to buy the Wairakau run, about five miles from here, and to throw it open as a special settlement. About 30 names have been given in of those desirous of taking up the land if thrown open for settlement’.³⁷⁷ Nothing came of this initiative, and by mid-1895 most occupiers of land had surrendered their holdings, and in some cases rates could not be collected from those remaining because they were ‘poor and unable to pay and not worth the expense of a Summons’, the county clerk reported.³⁷⁸

³⁷¹ *Waikato Electoral Roll, 1893; Waikato Supplementary Electoral Roll No. 1, 1893; Waikato Supplementary Electoral Roll No. 2, 1893.*

³⁷² *Thames Advertiser*, 9 February 1893, p. 2.

³⁷³ *Waikato Times*, 25 February 1893, p.3, 2 March 1893, p. 2.

³⁷⁴ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Thames Star*, 24 February 1893, p. 2.

³⁷⁵ *Thames Advertiser*, 16 March 1893, p. 2, 9 May 1893, p. 2; *Te Aroha News*, 4 February 1911, p. 1.

³⁷⁶ *Te Aroha News*, 4 February 1911, p. 1.

³⁷⁷ Te Aroha Correspondent, *New Zealand Herald*, 8 December 1893, p. 6.

³⁷⁸ County Clerk to Secretary, Thames High School Board, 9 June 1894, 26 July 1894, Piako County Council, Letterbook 1893-1899, pp. 224, 245, Matamata-Piako District Council Archives, Te Aroha; see also Piako County Council, *Waikato Times*, 21 July 1894, p. 10.

The declining population meant the council was even less willing to make improvements. In 1890, it spent precisely £1 to repair the streets.³⁷⁹ In the following year, in response to a petition from 18 ratepayers in Kilgour Street, it agreed to form the street from the post office to a store at a cost of up to £30.³⁸⁰ Small sums were spent on road repairs and on making a footpath to the schoolhouse in 1892.³⁸¹ An 1894 request for more repairs was left to lie on the table.³⁸²

THE BRIEF MINING BOOM

Any recovery required a revival of mining. An 1894 rumour that a new company would take over the battery was welcomed as ‘a great thing for the district’.³⁸³ The brief boom of the mid-1890s only briefly reversed the decline. In February 1895, the *Te Aroha News* commented that, ‘notwithstanding the bright prospects’, some empty houses were ‘being bought by outsiders and removed elsewhere’.³⁸⁴ Late that year, a new store opened, offering ‘a first-class grocery business on the cash principles’.³⁸⁵ This storekeeper was to file as bankrupt in July 1897.³⁸⁶

1896 commenced in dramatic fashion when ‘a thunderstorm of a most severe nature passed over the township’ one evening, ‘shattering several of the telegraph posts on each side of the corner opposite the Waiorongomai Hotel, and tearing down several trees on the track by which the miners were at the time coming from work, frightening several of them to such an extent’ that one of them ‘got lost for some time, but turned up safely after the storm’. The woman in charge of the telegraph office was rendered unconscious ‘for a few seconds’, and three of her cats were killed. The publican’s horse, ‘while standing opposite his hotel, was struck by splinters

³⁷⁹ Piako County Council, Minutes of Meeting of 26 November 1890, Matamata-Piako District Council Archives, Te Aroha.

³⁸⁰ Piako County Council, *Waikato Times*, 9 April 1891, p. 2.

³⁸¹ Piako County Council, Minutes of Meetings of 31 May 1892, 5 July 1892, Matamata-Piako District Council Archives, Te Aroha.

³⁸² Piako County Council, Minutes of Meeting of 20 June 1894, Matamata-Piako District Council Archives, Te Aroha.

³⁸³ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 10 March 1894, p. 23.

³⁸⁴ *Te Aroha News*, 27 February 1895, p. 2.

³⁸⁵ *Te Aroha News*, 6 November 1895, p. 2.

³⁸⁶ *Ohinemuri Gazette*, 31 July 1897, p. 4; *New Zealand Gazette*, 5 August 1897, p. 1445.

from a telegraph pole, and bolted, scattering the contents of the dray' as he went. A dog standing beside a man milking a cow was killed, the milker 'narrowly escaping with his life'. Three residents 'were terrified out of their houses, which shook as if there was a violent earthquake, but beyond the shaking no damage is reported'. When a candlestick blown out of a hotel bedroom was found 'no tinsmith could repair it. The inmates of the hotel had a very anxious time of it, and several of the holiday makers were transformed into serious, sober men'.³⁸⁷

The 1896 electoral roll listed 124 residents, not the full total, for the April 1896 census revealed 201 residents, 69 less than in the previous one.³⁸⁸ There were 47 miners and four battery workers; nine farmers and two settlers may have lived outside the settlement. There were seven labourers, four carpenters, three blacksmiths, two shopkeepers, and one each of the following: contractor, clerk, hotelkeeper, bootmaker, butcher, coach proprietor, and teacher. 'Domestic duties' was the occupation of 39 women.³⁸⁹ In late May 'the general hopefulness' caused by the sale of the principal mines to the New Zealand Exploration Company caused residents to immediately peg out sections until there was 'not an eligible vacant allotment' left.³⁹⁰ Some were sold by mid-June, and buildings would be erected without delay.³⁹¹ The board's June meeting was informed that the 'great revival of mining' meant their tenants' position' had 'generally improved', everyone speaking 'in the most hopeful terms of the future'. It could 'with safety be predicted' that it would 'derive a greatly increased amount from goldfields revenue', and should 'results prove as favourable as is generally expected, the goldfields revenue should each year show a decided improvement'.³⁹²

There was a 'great demand' for houses in July, and the following month the post office savings bank reopened.³⁹³ The renovated Waiorongomai Hotel was turned into a boarding house, although some

³⁸⁷ *Thames Star*, 7 January 1896, p. 2.

³⁸⁸ *Ohinemuri Electoral Roll, 1896; Results of a Census of the Colony of New Zealand, taken for the night of the 12th April 1896* (Wellington, 1897), p. 39.

³⁸⁹ *Ohinemuri Electoral Roll, 1896*.

³⁹⁰ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 30 May 1896, p. 9; see also Waiorongomai Correspondent, *Ohinemuri Gazette*, 30 May 1896, p. 5.

³⁹¹ *Ohinemuri Gazette*, 20 June 1896, p. 4.

³⁹² High School, *Thames Advertiser*, 2 June 1896, p. 2.

³⁹³ *Thames Advertiser*, 22 July 1896, p. 2, 7 August 1896, p. 2.

visitors considered it 'not exactly up to date'.³⁹⁴ Some who took up residence sites established small farms on them, and by November building was 'proceeding apace'.³⁹⁵ In March 1897 some residents complained at the board 'raising the price of garden sites from ten shillings to one pound', arguing that the new prosperity did not warrant this; if the increase was insisted on, some would abandon their ground.³⁹⁶ By comparison, at Te Aroha building in mid-1897 was 'going on in every part of the town', and an empty house was 'unknown'.³⁹⁷

Some believed that outside capitalists retained faith in the future of the goldfield, for the licensee of the Waiorongomai Hotel received a 'substantial' offer for his property.³⁹⁸ However, once purchased it was dismantled and used to construct a hotel at Whakatane.³⁹⁹ The empty and 'ramshackle' Premier Hotel was purchased and pulled down early in 1898, its timber being used to build five or six cottages and thereby 'supply a long-felt want'.⁴⁰⁰ In July two stores were closed, one being used to construct two Te Aroha cottages.⁴⁰¹ By 1899, there were only 25 families, exclusive of farming ones, still listed in a street directory.⁴⁰² This was an incomplete total, for the electoral roll of that year, which did not include everybody, listed 107 residents. The largest occupational groups were miners and 'domestic duties', each with 35; that eight farmers and one settler were included indicates that some probably lived outside the settlement. There were five labourers, four carpenters, four battery workers, three blacksmiths, two storekeepers and two hotelkeepers, and one each of the following: mine and battery owner, mine manager, flaxmiller, dressmaker, clerk, coach proprietor, bootmaker, and teacher.⁴⁰³

³⁹⁴ *Ohinemuri Gazette*, 5 September 1896, p. 4, 9 January 1897, p. 7.

³⁹⁵ *Thames Advertiser*, 16 October 1896, p. 2, 7 November 1896, p. 2.

³⁹⁶ *Thames Advertiser*, 9 March 1897, p. 2.

³⁹⁷ *Te Aroha News*, n.d., reprinted in *Thames Advertiser*, 6 June 1897, p. 2.

³⁹⁸ *Thames Advertiser*, 10 July 1897, p. 3.

³⁹⁹ *Te Aroha News*, 1 May 1939, p. 7.

⁴⁰⁰ *Te Aroha News*, 1 February 1898, p. 2, 29 March 1898, p. 2.

⁴⁰¹ *Te Aroha News*, 9 July 1898, p. 2.

⁴⁰² *Cleave's Auckland Directory, 1899* (Auckland, 1899), pp. 362-363.

⁴⁰³ *Ohinemuri Electoral Roll, 1899*.

An 1895 request to beautify Grey Street by planting trees along its footpath was declined.⁴⁰⁴ Also in that year, several residents complained ‘about pigs trespassing on the roads’.⁴⁰⁵ Because of ‘damage being done to footpaths, etc, by pigs being allowed to run at large’, three residents were sent formal letters requiring them to keep their pigs within bounds, ‘as considerable damage was being done to the roadway’.⁴⁰⁶ As well, ‘what might have been a most serious accident’ was narrowly averted ‘through the folly of people keeping dogs that run after any rider that passes. Two ladies were riding past one of the settlers’ houses when two dogs rushed after the horses, frightening one of them, which threw its rider and dragged her for a short distance. Fortunately the lady escaped with a severe shaking, but it might have been much more serious’.⁴⁰⁷ To counter the image created by these reports, earlier in the year a Waiorongomai correspondent found it ‘gratifying to notice’ that the school inspector’s report had singled out the school and its grounds ‘as among the neatest and best kept in the district’.⁴⁰⁸ And, at long last, in 1898, a teacher’s residence was built.⁴⁰⁹

With Edwin Henry Hardy reviving mining at the end of the century,⁴¹⁰ there was considered to be ‘a more promising outlook’, and in 1899 improvements were made to footpaths and streets and none of the remaining houses were empty.⁴¹¹ That year, the Mines Department spent £150 repairing the main road and the council spent a third of this amount on footpaths and drains.⁴¹²

1900-1930

⁴⁰⁴ Piako County Council, Minutes of Meeting of 13 June 1895, Matamata-Piako District Council Archives, Te Aroha.

⁴⁰⁵ Piako County Council, *Te Aroha News*, 19 October 1895, p. 2.

⁴⁰⁶ Piako County Council, *Te Aroha News*, 30 November 1895, p. 2; Piako County Council, *Waikato Times*, 3 December 1895, p. 2; Piako County Council, Letterbook 1893-1899, pp. 520-521, 550-552, Matamata-Piako District Council Archives, Te Aroha.

⁴⁰⁷ Te Aroha Correspondent, *New Zealand Herald*, 8 August 1895, p. 6.

⁴⁰⁸ Waiorongomai Correspondent, *Te Aroha News*, 16 February 1895, p. 2.

⁴⁰⁹ *Te Aroha News*, 29 March 1898, p. 2.

⁴¹⁰ See paper on his life.

⁴¹¹ *Auckland Weekly News*, 27 October 1899, p. 20.

⁴¹² Piako County Council, *Waikato Argus*, 23 March 1899, p. 3, 24 October 1899, p. 4.

In January 1900 Hardy employed 19 men, and the size of the settlement was indicated when his stopping work (briefly) affected ‘almost every family’.⁴¹³ There were many abandoned sections,⁴¹⁴ and in October a residence site was sold for one shilling.⁴¹⁵ In November, a new settler told his wife there were ‘some very nice sections but the houses are no good’.⁴¹⁶ The *Te Aroha News*, in contrast, tried to discern positive features, claiming it was ‘bearing an outward and visible sign of an improved condition of the money market’ because painters and carpenters were renovating several buildings.⁴¹⁷ The typical house had four rooms ‘and a kitchen across the back and verandah at front’.⁴¹⁸

The census of March 1901 revealed that Waiorongomai ‘and vicinity’ had 154 residents.⁴¹⁹ More people had abandoned their sections, and others who could not afford to pay rent asked the board to remit them.⁴²⁰ Some residents started to fence off streets for grazing and take up residence sites ‘for garden purposes’.⁴²¹ A street directory listed people employed in 32 occupations, all but one male. There were an equal number, nine, of miners and farmers, the latter probably residing mostly or entirely outside the village. There was a mine manager, a battery proprietor (Hardy), and three battery hands. All the shopkeepers had left apart from a grocer.⁴²²

⁴¹³ *Auckland Weekly News*, 26 January 1900, p. 19.

⁴¹⁴ For example, County Clerk to Superintending Valuer, Auckland, 13 March 1900, Piako County Council, Letterbook 1899-1901, pp. 149-151, Matamata-Piako District Council Archives, Te Aroha.

⁴¹⁵ Assignment of W.H.P. Marsden to J.S. Baskett, 22 October 1900, Te Aroha Warden’s Court, Mining Registrations 1900, BCDG 11288/1a, ANZ-A.

⁴¹⁶ T.F. Holt to E.H. Holt, 27 November 1900, Thomas Franz Holt Papers, Te Aroha Museum.

⁴¹⁷ *Te Aroha News*, n.d., reprinted in *Ohinemuri Gazette*, 17 November 1900, p. 2.

⁴¹⁸ Ronald McIndoe, typescript reminiscences, n.d., p. 1, MS Papers 3806, Alexander Turnbull Library.

⁴¹⁹ *Results of a Census of the Colony of New Zealand taken on the night of the 31st March 1901* (Wellington, 1902), p. 40.

⁴²⁰ Te Aroha Warden’s Court, Complaint Book 1899-1947, Hearing of 6 February 1901, BBAV 11551/1a, ANZ-A; Secretary, Thames High School Board, to Minister of Mines, 7 May 1901, Mines Department, MD 1, 01/571, ANZ-W.

⁴²¹ Piako County Council, *Waikato Argus*, 24 July 1901, p. 2; Te Aroha Warden’s Court, Gold Revenue Licenses 1882-1929, folios 122-123, BBAV 11495/1a, ANZ-A.

⁴²² *Cleave’s Directory, 1902* (Auckland, 1902), p. 399.

The Auckland volume of the *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, published in 1902, could find little positive to report. After mentioning its past importance, the brief entry stated that ‘in consequence of the output of gold having decreased’ the population had ‘dwindled, and the post office was conducted by settler’s wife in her home. There was ‘a hotel, one or two business places, and a public school’.⁴²³ In February, the *Te Aroha News* commented that the number of dwellings was ‘getting beautifully less. As time goes on the inhabitants are disappearing one by one, the houses being taken down and erected in more prosperous surroundings’. Recently a four-roomed cottage was ‘carted to Te Aroha for rebuilding’.⁴²⁴ The following month, a Te Aroha correspondent described its ‘somewhat deserted appearance’, with ‘the number of buildings getting less and less as time goes by’. The remaining inhabitants were ‘living in hope’ of mining recovering.⁴²⁵ In November, Mary Jennings, wife of Edward, a carpenter and miner,⁴²⁶ stated there was ‘no demand for sections’ and ‘a large number’ were ‘vacant and available for any one to take up’.⁴²⁷ By the end of that year, only 22 families remained, excluding farmers, and there were two less a year later.⁴²⁸ The census taken on 29 April 1906 recorded 121 residents, 33 less than five years previously.⁴²⁹

Briar, blackberry and ragwort thrived on abandoned sections and spread onto farms, drawing the wrath of the inspector of noxious weeds down upon the board.⁴³⁰ A young resident in the early twentieth century later wrote that ‘it came to being a typical Ghost Town with people and houses being shifted over to Te Aroha as pigs poultry and cows ran

⁴²³ *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 2, p. 835.

⁴²⁴ *Te Aroha News*, n.d., cited in *Thames Star*, 25 February 1902, p. 4.

⁴²⁵ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Thames Star*, 21 March 1902, p. 4.

⁴²⁶ See *Waikato Times*, 7 August 1890, p. 3; *Te Aroha News*, 18 October 1884, p. 7, 12 May 1908, p. 2, 27 October 1926, p. 8.

⁴²⁷ Declaration of Mary Jennings, 18 November 1902, Te Aroha Warden’s Court, Mining Registrations 1902, BCDG 11288/1a, ANZ-A.

⁴²⁸ *Cleave’s Auckland Directory, 1903* (Auckland, 1903), p. 415; *Cleave’s Auckland Directory, 1904* (Auckland, 1904), p. 441.

⁴²⁹ *Results of a Census of the Colony of New Zealand taken on the night of 29th April 1906* (Wellington, 1907), p. 42.

⁴³⁰ Piako County Council, Letterbook 1902-1903, p. 276, Matamata-Piako District Council Archives, Te Aroha; Thames High School Board of Governors, Minutes of Meetings held on 5 June 1906, 6 November 1906, 4 December 1906, High School Archives, Thames.

everywhere'.⁴³¹ In 1907 'stray cattle running on the reserve and on the roads' were causing 'considerable trouble' by 'breaking through fences around the private land and running thereon'.⁴³²

One dangerous feature close to the settlement, the 90-foot deep Alameda shaft, was brought to the attention of the mining inspector in 1902 by the local constable. 'The wood-work has fallen into decay; some of the planks guarding the top of the shaft being very rotten', and as children often played nearby, 'no one would be very surprised to hear that one of them had fallen in'.⁴³³ It was filled in at the expense of the Mines Department, but four years later was again dangerous and had to be filled in once more.⁴³⁴

By 1908, the settlement had so decreased that, when a new hotel was proposed to replace the one that had burned down, it was erected on the corner of the main road to Shaftesbury to catch the passing trade.⁴³⁵ Still not viable there, in 1912 it was moved to Te Aroha.⁴³⁶ The 1911 census revealed 109 residents still lived in the village,⁴³⁷ the 1916 one recorded 224 in the 'locality',⁴³⁸ which had 125 in 1921 and 122 in 1926.⁴³⁹ Only 12 men

⁴³¹ Ronald McIndoe, typescript reminiscences (n.d.), p. 1, MS Papers 3806, Alexander Turnbull Library.

⁴³² *Te Aroha News*, 11 May 1907, p. 2.

⁴³³ F.W. Wild to James Coutts (Inspector of Mines), 14 January 1902, Mines Department, MD 1, 02/68, ANZ-W.

⁴³⁴ James Coutts to Under-Secretary, Mines Department, 16 January 1902; Under-Secretary, Mines Department, to James Coutts, 21 January 1902; James Coutts to Under-Secretary, Mines Department, 24 February 1902, Mines Department, MD 1, 02/68, ANZ-W; Thames High School Board of Governors, Minutes of Meetings of 5 September 1906, 2 October 1906, High School Archives, Thames.

⁴³⁵ *Te Aroha News*, Licensing Committee, 11 June 1908, p. 3, Licensing Committee, 20 June 1908, p. 2, Waiorongomai Correspondent, 5 September 1908, p. 2.

⁴³⁶ Thames High School Board of Governors, Minutes of Meetings of 20 February 1912, 7 May 1912, High School Archives, Thames; *Te Aroha News*, 6 May 1912, p. 2.

⁴³⁷ *Results of a Census of the Dominion of New Zealand taken on the night of 2 April 1911* (Wellington, 1912), p. 49.

⁴³⁸ *Results of a Census of the Dominion of New Zealand taken on the night of 15 October 1916* (Wellington, 1918), p. 53.

⁴³⁹ *Results of a Census of the Dominion of New Zealand taken on the night of 17 April 1921* (Wellington, 1921), p. 57; Dominion of New Zealand, *Population Census, 1926: vol. 1: Increase and geographical distribution* (Wellington, 1927), p. 55.

were listed as living there in the street directory of 1929, six being farmers and only one a miner.⁴⁴⁰ According to the *Te Aroha News*, by June 1917 it was ‘becoming more like Goldsmith’s “Deserted Village” day by day. Within a few weeks no less than three families will have taken their departure’.⁴⁴¹ After the school closed in 1927, the children were taken by bus to Te Aroha and the school and the teacher’s residence were sold for removal.⁴⁴² To keep noxious weeds down on abandoned sections, residents and farmers legally or illegally fenced off streets to graze cattle.⁴⁴³ Some inhabitants opposed any streets being fenced off and their village turned into farms.⁴⁴⁴

During the First World War, road metal was crushed in the battery and a sawmill provided some employment.⁴⁴⁵ From 1919 to 1927 a quarry in the lower Waiorongomai Valley provided work for a few.⁴⁴⁶ By the latter year, the township site was ‘inhabited only by a few scattered families’.⁴⁴⁷ Those living there at the end of the 1920s were one contractor, one labourer, one quarry foreman, two builders, five farmers, and one miner.⁴⁴⁸

THE 1930s

⁴⁴⁰ *Wise’s Directory for 1929* (Auckland, 1929), p. 755.

⁴⁴¹ *Te Aroha News*, 25 June 1917, p. 2; see also 9 July 1917, p. 3.

⁴⁴² Loris Priest, *Te Aroha Primary and District High School 1881-1981* (Te Aroha, 1981), p. 38; Thames High School Board of Governors, Minutes of Meetings of 28 February 1928, 27 March 1938, 23 October 1928, 27 November 1928, High School Archives, Thames.

⁴⁴³ For example, Matthew Paul to Warden, 10 April 1915, Mines Department, MD 1, 6/61, ANZ-W; Warden to Under-Secretary, Mines Department, 17 April 1915, Thames Warden’s Court, Letterbook 1913-1916, folio 589, BACL 14458/3b, ANZ-A; Piako County Council, Minutes of Meetings of 20 January 1915, 18 August 1915; County Clerk to Miller and Sons, 1 December 1915, Letterbook 1914-1916, folio 262, Matamata-Piako District Council Archives, Te Aroha.

⁴⁴⁴ Piako County Council, Minutes of Meetings of 15 October 1917, 7 November 1917, Matamata-Piako District Council Archives, Te Aroha.

⁴⁴⁵ Waiorongomai Correspondent, *Te Aroha News*, 2 August 1916, p. 2, 1 November 1916, p. 3; see also 16 August 1920, p. 2.

⁴⁴⁶ Piako County Council, *Te Aroha News*, 19 March 1919, p. 1; Piako County Council, Minutes of Meetings of 22 May 1919, 28 June 1919, 9 August 1919, Matamata-Piako District Council Archives, Te Aroha; *Te Aroha News*, 26 October 1922, p. 1, 18 August 1926, p. 5, 17 December 1926, p. 4, 29 April 1927, p. 5.

⁴⁴⁷ *Te Aroha News*, 27 July 1927, p. 8.

⁴⁴⁸ *Cleave’s Auckland Directory, 1929* (Auckland, 1929), p. 755.

In January 1931, the *Te Aroha News* gave a romantic and inaccurate account of Waiorongomai's past (the number of both residents and batteries was inflated) along with an unflattering portrait of its current appearance:

Huddled at the entrance to one of the steep-sided valleys that gash the Coromandel ranges is all that remains of the once busy mining centre known as Waiorongomai. To the stranger this scattered group of ruins and cottages would mean little more than some futile attempt at settlement.... Time was when Waiorongomai seethed with life. A population varying from 3,000 to 4,000 thronged its streets and rumours of wild doings on Saturday nights made it a township notoriously attractive to the young bloods of the more peaceful settlements that were then springing up on the plains. Three hotels attended to the thirsty needs of the inhabitants and to the comfort of the tourist, while the constant thunder of three "batteries" awoke the startled echoes of the bush-clad slopes that towered above the town....

Then Waiorongomai failed. The miners vanished, the larger houses were demolished or removed to the rising township of Te Aroha, four miles distant, and the roar of the batteries was stilled. All that was left were the few tumbledown cottages still held by an occasional prospector who refuses to give in, but for the most part falling rapidly into decay.

The old mining office, a queer square building with a yellow brick chimney shooting from the centre of its only gable, startles the passers-by with the brightness of its torn wallpapers which stare bravely out from its broken plains. It faces all that is now left of [Henry Hopper] Adams' battery,⁴⁴⁹ the largest on the field – two huge wooden uprights standing forlornly in the midst of a sea of gorse.⁴⁵⁰

In 1930 the board wanted to resume unoccupied sections to incorporate them into farms because these would provide higher rentals.⁴⁵¹ The following year, it decided that the licenses of all residence sites on which rent was owed would be cancelled and all unoccupied areas resumed and

⁴⁴⁹ See paper on his life.

⁴⁵⁰ *Te Aroha News*, 7 January 1931, p. 5; a slightly condensed version from its Te Aroha Correspondent was published in *New Zealand Herald*, 9 January 1931, p. 8.

⁴⁵¹ Thames High School Board of Governors, Minutes of Meeting of 22 July 1930, High School Archives, Thames; editorial, *Te Aroha News*, 23 September 1931, p. 4.

taken out of the goldfield.⁴⁵² Out of 77 acres reserved for the township, 12 residence site licenses were still held, rent being in arrears in every case, and seven 'houses or shacks' were occupied. Some residents had illegally fenced in several acres.⁴⁵³ The warden was informed that the board had 'endeavoured to make use of the unoccupied portion of the area by granting temporary grazing rights over it, but obstruction on the part of some of the adjoining occupiers has rendered any such arrangements impossible'. It wanted the unoccupied areas used for dairying.⁴⁵⁴ After inspecting in May, John Francis Downey, the mining inspector, informed the warden that until recently all rents were in arrears, some for years. Only one man lived on his section, the rest having let them. Almost all residents had enclosed larger areas that they were entitled to and had failed to control noxious weeds. He proposed that existing licenses continue and some streets be kept open to provide access to the hill tracks and the battery site.⁴⁵⁵ These arrangements would be sufficient because there was little hope of a mining revival.⁴⁵⁶

Plans to remove most of the township from the goldfield and convert it into dairy farms exacerbated ill feeling between residents and farmers. Earlier, when farmers were granted temporary grazing rights some inhabitants destroyed their fences' and made impossible any such use by outsiders'.⁴⁵⁷ Thomas Stewart,⁴⁵⁸ an old miner with a claim near the old Aroha Company's low level drive,⁴⁵⁹ claimed one farmer was trying to drive him off his land and had stated that he would obtain 'the sole right of the

⁴⁵² Thames High School Board of Governors, Minutes of Meetings of 24 February 1931, 24 March 1931, 26 May 1931, High School Archives, Thames.

⁴⁵³ Secretary, Thames High School Board, to Under-Secretary, Mines Department, 7 March 1931, Mines Department, MD 1, 6/61, ANZ-W.

⁴⁵⁴ Secretary, Thames High School Board, to Warden, 21 April 1931, Te Aroha Warden's Court, Mining Applications 1931, 11/1931, BCDG 11289/2a, ANZ-A.

⁴⁵⁵ J.F. Downey to Warden, 26 May 1931, Te Aroha Warden's Court, Waiorongomai Township File 1931-1935, BBAV 11573/1a, ANZ-A.

⁴⁵⁶ J.F. Downey to Minister of Mines, 5 May 1931, Mines Department, MD 1, 6/61, ANZ-W.

⁴⁵⁷ Secretary, Thames High School Board, to Under-Secretary, Mines Department, 7 March 1931, Mines Department, MD 1, 6/61, ANZ-W.

⁴⁵⁸ See paper on prospectors and investors in the Te Aroha Mining District in the 1930s.

⁴⁵⁹ Te Aroha Warden's Court, Register of Applications 1921-1934, hearings of 13 March 1928, 10 July 1930, 14 April 1932, 8 June 1933, BBAV 11505/6b; Register of Mining Privileges 1933-1972, folio 26, BBAV 11500/5a, ANZ-A.

Whole of Waiorongaomai if it took all the money he has'. He complained to the minister that there was

very little encouragment for a prospector but plenty of obstacles as the farmers would sooner see dairy cows their own of course inhabiting Waiorongaomai than human beings forgetting that before the great War the then tenants on the endowment Leases was glad enough to get a bit of work in the Mines but what a change now there is no room on the map for him, every thing possible has been done in the way of vandilism and destruction to mining property Miners huts been burned down every portable article in the Bendigo Battery stolen or destroyed rock crusher truck wheels bran new busted and sold for scrap iron and all with the intention of of converting Wairongaomai into a cattle run and all for the benefit of the most covotus and selfish individual ever i met hoping you will keep the old town in the Gold fields.⁴⁶⁰

Fear of losing their land prompted tenants to pay their arrears.⁴⁶¹ As little prospecting was being done, 'very few' lived in the township area, which had 'a most woebegone appearance and large clumps of blackberry take the place of former human habitations'.⁴⁶² In October, the solicitor representing the settlers argued in the warden's court that the township should be kept for housing 'as long as there was even a possibility of the revival of mining', for if this happened the Crown would have to acquire the land again 'and possibly pay heavy compensation'. Licensees had acquired their homes 'in the faith and in the belief that they were settling in a township area, bearing all the amenities of a township such as roads, streets, reserves for school, church, etc'.⁴⁶³ Discussions were 'quite friendly', according to Downey, licensees agreeing that better arrangements should be made, on condition that access roads to their sections and the mines were retained.⁴⁶⁴ The warden determined, in November, that the unoccupied portion of the township could be leased, with gates erected across some

⁴⁶⁰ Thomas Stewart to Minister of Mines, n.d. [received 27 February 1931], Mines Department, MD 1, 6/61, ANZ-W.

⁴⁶¹ J.F. Downey to Under-Secretary, Mines Department, 4 May 1931, Mines Department, MD 1, 6/61, ANZ-W.

⁴⁶² Editorial, *Te Aroha News*, 23 September 1931, p. 4.

⁴⁶³ Warden's Court, *Te Aroha News*, 19 October 1931, p. 1.

⁴⁶⁴ J.F. Downey to Under-Secretary, Mines Department, 30 October 1931, Mines Department, MD 1, 6/61, ANZ-W.

streets being kept open. He was 'satisfied' that a mining revival was 'such a remote possibility that it need not be seriously considered'.⁴⁶⁵

Malcolm Hardy, an over-optimistic new miner,⁴⁶⁶ challenged this belief, insisting that the township should remain part of the goldfield because it provided the only flat land for building and the only suitable battery site. Writing to the minister 'as one vitally interested in conditions here', he suggested that 'at least three blocks of the township should be retained as well as a machine site'. This arrangement, 'whilst releasing a large block of land for farming or grazing', would 'provide ample accommodation for sufficient residence sites in case of necessity'.⁴⁶⁷ Downey did not believe Hardy, or anyone else, would revive mining, but, to give him 'a chance to show what he can do', recommended that 38 residence sites in two of the township blocks along with the battery site 'be reserved for mining purposes for a period of say two years'. If not then 'taken up for bona-fide mining purposes they could pass to the control of the High School Board'. The warden adopted his suggestion.⁴⁶⁸

Some holders of residence sites were 'squatters', in the opinion of the board, because they occupied 'areas greatly in excess of their titles' and caused trouble by letting stock graze on adjoining agricultural leases.⁴⁶⁹ Having used the settlement as a free grazing common, they were opposed to anyone having the sole lease over it. When, in 1932, a temporary tenancy was arranged, the secretary of the board predicted that 'difficulty in working the area will arise through objectors claiming the use of the roads thereon, as in all previous efforts to make use of the property any fencing was immediately destroyed by the free grazers'.⁴⁷⁰ There were indeed immediate complaints and 'considerable trouble' about boundaries, mainly

⁴⁶⁵ Decision of Warden, 7 November 1931, Mines Department, MD 1, 6/61, ANZ-W.

⁴⁶⁶ See paper on his life.

⁴⁶⁷ Malcolm Hardy to Minister of Mines, 6 November 1931, Mines Department, MD 1, 6/61, ANZ-W.

⁴⁶⁸ J.F. Downey to Under-Secretary, Mines Department, 3 December 1931; Warden to Under-Secretary, Mines Department, 15 December 1931, Mines Department, MD 1, 6/61, ANZ-W.

⁴⁶⁹ Thames High School Board of Governors, Minutes of Meeting of 26 July 1932, High School Archives, Thames.

⁴⁷⁰ Secretary, Thames High School Board, to Under-Secretary, Mines Department, 15 August 1932, Mines Department, MD 1, 6/61, ANZ-W.

involving members of the Stewart family.⁴⁷¹ The mining registrar intended to consider ‘only applications from bona-fide miners for residence sites’,⁴⁷² but none were received.

Because there was no rebirth of mining, in 1932 the settlement was a ‘few straggling houses clustered on the fringes of land where plain meets mountain at the entrance to the gorge of “golden hopes” ’.⁴⁷³ Eighteen families were listed as residing in the area, 14 of them being farmers and Stewart being the only miner.⁴⁷⁴ Six years later, only 14 were listed and Stewart remained the sole miner.⁴⁷⁵ In that year, ‘in view of constant complaints from adjoining lessees’, the board resumed the unoccupied sections and arranged that they were ‘cleared of Ragwort and other noxious weeds preparatory to offering the whole area on extended lease’.⁴⁷⁶ The mining inspector agreed because of Hardy’s failure to find worthwhile gold, and in mid-1939 the battery site and most of the remaining residence sites were exempted from the Mining Act despite protests from Hardy and one other resident.⁴⁷⁷

FINAL YEARS

⁴⁷¹ Mary Stewart to Minister of Mines, 18 August 1932; Secretary, Thames High School Board, to Under-Secretary, Mines Department, 9 December 1932, Mines Department, MD 1, 6/61, ANZ-W; *Te Aroha News*, 30 November 1932, p. 4.

⁴⁷² Thames High School Board of Governors, Minutes of Meeting of 25 October 1932, High School Archives, Thames.

⁴⁷³ *Te Aroha News*, 11 April 1932, p. 5.

⁴⁷⁴ *Cleave’s Auckland Directory, 1932-33* (Auckland, 1932), p. 746.

⁴⁷⁵ *Leighton’s Auckland Provincial Directory, 1938-39* (Auckland, 1938), p. 801.

⁴⁷⁶ Thames High School Board of Governors, Minutes of Meeting of 22 November 1938, High School Archives, Thames; Secretary, Thames High School Board, to Under-Secretary, Mines Department, 24 November 1938, Inspector of Mines, BBDO 18634, A902, MM206, ANZ-A.

⁴⁷⁷ E.J. Scoble (Inspector of Mines) to Under-Secretary, Mines Department, 23 December 1938; Under-Secretary, Mines Department, to E.J. Scoble, 17 January 1939, 14 August 1939; Minister of Mines to Malcolm Hardy, 20 September 1939, Inspector of Mines, BBDO 18634, A902, MM206, ANZ-A; Mining Registrar, Te Aroha, to Under-Secretary, Mines Department, 6 March 1939; Memorandum of Chief Surveyor, 24 May 1939, with map, Ministry of Commerce, AATJ 6090, 6/61, Part 2, ANZ-W; *New Zealand Gazette*, 22 June 1939, p. 1859; Minister of Mines to Mita Dixon, 25 October 1939, Lands and Survey Department, 8/857, Part 1, Land Information New Zealand, Hamilton.

The number of families living there declined from 13 in 1941 to seven only two years later.⁴⁷⁸ No residents were listed after 1959.⁴⁷⁹ By 1948, 'gorse was encroaching upon the roadway' into it.⁴⁸⁰ In January 1950 the high school endowment was extinguished.⁴⁸¹ Four months later, a Waiorongomai farmer wishing to graze 17 acres set aside for residence sites wrote that his grazing would clear the gorse and blackberry.⁴⁸² In 1960, the last site owned by the council was abandoned. 'The lease was of no value to the council and it would be better for the land to be used for farming', in the opinion of the county engineer.⁴⁸³ Thus Waiorongomai finally vanished, the only remaining indication of a settlement being the loop road following the line of some of the original streets.

SPORTING LIFE

Sport was an important form of relaxation, and many residents must have participated in sporting events at Te Aroha as well as at Waiorongomai. The first surviving mention of cricket match was in November 1882, when two Waiorongomai cricketers 'played some excellent cricket; they were rough [on the] balls'. Another made 'an elegant wicket-keeper'.⁴⁸⁴ A cricket club was formed in October 1883.⁴⁸⁵ Over summer, 'the half-friendly and half-jealous rivalry' between the two townships was 'kept ablaze by a series of cricket matches, in which the palm of victory was finally borne off, after a severe struggle, by the Waiorongomai players, assisted by the men of the mountain', meaning the miners of Quartzville

⁴⁷⁸ *Leighton's Auckland Provincial Directory, 1941-1942* (Auckland, 1941), p. 854; *Wise's Auckland Directory, 1942* (Auckland, 1942), p. 419a; *Wise's Auckland Directory, 1943* (Auckland, 1943), p. 423.

⁴⁷⁹ See *Wise's Auckland Directory* for 1950s and 1960s.

⁴⁸⁰ Piako County Council, Minutes of Meeting of 15 March 1948, Matamata-Piako District Council Archives, Te Aroha.

⁴⁸¹ Minister of Mines to R.C. Vanstone, 12 May 1950, Ministry of Commerce, AATJ 6090, 6/61, Part 2, ANZ-W.

⁴⁸² R.C. Vanstone to Minister of Mines, 28 April 1950, Ministry of Commerce, AATJ 6090, 6/61, Part 2, ANZ-W.

⁴⁸³ *Te Aroha News*, 21 October 1960, p. 5.

⁴⁸⁴ 'Waiorongomai', *Observer*, 18 November 1882, p. 153.

⁴⁸⁵ *Te Aroha News*, 20 October 1883, p. 2.

and the adjacent hillside. A team of bachelors from Te Aroha and Waiorongomai played the married men, 'and got a sound drubbing for their audacity'.⁴⁸⁶ Another match between 'the Hill and the Flat' was held late that year.⁴⁸⁷ In early 1888 the settlement was noted for its 'rather powerful Cricket Club ... composed of old and cute veterans at the willow'.⁴⁸⁸ In the next season it had 29 members, who practiced on the government reserve and a farm and played against teams from Te Aroha, the Bay of Plenty, and elsewhere.⁴⁸⁹ 'Working members' paid a subscription of five shillings and 'honorary members' paid double this amount.⁴⁹⁰ It unsuccessfully played Paeroa in January 1889.⁴⁹¹ Twenty men attended a November meeting to re-form it, 12 enrolling immediately and several more shortly afterwards.⁴⁹² A team existed into the early twentieth century.⁴⁹³ There were 'some real enthusiasts', but 'the sparsity of population' meant there were 'very few players'.⁴⁹⁴

One early resident recalled 'great rivalry' between the Te Aroha and Waiorongomai football teams in the 1880s.⁴⁹⁵ The first mention of a Waiorongomai team was in October 1884, when it played Quartzville.⁴⁹⁶ When re-formed in 1889, a meeting agreed to halve the entrance fee of five shillings and to procure uniforms.⁴⁹⁷ Scratch matches were held every Saturday afternoon, such as one of married men versus single men.⁴⁹⁸ The

⁴⁸⁶ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 28 February 1884, p. 3; *Te Aroha News*, 23 February 1884, p. 2.

⁴⁸⁷ *Te Aroha News*, 29 November 1884, p. 2.

⁴⁸⁸ *Waikato Times*, 10 October 1888, p. 2.

⁴⁸⁹ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Thames Advertiser*, 26 September 1888, p. 2; *Te Aroha News*, 3 October 1888, p. 2, 10 October 1888, pp. 2, 7, 24 October 1888, p. 2, 28 November 1888, p. 2, Waiorongomai Correspondent, 11 March 1909, p. 2.

⁴⁹⁰ *Te Aroha News*, 10 October 1888, p. 7.

⁴⁹¹ *Te Aroha News*, 30 January 1889, p. 2.

⁴⁹² *Te Aroha News*, 20 November 1889, p. 2, 23 November 1889, p. 2.

⁴⁹³ See *Auckland Weekly News*, 3 September 1903, p. 34; *Te Aroha News*, 3 November 1908, p. 2.

⁴⁹⁴ *Te Aroha News*, 30 November 1909, p. 2.

⁴⁹⁵ Recollections of Agnes Jeffrey, *Te Aroha News*, 10 February 1948, p. 5.

⁴⁹⁶ *Te Aroha News*, 4 October 1884, p. 2.

⁴⁹⁷ *Te Aroha News*, 30 March 1889, p. 2; *Waikato Times*, 16 April 1889, p. 2.

⁴⁹⁸ Waiorongomai Correspondent, *Te Aroha News*, 27 March 1889, p. 2.

first match of that season, against Te Aroha, was held on ‘the old playing ground, generally known as the racecourse’, at Ruakaka:

The greatest interest was evinced in the match, and some time prior to play commencing, large numbers might be seen wending their way to the ground on foot, horseback, and in vehicles, and the merits and demerits of the players were freely discussed. A temperance booth was erected on the ground and did a good business trade in the afternoon.

This ‘well contested’ game was won by Waiorongomai, which ‘undoubtedly’ had ‘the advantage both as regards weight and previous practice. One very pleasing feature that was observable throughout was the good humour which prevailed, notwithstanding the rough handling both sides received’.⁴⁹⁹ The united clubs held an entertainment and dance at Te Aroha to raise funds to improve the Ruakaka football field.⁵⁰⁰ In May, they played Paeroa at Waiorongomai in a game which was ‘well conducted’ at first, but after the local men won two tries ‘bullocking was freely indulged in by both sides’, the Waiorongomai captain playing ‘in a brilliant manner’ despite one rib being broken. The team won two-nil, and ‘although the play at times was rather rough the utmost good humour prevailed throughout’.⁵⁰¹

Such contests were big social events. Before this game, for instance, the visitors were ‘heartily cheered’ by a ‘large crowd’, and ‘many of the fair sex’ watched the game.⁵⁰² Afterwards the players were given ‘a most substantial’ dinner at the Waiorongomai Hotel by the local teams, and ‘a very pleasant social evening followed’, with ten men contributing songs, recitations, and a sailor’s hornpipe.⁵⁰³ The combined team again defeated Paeroa, at the latter, in the following month, afterwards being entertained at a dinner and dance.⁵⁰⁴ In a return match against Katikati in July, the Waiorongomai team won easily despite the poor conditions of its ground, which was ‘very wet, water lying in the hollows all over the ground, which

⁴⁹⁹ *Te Aroha News*, 17 April 1889, p. 2.

⁵⁰⁰ *Te Aroha News*, 30 March 1889, p. 2, 10 April 1889, p. 2.

⁵⁰¹ Waiorongomai Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 14 May 1889, p. 2; *Te Aroha News*, 15 May 1889, p. 2.

⁵⁰² Waiorongomai Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 14 May 1889, p. 2.

⁵⁰³ *Te Aroha News*, 15 May 1889, p. 2.

⁵⁰⁴ *Te Aroha News*, 29 May 1889, p. 2.

did not tend to add to the comfort of the players who got rolled about in it, and also made the ball unpleasantly slippery'. Afterwards the teams dined at the Waiorongomai Hotel 'and spent a pleasant evening together; several toasts being given, and songs were rendered'.⁵⁰⁵ After Waiorongomai defeated Quartzville at the end of August, both teams adjourned to a boarding house for a meal, speeches, songs, and a dance.⁵⁰⁶ 'Being a purely local affair much interest' was shown.⁵⁰⁷ The last time the players were mentioned that year was in September, when they combined with Te Aroha to defeat Huntly.⁵⁰⁸ Football matches continued during the 1890s, one in 1896 appalling a Paeroa clergyman because it was 'played at Waiorongomai on a Sunday afternoon. He was gratified to know that the Paeroa boys, at least, did not play on Sundays'.⁵⁰⁹

In April 1884, Louis Kalman convened a meeting to form a Waiorongomai Athletic Club.⁵¹⁰ The following month, he asked for the use of the old schoolroom as a gymnasium,⁵¹¹ but there is no record of his being granted permission or of one being started. On New Year's Day 1885 the Band of Hope and the schoolchildren 'passed a very enjoyable time' at a farmer's paddock with 'an abundance of good things to gratify the youthful appetite and everybody present. Athletic sports ... were witnessed by a goodly muster of people'. Over £20 in prizes 'excited keen competition. Foot racing formed the chief part of the sports'.⁵¹² Footraces were held on the government reserve in September 1888.⁵¹³ People from Te Aroha and elsewhere attended athletic sports on this reserve later that month, but the 200 spectators found proceedings 'slow' because entries were accepted on the ground; for this reason the *Te Aroha News* felt that the band should have played.⁵¹⁴ A correspondent devoted most of his report to the following incident:

⁵⁰⁵ *Te Aroha News*, 10 July 1889, p. 2, 13 July 1889, p. 2.

⁵⁰⁶ *Te Aroha News*, 28 August 1889, p. 2, 4 September 1889, p. 2.

⁵⁰⁷ Waiorongomai Correspondent, *Te Aroha News*, 28 August 1889, p. 2.

⁵⁰⁸ *Te Aroha News*, 11 September 1889, p. 2.

⁵⁰⁹ *Thames Advertiser*, 22 July 1896, p. 2.

⁵¹⁰ *Te Aroha News*, 19 April 1884, p. 2.

⁵¹¹ *Te Aroha News*, 10 May 1884, p. 2.

⁵¹² *Waikato Times*, 6 January 1885, p. 2.

⁵¹³ *Te Aroha News*, 12 September 1888, p. 2.

⁵¹⁴ *Te Aroha News*, 26 September 1888, p. 2.

An item (not in the programme) somewhat marred the general enjoyment and should be disallowed at future sports, especially when there are ladies with their best headgear on, gentlemen with bell toppers, hardknockers, or soft treads. This was a football which was being kicked all over the ground, and every now and again came thud on some poor unfortunate's cranium, and before "knife" could be said, much less used, the objectionable object was chased off only to be returned again.⁵¹⁵

The only sports day recorded in the 1890s, on New Year's Day 1896, was restricted to local people.⁵¹⁶

Boxing was popular, an 'exhibition of heavy and light weight sparring' being held in 1888. 'Some of the local men were matched with the visitors, causing much amusement to the spectators'.⁵¹⁷ A lightweight boxer who settled at Waiorongomai had 'a number of pupils', whose contest was 'amongst the attractions' of the athletic sports at the end of September.⁵¹⁸ An informal boxing match occurred in 1896 between 'Happy Jack', who was 'well known in the locality', and a visitor who had 'imbibed freely' before challenging 'Happy Jack' to a 'fifteen-round go'. The visitor 'had the best of the "go" as far as science went, but unfortunately fell on the horse-post' outside the hotel 'and dislocated his shoulder. At the close of the fight "Happy" presented a most dreadful spectacle, his face being covered in blood'.⁵¹⁹

Every evening in summer at the end of the 1880s quoits matches were played on the 'excellent ground' beside the Premier Hotel.⁵²⁰ In April 1898 residents were reported to be looking forward to the opening of the season for shooting native pigeon.⁵²¹ Horse racing was also popular, but normally enthusiasts participated in Te Aroha events. The only mention of a local race was one held on a farmer's paddock during the Christmas holidays of 1885.⁵²²

⁵¹⁵ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Thames Advertiser*, 26 September 1888, p. 2.

⁵¹⁶ *Te Aroha News*, 18 December 1895, p. 2.

⁵¹⁷ *Te Aroha News*, 25 August 1888, p. 2, 29 August 1888, p. 2.

⁵¹⁸ *Te Aroha News*, 12 September 1888, p. 2.

⁵¹⁹ *Te Aroha News*, n.d., cited in *Thames Advertiser*, 22 July 1896, p. 2.

⁵²⁰ *Waikato Times*, Waiorongomai Correspondent, 29 January 1889, p. 2, 12 February 1889, p. 2.

⁵²¹ Waiorongomai Correspondent, *Te Aroha News*, 7 April 1898, p. 2.

⁵²² For instance, *Te Aroha News*, 31 October 1885, p. 2.

ENTERTAINMENT

An early resident recalled that 'there was little in the way of entertainment, everybody having to make their own. Dances, concerts and socials were the main forms of entertainment, and occasionally they visited Te Aroha to see something outstanding, such as circuses'.⁵²³ As an example of homegrown entertainment, at the opening of the school in 1883 Margaret Lawless, wife of Thomas, the publican, played 'several choice selections on the pianoforte'. In the evening she played for a dance that attracted about 20 dancing couples and many onlookers and lasted till midnight. It was 'the first social gathering of the kind that has taken place in Waiorongomai, and seemed to be greatly enjoyed, especially by the ladies'.⁵²⁴ The *Observer* Man agreed the dance was 'a thorough success. At eight o'clock the room was full, and dancing was kept up till the small hours'.⁵²⁵ Immediately afterwards, a Quadrille Assembly was formed,⁵²⁶ which organized weekly dances.⁵²⁷

In August 1884 the schoolroom was used for a concert and dance to raise money to clear the school ground and erect swings and make other improvements.⁵²⁸ This dance was an exception, for the school committee allowed it to be used only 'for certain purposes, dancing being strictly forbidden'; therefore in that month it was decided to erect a public hall.⁵²⁹ A library and reading room would be provided in the future, the *Te Aroha News* commenting that it knew of no township 'where such a worthy institution is more needed, for there is at present but little amusement or recreation to be found there, other than that affected by the billiard rooms except on special occasions, and miners coming down from the Hill on Saturdays have no place to go but the public house'.⁵³⁰ The promoters stated that as the hall's purpose was 'the social, moral, and intellectual good of the people of this town and district', it would be 'open for all kinds of amusements, social gatherings, and also as a place of public worship for all

⁵²³ Recollections of Agnes Jeffrey, *Te Aroha News*, 10 February 1948, p. 5.

⁵²⁴ *Te Aroha News*, 4 August 1883, p. 2.

⁵²⁵ See Warden's Court, *Te Aroha News*, 24 November 1883, p. 3.

⁵²⁶ *Te Aroha News*, 11 August 1883, p. 2.

⁵²⁷ 'Waiorongomai', *Observer*, 1 September 1883, p. 12.

⁵²⁸ Advertisement, *Te Aroha News*, 16 August 1884, p. 7.

⁵²⁹ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 9 August 1884, p. 3.

⁵³⁰ Editorial, *Te Aroha News*, 9 August 1884, p. 2.

denominations'.⁵³¹ The *Te Aroha News* anticipated that within its walls 'no doubt many important matters will be discussed, and weighty decisions arrived at. Who knows but some great leader of the people may there first ventilate his ideas and keep an audience spell-bound by his eloquence'.⁵³² The Waiorongomai Public Hall Company wanted to raise £250 by selling £1 shares and would raise £300 if required; the *Te Aroha News* considered that £500 would be needed to construct a good building.⁵³³ Nearly all the 34 shareholders were residents of Waiorongomai or nearby.⁵³⁴ The directors comprised a mine manager, the battery manager, a farmer, a coach proprietor, and a miner.⁵³⁵ The hall was erected 'about midway on the right side of the street leading to the battery', and was 62 feet by 30, with a 16-foot stud, two anterooms adjacent to the stage, and the interior was match-lined.⁵³⁶ It was described as 'high, substantial, and neat'.⁵³⁷

Firth laid the 'foundation stone (or rather block)' in late September.⁵³⁸ 'A substantial platform was erected for the occasion, and tastefully decorated with flags, ferns and flowers, etc. At the back of the platform was a banner bearing the device of the miners' pick and shovel and the words "Success Attend Our Efforts" '. After some of the schoolchildren sang 'Scatter Seeds of Kindness', Firth praised the colonists and their Mother Country and said miners would use the hall to read newspapers, play chess, and discuss the events of the day. He was pleased the public-spirited residents were building the hall themselves, for 'the common plan now-a-days' was 'to ask the Government for everything', an interesting comment considering Firth's record at Waiorongomai. Then, after placing some rich pieces of quartz underneath, he laid the block.⁵³⁹

The company erected what was officially the Werahiko Hall but usually was referred to as the public hall for about £330, including seating.⁵⁴⁰ A small mortgage covered this amount.⁵⁴¹ The opening was

⁵³¹ *Te Aroha News*, 15 November 1884, p. 2.

⁵³² *Te Aroha News*, 15 November 1884, p. 2.

⁵³³ *Te Aroha News*, 9 August 1884, p. 2, including editorial.

⁵³⁴ *Te Aroha News*, 15 November 1884, p. 2.

⁵³⁵ *Te Aroha News*, 9 August 1884, p. 2.

⁵³⁶ *Te Aroha News*, 4 October 1884, p. 2.

⁵³⁷ *New Zealand Methodist*, 17 November 1888, p. 4.

⁵³⁸ *Te Aroha News*, 27 September 1884, p. 7.

⁵³⁹ *Te Aroha News*, 4 October 1884, p. 2.

⁵⁴⁰ *Waikato Times*, 11 November 1884, p. 2.

celebrated in November on a public holiday, the Prince of Wales' birthday, with 'variety enough to suit all tastes'.⁵⁴² The programme promised 'Public Soiree 6 p.m., Grand Concert 8 p.m., Minstrel Performance 9.30 p.m., Ball to Open 11 p.m.'; the 'assistance of nearly all the principal lady vocalists in the district has been procured'.⁵⁴³ It was a great success, the *Te Aroha News* providing details of the decorations, feasting, and entertainment:

The front part of the building was gaily decorated with evergreens, and a large flag floated from the roof. Inside, both walls were covered from floor to roof with ferns, flowers, evergreens, and flags, most tastefully arranged. Immediately over the door a large scroll was stretched bearing the words in large gold letters on a black ground, "United we stand, divided we fall," surmounting this were the Royal Arms. At the upper end of the building, immediately over the platform was the motto, "God bless the Prince of Wales," and a Prince of Wales plume, underneath which was the Union Jack, whilst lower down still was the very appropriate device worked in black and gold letters on a red ground "Welcome among us." The platform, or stage, was also very nicely arranged; vases of handsome flowers adding to the pleasant effect. Tea commenced at six o'clock, and was served on three large tables extending the full length of the room. These tables were arranged in first-class style, beautifully decorated with flowers, and covered with an abundance of good things. In addition to the more solid edibles, cakes, tarts, and pastry of every conceivable kind abounded, and in addition fruits of various kinds, such as strawberries, pineapples, oranges, apples, etc, were also provided. The whole get up reflected the greatest credit on ... the caterer.

Thirteen women 'presided at the tea-tables'. The locals who provided the subsequent concert 'all fulfilled their parts well'. After the company's secretary reported on its achievements, an hour of Christey Minstrel entertainment was given. 'Dancing commenced about 12 o'clock, and was kept up with spirit till the small hours'. It was estimated about 270 people attended.⁵⁴⁴

⁵⁴¹ *Te Aroha News*, 28 August 1889, p. 2.

⁵⁴² *Waikato Times*, 11 November 1884, p. 2.

⁵⁴³ *Te Aroha News*, 8 November 1884, p. 7; *Te Aroha Correspondent*, *Waikato Times*, 11 November 1884, p. 2.

⁵⁴⁴ *Te Aroha News*, 15 November 1884, p. 2.

This was an example of a special occasion producing an especially elaborate event. Even more special was Queen Victoria's Jubilee in May 1887, celebrated by a fancy dress ball.⁵⁴⁵ This ball, 'so long looked forward to, and so much talked of', was 'an immediate success', about 120 attending; two crowded coaches provided free transport from Te Aroha.⁵⁴⁶

Waiorongomai residents naturally felt proud of having taken the lead in this direction, it being the first fancy dress ball that has been held in the district. Active preparations for the event have been in progress for a number of weeks past, the result being that the arrangements in connection therewith were of a most perfect character, and reflected great credit on the indefatigable committee of management.... The Hall was most tastefully decorated with flags and evergreens, etc ... a number of Chinese lanterns, of all sizes and designs, adding greatly to the effect. Some dozen or more mottos were hung around the hall, such as, for example, the following:

"In grand array,
Happy and gay,
We're here,
The 23rd of May."

"Rule Britannia," "Erin go Bragh," etc., whilst across the full breadth of the stage was stretched a banner bearing the inscription in large capitals, "Welcome." Dancing commenced at 8.30, was kept up with much spirit till 6 a.m., the floor being in splendid order.

Two men played piccolo, cornet, and piano for the dancing, and during the evening several songs were sung and two men danced a hornpipe.

A general suspension of dancing took place shortly before midnight, for supper, and at twelve o'clock an immense rich cake, beautifully iced, and termed the Queen's Cake, was cut, when the whole company stood up and ushered in the Queen's Birthday by singing in real hearty style the National Anthem, thus demonstrating the loyalty, love and respect with which Her Majesty is regarded by her subjects at Waiorongomai. The supper was provided on a most liberal scale, and included in addition to the more substantial viands, jellies, blanchemanges, pastry, fruit, etc, of all description, tea, coffee, and lemonade, being on hand,

⁵⁴⁵ *Te Aroha News*, 23 April 1887, p. 3.

⁵⁴⁶ *Te Aroha News*, 21 May 1887, p. 2, 28 May 1887, p. 2.

all night through.... We have no intention of entering an opinion as to who was the belle of the ball, but will leave the ladies to decide that (probably much-vexed question) for themselves. As may be imagined the hall presented an exceedingly gay appearance on the occasion; and many of the dresses and costumes displayed very great taste and fertility of resource on the part of those by whom selected, and no doubt deserve special mention, but as in the case of the belle it is a thankless office to make distinctions.

Apart from the 29 women wearing evening dress, the following costumes were noted: Vivandiere, Ivy, Spanish Lady, Night, Dolly Vardon, Pink, Swiss Peasant Girl, Colleen Bown, Florence Nightingale, Twilight, Erin (worn by Mrs Scott), Normandy Peasant, Italian Lady, Bridesmaid, Housemaid, French Peasant Girl, Welsh Lady, Girl of the Period, Mama, Lady Langlish, Winter, Flower Girl, Robin Redbreast, Normandy Peasant Girl, and Red Riding Hood. At least 23 men wore evening dress, and the male costumes listed were Frederick (from *The Pirates of Penzance*, by Gilbert and Sullivan), Italian Brigand, Charles 1 Noble, Sergeant of Rifle Rangers, Cavalry Bandsman, Sergeant-Major of 92nd., Tambor Major, A Man-of-Warsman (two of these), Scottish, McTavish, 'jockey (white and pink)', Staff Sergeant TSB, Footballer, Oddfellow (NG), Bandsman, Baker, Village Blacksmith, Bandmaster, Scottish Gentleman, Country Squire, Cricketer, two jockeys, Naval Volunteer, and Morning Glory.⁵⁴⁷

This ball prompted a Te Aroha carpenter and occasional poet, John Cornes,⁵⁴⁸ to produce a poem entitled 'Waiorongomai Fancy Dress Ball':

In the neat little township of Waiorongomai,
Nestling under Te Aroha mountain so high;
Its name denotes Love, which the folks don't forget,
More sociable people I never have met;
For their mutual enjoyment they did all agree
To dance in the birth of the Queen's Jubilee;
'Twas well decorated, their fine public hall,
And a picture to see, that Fancy Dress Ball.

The ladies look handsome (but which was the belle,
With such fantastic costumes it was hard to tell).

⁵⁴⁷ *Te Aroha News*, 28 May 1887, p. 2.

⁵⁴⁸ See *Te Aroha News*, 18 October 1884, p. 7, 11 April 1885, p. 7, 6 February 1886, p. 2, 27 February 1886, p. 2, 16 October 1886, p. 2, 12 March 1887, p. 2; *New Zealand Herald*, 18 February 1926, p. 10.

'Twas a very crammed muster of elegance and grace,
 While mirth and good humour reigned supreme in the place.
 There were represented all countries and climes,
 Nurses, and Bridesmaids dressed up to the nines,
 With summer, and winter with snowflakes so small;
 Also autumn and spring at the Fancy Dress Ball.

And the gents from the fair ones were not far behind,
 With regalias and uniforms how they did shine.
 A blacksmith in apron, and a baker in cap,
 With soldiers and sailors going round in their track;
 A Lord High Chancellor, and also Tam-O'Shanter;
 Also butchers and jockeys all going at canter,
 Pirates and brigands, Dick Turpin and all,
 And a man without pants⁵⁴⁹ at the Fancy Dress Ball.

'Twas kept up with the year till daybreak next morn,
 The anniversary day, Queen Victoria was born;
 Could Her Majesty have seen them 'twould gladden her heart,
 Those people so loyal in this distant part.
 'Twas the greatest success that has been in the place,
 And a credit to any Colonial race;
 And if you want enjoyment just give them a call,
 When next they get up such a Fancy Dress Ball.⁵⁵⁰

Many had to stand throughout such entertainments, for the hall needed more seats.⁵⁵¹ After being wrecked in a storm in 1893, it was not replaced and social events reverted to the schoolroom.⁵⁵²

Both hall and schoolroom were used for improving activities organized by the respectable. In April 1884 the head teacher convened a meeting attended by either 22 or 24 people, 17 of whom enrolled in what was either the Mutual Improvement and Parliamentary Debating Society or the Debating Class and Improvement Society. A committee comprising two teachers was elected, an entrance fee of one shilling and a quarterly subscription of another shilling was set, and the public was invited to its

⁵⁴⁹ But wearing a kilt.

⁵⁵⁰ *Te Aroha News*, 4 June 1887, p. 2.

⁵⁵¹ *Te Aroha News*, 25 May 1889, p. 2.

⁵⁵² *Waikato Times*, 25 February 1893, p. 3, 2 March 1893, p. 2; *Te Aroha News*, 18 May 1895, p. 2, 19 June 1895, p. 2.

first debate, ‘Whether Oliver Cromwell is worthy of admiration’.⁵⁵³ A ‘large number’ attended; the next debate asked ‘Is the mental capacity of the sexes equal’, and at the following meeting there was an impromptu debate.⁵⁵⁴ Although there were no further reports of debates, they may have continued for some time.

The next example of moral uplift was reported in May 1888, when informal meeting over several weeks discussed ‘the best means of providing recreation and amusement of a desirable character, more especially for the young folks, during the winter months. It was decided to establish a library and reading-room’, and a shopkeeper ‘most generously offered free of charge the use of two front rooms in his store’. A committee sought subscriptions.⁵⁵⁵ The library was not established before this store was sold, to William Samuel Collins,⁵⁵⁶ in September.⁵⁵⁷ Collins had revealed an interest in literature earlier: when a tea merchant in Auckland, he gave away ‘good’ books with every three pounds of tea sold.⁵⁵⁸ Early in 1889 he agreed to the request by a clergyman, a member of the Te Aroha library committee, to hold books at his store for its subscribers, and residents he spoke to ‘appeared pleased at the proposed arrangement and inclined to join’.⁵⁵⁹ Within a month it was replaced by having a catalogue of library books available at his store.⁵⁶⁰ As Collins had to assign his estate to his creditors late that year,⁵⁶¹ this initiative ended. A local correspondent hoped a public library would be established,⁵⁶² but this was not to be.

Improving lectures were occasionally provided by visitors; in 1889, for instance, ‘An Evening with Robert Emmett, the Irish Patriot and Martyr of 1803’, was enlivened with Irish ballads.⁵⁶³ The following year an Auckland clergyman obtained a ‘good house’ in Te Aroha for his lecture ‘Lights and

⁵⁵³ *Te Aroha News*, 19 April 1884, p. 2, 26 April 1884, p. 2; *Thames Advertiser*, 28 April 1884, p. 2.

⁵⁵⁴ *Te Aroha News*, 24 May 1884, p. 7, 21 June 1884, p. 2.

⁵⁵⁵ *Te Aroha News*, 12 May 1888, p. 2.

⁵⁵⁶ See *New Zealand Herald*, 27 December 1915, p. 9.

⁵⁵⁷ *Te Aroha News*, 22 September 1888, p. 2.

⁵⁵⁸ *Observer*, 8 December 1883, p 15.

⁵⁵⁹ *Te Aroha News*, 16 February 1889, p. 2.

⁵⁶⁰ *Te Aroha News*, 20 March 1889, p. 7.

⁵⁶¹ *Thames Star*, 30 November 1889, p. 2, 3 December 1889, p. 2.

⁵⁶² Waiorongomai Correspondent, *Te Aroha News*, 11 May 1889, p. 2.

⁵⁶³ *Te Aroha News*, 19 January 1889, p. 2.

Shadows of London Life' but only a 'very fair attendance' at Waiorongomai for 'A Man's a Man for A' That'.⁵⁶⁴

Another example of social interaction and moral uplift was the Band of Hope, formed in Waiorongomai in 1883. According to its secretary, it was 'a grand success', despite 'much opposition' from 'members of the community who were financially affected by the spread of Temperance'.⁵⁶⁵ These temperance meetings were believed to be changing lives,⁵⁶⁶ as a correspondent reported in July 1884. 'A large and enthusiastic gathering of temperance people, old and young, in the school room', spent 'a most pleasant evening'. A 'large number of friends from Te Aroha' helped to create a 'genuine success'.⁵⁶⁷ An 'energetic committee of young men' had attracted 'a very large attendance, the room being crowded in every part'.

A long and varied programme of suitable pieces, consisting of readings, recitations, songs, instrumental solos, &c, was gone through in very creditable style. In fact, it is a matter of surprise that in so small a place as Waiorongomai so varied a programme of pieces so appropriate to the occasion could be got up. The evening being fine, a number of friends walked out from Te Aroha, some of them taking part in the meeting.⁵⁶⁸

Similar meetings were held every month. In June the following year, for instance, the Band of Hope arranged a 'Fruit Soiree' and entertainment, primarily for children.⁵⁶⁹

As an example of entertainment deemed suitable for children, in 1889 the Sunday School celebrated its anniversary with a soiree lasting for an hour and a half, followed by a concert featuring 'a large choir'. Those attending were assured of 'a very pleasant evening', the 'lengthy and attractive' programme including 'addresses, songs, musical selections, reading, recitations, etc, etc'.⁵⁷⁰ The details provide an example of this type of respectable entertainment that attracted 'a full house':

⁵⁶⁴ *Te Aroha News*, 12 February 1890, p. 2.

⁵⁶⁵ Waiorongomai Band of Hope, Minute Book 1883-1889, Secretary's Report to Meeting of 5 June 1884, 3050/916, Methodist Archives, Auckland.

⁵⁶⁶ See chapter on temperance.

⁵⁶⁷ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Te Aroha News*, 15 July 1884, p. 4.

⁵⁶⁸ Waiorongomai Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 19 July 1884, p. 21.

⁵⁶⁹ Advertisement, *Te Aroha News*, 20 June 1885, p. 7.

⁵⁷⁰ *Te Aroha News*, 16 February 1889, p. 2, 9 March 1889, p. 2.

The weather was fine, and the attendance on the occasion very large, in fact the Hall was crowded; friends from the surrounding districts were putting in an appearance in goodly numbers. The Hall was decorated for the occasion with banners, etc, etc, such mottos as "Love One Another;" "God Bless Our Labours;" "Suffer the Little Children," etc, being conspicuous; whilst the light from a large number of Chinese lanterns (kindly lent by Mr Smith) suspended at intervals around the Hall, and surrounded by ferns, etc., had a very pleasing effect. There were four large tables laid out in the Hall, each well laden with the most varied and abundant supply of good things of every conceivable description.... About 120 children, besides adults, sat down to tea, and lost no time in getting "to work" in real earnest. Full justice having been done to the tea, etc, the Hall was cleared for the concert, which commenced about eight o'clock.

After the choir sang 'There's a work for each', the chairman made 'a few remarks appropriate to the occasion', after which the work of the Sunday School during the year was outlined.

The programme was then proceeded with as follows:- Song, "Angels Ever Bright and Fair," Mrs Darby; pianoforte solo, "The Maiden's Prayer," Mrs Lloyd; selection, "We Have Sat at the Golden Gate," Choir; song, "The Garden of Sleep," Miss Mulgan; recitation, "The Bee," Master Joe Benney; song, "The Miller and the Maid," Miss Wainwright; address, Rev. J. Marshall (who spoke of the great importance of properly educating the young, and deplored the fact that religious teaching was totally forbidden in our public schools, etc.); song, "The Land Where I Was Born," Mr Taylor; pianoforte solo, Mrs Collins; selection, "One Day Nearer Home," Choir; pianoforte duet, Miss Wainwright and Mrs Lovell; song, "Never More," Miss V. Pavitt; reading, "Tit for Tat," Mr Elliot; song, "Teddy and I," Miss Mulgan (with violin accompaniment by Mr Smales); song, "The Powder Monkey," Mr V.F. Hunt; song, "The Old Brigade," Mr McLiver; song, "Within a Mile of Edinburgh Town," Miss Wainwright; song, "Don't Go, Molly," Miss V. Pavitt; song, "Some Day I'll Wander Back Again," Mr McLiver. Several of the pieces were encored, Miss Wainwright's singing being particularly good; and all who took part acquitted themselves well. During the course of the evening the Chairman delivered an excellent practical address, and appealed for helpers in the school work.... The proceedings were brought to a conclusion by singing the National Anthem; all present appearing to have thoroughly enjoyed themselves.⁵⁷¹

⁵⁷¹ *Te Aroha News*, 20 March 1889, pp. 2, 7.

Every year the Sunday School anniversary was celebrated with special services featuring ‘appropriate addresses’ and an entertainment for both children and adults.⁵⁷²

At the end of every year the school had a ‘feast’. The picnic in 1894, for instance, was held in ‘perfect’ weather, enabling ‘children and parents from some distance around to be present. Every preparation had been made by the committee and their lady friends for the enjoyment of the children and never were efforts more successful than on this occasion’. There were 25 races, ‘for which £4 10s in prize-money was distributed, every event being keenly contested’. As well, ‘games of all kinds were started, so that all could enjoy themselves’. As more money had been raised than was needed for this event, the balance went to purchase books for the school library. Although this occasion occurred when Waiorongomai was going through ‘a period of deep depression’, a local correspondent considered that the residents showed ‘a spirit of kindness and unanimity that might well be copied by some of the neighbouring townships’.⁵⁷³

Usually only local performers contributed; for instance, in December 1884 a concert ‘passed off very quietly, only the local talent were brought into requisition. The attendance was not large’.⁵⁷⁴ One year later, the hall was ‘comfortably filled’ when the Band of Hope held a ‘Grand Soiree, Concert, and Dance’ at which ‘nearly all of our leading musicians, vocal and instrumental’, assisted; ‘with such an array of talent the affair could not fail to prove a success musically’.⁵⁷⁵

Few visiting entertainers performed at Waiorongomai as well as Te Aroha. In August 1885, after the ‘Wonders of the World’ panorama attracted a good attendance at the latter, it was displayed in the Waiorongomai hall.⁵⁷⁶ The following April, ‘Professor’ Hugo advertised that he would ‘deliver one of his Amusing and Popular Lectures on Physiognomy at the above Hall *this evening*. The subject will be illustrated by paintings and Drawings, and at the close Mr Hugo will be in attendance to supply applicants with charts’.⁵⁷⁷ The Thames Snowflake Minstrels obtained a

⁵⁷² For example, Te Aroha Correspondent, *New Zealand Herald*, 2 May 1894, p. 6.

⁵⁷³ Waiorongomai Correspondent, *New Zealand Herald*, 24 December 1894, p. 6.

⁵⁷⁴ *Te Aroha News*, 13 December 1884, p. 2.

⁵⁷⁵ *Te Aroha News*, advertisement, 12 December 1885, p. 7, 19 December 1885, p. 2.

⁵⁷⁶ *Te Aroha News*, 8 August 1885, p. 2.

⁵⁷⁷ Advertisement, *Te Aroha News*, 17 April 1886, p. 7.

'bumper house' in June 1888.⁵⁷⁸ Later that year, 'MAX RINKLE, POLYPHONIC WONDER, Mongolian and Humourist', performed his 'Grand Polytechnic Display' of songs, dances, and 'comicalities' for the Band of Hope and organ funds.⁵⁷⁹ Rinkle performed three times, assisted by some residents; his show was 'much appreciated, although not largely attended' because of a counter-attraction combined with bad weather.⁵⁸⁰ The Tourist Minstrels from Thames included Waiorongomai in their 1889 tour, obtaining a crowded house compared with the small audience at Te Aroha.⁵⁸¹ Freda's Troubadours, who also performed at both settlements, featured a 'Masher Queen and Baby Impersonator', and its programme was professedly 'New, Sparkling, and Refined'.⁵⁸² Bad weather meant a small attendance at the first performances, but the final night featured an entirely new programme, including 'a leap for life through a fire balloon', which attracted a crowded and 'greatly pleased' audience.⁵⁸³ Devere and Moore, minstrels, performed at both settlements,⁵⁸⁴ as did the Payne Family of musicians, from Ballarat. They had toured Australasia for the past three years, and as they had been popular throughout New Zealand patrons were assured of 'a musical treat'.⁵⁸⁵ Late in the year, 'Mdle Minnie' assisted a ventriloquist and mimic at both settlements in performing 'Begone Dull Care' and 'The Magic Statue', attracting large attendances.⁵⁸⁶

One type of entertainment provided by both local and visiting performers would later be seen as inappropriate. A troupe of local amateurs, 'Keep It Dark Minstrels', held an entertainment and ball in 1884.⁵⁸⁷ During the concert to celebrate the opening of the hall, the Christey Minstrels 'were got up in A1 nigger costumes, and caused considerable amusement with their jokes, etc'.⁵⁸⁸ In July 1887 the Waiorongomai Jubilee Minstrels

⁵⁷⁸ *Te Aroha News*, 13 June 1888, p. 2, 20 June 1888, p. 2.

⁵⁷⁹ Advertisement, *Te Aroha News*, 17 October 1888, p. 2.

⁵⁸⁰ *Te Aroha News*, 24 October 1888, p. 2.

⁵⁸¹ *Te Aroha News*, 14 May 1889, p. 2, 22 May 1889, p. 2.

⁵⁸² *Te Aroha News*, 29 May 1889, p. 2, advertisement, p. 7.

⁵⁸³ *Te Aroha News*, 1 June 1889, p. 2, 5 June 1889, p. 2.

⁵⁸⁴ *Te Aroha News*, 7 August 1889, p. 7.

⁵⁸⁵ *Te Aroha News*, 10 August 1889, p. 2.

⁵⁸⁶ *Te Aroha News*, advertisement, 13 November 1889, p. 7, 23 November 1889, p. 2, 27 November 1889, p. 2.

⁵⁸⁷ *Te Aroha News*, advertisement, 20 September 1884, p. 2, 4 October 1884, p. 2.

⁵⁸⁸ *Te Aroha News*, 15 November 1884, p. 2.

provided a minstrel and variety entertainment followed by a 'Big Shoe Dance' and 'the laughable Farce, Ebenezer's Visit to New York'.⁵⁸⁹ The latter, repeated at a fund-raising concert for the church organ in 1889, had 'a coloured gentleman of Congress' as a main character.⁵⁹⁰ The 'Niggers' performed at a benefit concert for an injured miner in September 1887.⁵⁹¹ Other minstrel shows performed by visitors probably included the same stereotypes, although 'minstrel' in some cases may have simply referred to singing.

One consistent reason for holding entertainments was fund-raising. For instance, in January 1885 residents were invited to join an excursion picnic to raise money for the Te Aroha band. A river steamer left Waiorongomai at 9 o'clock in the morning and Te Aroha one hour later for the 'Peach Grove at the Willows', returning to Waiorongomai at 9.30 at night. Patrons were promised races, games, selections played by the band, and a moonlight concert on the return trip.⁵⁹² About 150 people from both settlements attended.⁵⁹³ The school committee cleared, grassed, fenced, and planted 200 pine trees in the school grounds during 1886, necessitating two concerts and dances.⁵⁹⁴ Potential patrons to the second one were assured of 'a most attractive Programme'.⁵⁹⁵ The following year, the crowded benefit concert for Edwin Hadfield, crippled by an accident in the New Find mine,⁵⁹⁶ included another performance by the 'Niggers' followed by a dance lasting nearly until dawn.⁵⁹⁷ A concert on a Wednesday evening to raise funds for the Church of England was largely attended, the long programme, extended by encores, not concluding until 10.30 p.m., after which there was dancing for several hours.⁵⁹⁸ In June 1890 a 'Grand Musical and Literary Entertainment' raised money for the Wesleyan Church.⁵⁹⁹ In 1892, a concert and dance was held to raise money to rebuild a settler's house that

⁵⁸⁹ *Te Aroha News*, 2 July 1887, pp. 2, 3.

⁵⁹⁰ Advertisement, *Te Aroha News*, 18 May 1889, p. 7.

⁵⁹¹ *Te Aroha News*, 17 September 1887, p. 2.

⁵⁹² *Te Aroha News*, 24 January 1885, p. 7.

⁵⁹³ *Te Aroha News*, 31 January 1885, p. 2.

⁵⁹⁴ *Te Aroha News*, 3 July 1886, p. 2, 24 July 1886, p. 2, 18 December 1886, p. 3.

⁵⁹⁵ *Te Aroha News*, 18 December 1886, p. 3.

⁵⁹⁶ See paper on this mine.

⁵⁹⁷ *Te Aroha News*, 17 September 1887, p. 2.

⁵⁹⁸ *Te Aroha News*, 12 November 1887, p. 2.

⁵⁹⁹ *Te Aroha News*, 31 May 1890, p. 7.

had been blown down. 'Every seat in the hall was occupied, and all seemed determined to enjoy themselves as much as possible'. There was singing, instrumental pieces provided by violins, cello, and piano, comic songs, two 'tableaux', and some schoolchildren performed 'a dialogue and a part song', after which dancers 'enjoyed themselves to their heart's content'.⁶⁰⁰

Dances, a feature of almost all social occasions, required considerable stamina. For instance, when the bachelors gave a social and dance in August 1885, dancing lasting till 2 a.m.⁶⁰¹ Miners from Waiorongomai and Quartzville who organized a miners' ball in October were 'certainly to be congratulated on the very efficient manner in which they discharged their duties, the Ball being voted an unqualified success in every way'. About 50 couples attended, many coming from Te Aroha in specially chartered coaches. 'Dancing, which commenced about half past eight, was kept up with spirit until about 5 a.m.; there were thirty three dances in all'.⁶⁰² In the following May, 20 couples attending the Waiorongomai Ball: 'Dancing was kept up with spirit until the wee sma' hours', which must have exhausted the two musicians, one playing a piccolo and the other a violin.⁶⁰³ In August, a free coach from Te Aroha was provided for the annual Bachelors' Ball and Supper.⁶⁰⁴ Those attending were greeted by the word 'Welcome' in large gold letters on a black banner over the stage, with underneath 'two hearts closely united, and surrounded by the words "Our Hearty Union" ', below which was a poem 'from the Bachelors':

With greetings to you ladies,
We hail you all to-night,
To join with you both heart and hand
It is our chief delight.⁶⁰⁵

On a Monday night in June 1887, at a combined Jubilee Ball and 'return ball given by the married men to the Bachelors' dancing lasted 'till nearly daybreak'.⁶⁰⁶ A ball organized by a 'committee of ladies' in August

⁶⁰⁰ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 10 September 1892, p. 21.

⁶⁰¹ *Te Aroha News*, 1 August 1885, p. 2.

⁶⁰² *Te Aroha News*, advertisement, 26 September 1885, p. 7, 3 October 1885, p. 2, 10 October 1885, p. 7.

⁶⁰³ *Te Aroha News*, 29 May 1886, p. 2.

⁶⁰⁴ *Te Aroha News*, 31 July 1886, p. 3.

⁶⁰⁵ *Te Aroha News*, 21 August 1886, p. 3.

⁶⁰⁶ *Te Aroha News*, 18 June 1887, p. 2, 25 June 1887, p. 2.

1890 attracted 50 couples who had 24 dances.⁶⁰⁷ In 1891 ‘the usual monthly social’ was ‘a decided success’, 40 couples dancing for four and a half hours before refreshments at 12.30 a.m. and more dancing until three o’clock.⁶⁰⁸ Even a concert in aid of the Sunday School concluding with a dance, giving everyone a ‘great time’.⁶⁰⁹

Miners did not always require partners to dance, the *Te Aroha News* discovered:

Miners indulging in step-dancing to the strains of the fiddle is not a thing of the past, although the miner of to-day is a more matter-of-fact individual than of yore. On Monday afternoon last about a dozen men met at Mr Greenwood’s, the Waiorongomai tobacconist, where dancing was merrily indulged in for some time, the music being supplied by the “boss” of the establishment, on a new and excellent violin just arrived from Auckland.⁶¹⁰

In August 1885 several residents decided to open a roller-skating rink in the hall, and every Saturday night rinking was held until late October.⁶¹¹ In May 1888, a club was formed to arrange this for 13 weeks during winter; members paid ten shillings for the season and had ‘the privilege of introducing ladies free of charge’.⁶¹² It soon attracted ‘large crowds’.⁶¹³ Eighty couples attended a ‘Grand Fancy Dress Carnival’ in September to mark the close of that year’s season. The hall was ‘fairly transposed almost into a forest dell with ferns and evergreen’. The evening commenced with an hour of rinking, most of the skaters being in fancy costumes, some ‘very picturesque and original’. After the grand march, dancing lasted until 3 a.m.⁶¹⁴ In the following year the rink had ‘a good number of members’ who met every Wednesday evening for three hours.⁶¹⁵ A ‘very large attendance of members’ and onlookers attended one such occasion, all having ‘a thorough evening’s enjoyment; many of the gentlemen showing great proficiency in

⁶⁰⁷ ‘Te Aroha’, *Observer*, 30 August 1890, p. 17.

⁶⁰⁸ ‘Waiorongomai’, *Observer*, 26 September 1891, p. 21.

⁶⁰⁹ ‘Te Aroha’, *Observer*, 19 May 1894, p. 21.

⁶¹⁰ *Te Aroha News*, 1 August 1888, p. 2.

⁶¹¹ *Te Aroha News*, 8 August 1885, p. 2, 31 October 1885, p. 2.

⁶¹² *Te Aroha News*, 5 May 1888, p. 2.

⁶¹³ *Te Aroha News*, 16 June 1888, p. 2.

⁶¹⁴ *Te Aroha News*, 8 September 1888, p. 7, 22 September 1888, p. 2.

⁶¹⁵ *Te Aroha News*, 25 May 1889, p. 2.

the art. The graceful skating of many of the ladies was also much admired'.⁶¹⁶ At the end of that season a 'Grand Fancy Dress and Skating Carnival' was held, a five shilling ticket admitting one 'Gent. and Two Ladies'.⁶¹⁷ It was 'a decided success':

Between fifty and sixty couples were present. The Public Hall was very tastefully decorated for the occasion, with flags, ferns, nikau, and bush flowers, while the various coloured lights from a number of Chinese lanterns had a most pretty effect.... The night was fine, and by the hour appointed for opening, viz, eight o'clock, a goodly number had arrived. Skating was commenced forthwith, and kept up until about 9.30 p.m., when the Hall was quickly prepared for dancing. The Grand March was the first item on the programme, and about thirty-eight couples took part therein; the fancy costumes, intermingled with the evening dresses, having a very pleasing effect. Dancing was kept up with spirit until midnight, when supper was handed round, seats being laid down the centre of the Hall for this purpose. After an interval of about an hour, dancing was resumed, and kept up with vigour until about three-thirty a.m.... Altogether those who were present appeared to thoroughly enjoy themselves, and a very pleasant night was spent. Only seven ladies, and about the same number of gentlemen, appeared in fancy dresses, Miss Williams, as "Esmeralda," being voted belle of the evening.⁶¹⁸

Music featured in all entertainments, with varying levels of attainment. For instance, those who attended a 'Service of Song, entitled Uncle Tom' in 1887 heard music 'fairly well rendered'.⁶¹⁹ Concerts could be elaborate: the programme for one in 1889 contained an overture played on the piano, a chorus and two glees sung by the 'company', two violin solos, a 'selected' solo song, a comic song, two more songs, a vocal duet, the piano duet 'Canary Quadrilles', a duet for violin and piano, and a solo for 'clarionet'.⁶²⁰ October 1886 saw the debut of the Waiorongomai Fife and Drum Band, whose entertainment was 'very largely attended, and a great success'.⁶²¹ 'A Resident', who praised the postmaster, who was helping young people to form it, hoped for 'concerts of a healthy tone in lieu of the

⁶¹⁶ Waiorongomai Correspondent, *Te Aroha News*, 29 June 1889, p. 2.

⁶¹⁷ *Te Aroha News*, 28 August 1889, p. 2, 31 August 1889, pp. 2, 7.

⁶¹⁸ *Te Aroha News*, 14 September 1889, p. 2.

⁶¹⁹ *Te Aroha News*, 5 November 1887, p. 2.

⁶²⁰ Advertisement, *Te Aroha News*, 18 May 1889, p. 7.

⁶²¹ *Te Aroha News*, 2 October 1886, pp. 2, 3, 16 October 1886, p. 2.

wretched mountebank performances that people here seem so ready to pay for'.⁶²² The following month, this band paraded in a successful attempt to attract people to a Band of Hope meeting.⁶²³ In July 1887 an entertainment by the Waiorongomai Jubilee Minstrels raised money for it,⁶²⁴ but there was no mention of it subsequently. In 1888 some people contemplated forming a brass band of about 20 players, and negotiations took place to obtain instruments, music, stands, and other equipment from the disbanded Thames Rifle Rangers.⁶²⁵ This was not formed, and the following year residents of Waiorongomai and Tui were encouraged to join a minstrel troupe and brass band.⁶²⁶ Less musical was 'the time-honoured New Zealand custom' of a 'tin can serenade' for returning honeymooners. For instance, in July 1889 'the youngsters rolled up in great numbers, and were well entertained by the happy bridegroom'.⁶²⁷

Socials were held periodically.⁶²⁸ Participation was encouraged by advertisements, such as the 'Waiorongomai Grand Soiree and Concert', and the 'Grand Conversazione and Easter Tree, Easter Monday, 11 April, 1887, in aid of Wesleyan Church Circuit Funds'.⁶²⁹ Decorations were also a feature: for instance, at one Church of England concert the hall was decorated with coloured banners with slogans including 'Union is Strength', 'Advance Waiorongomai', and 'Nil Desperandum'.⁶³⁰ After the loss of the hall, socials, notably farewell ones, were held in the schoolroom.⁶³¹ A plain and fancy dress social in 1895 attracted people from Te Aroha and Gordon, and 'passed off in splendid style. The people of the town certainly know how to enjoy themselves when the time for pleasure comes round'.⁶³²

A basic requirement for all social events was a large supper. For instance, at a Church of England concert three tables of food were provided

⁶²² Letter from 'A Resident', *Te Aroha News*, 2 October 1886, p. 2.

⁶²³ *Te Aroha News*, 13 November 1886, p. 2.

⁶²⁴ *Te Aroha News*, 2 July 1887, pp. 2. 3.

⁶²⁵ *Aroha Gazette*, n.d., reprinted in *Thames Advertiser*, 5 June 1888, p. 2; *Te Aroha News*, 1 August 1888, p. 2.

⁶²⁶ *Te Aroha News*, 27 March 1889, p. 2.

⁶²⁷ Waiorongomai Correspondent, *Te Aroha News*, 6 July 1889, p. 2.

⁶²⁸ For example, *Te Aroha News*, 12 February 1887, p. 3.

⁶²⁹ Advertisement, *Te Aroha News*, 2 April 1887, p. 2.

⁶³⁰ *Te Aroha News*, 10 November 1888, p. 2.

⁶³¹ For example, *Te Aroha News*, 18 May 1895, p. 2, 19 June 1895, p. 2.

⁶³² *Te Aroha News*, 6 November 1895, p. 2; *Thames Advertiser*, 7 November 1895, p. 2.

by the 'ladies of Waiorongomai' and one by the bachelors and 'all comers'; all were 'laid out in great taste, and literally loaded with good things of every conceivable description', and decorated with flowers 'skillfully arranged'.⁶³³

Despite the steady loss of population in the early twentieth century, social gatherings continued.⁶³⁴ All recorded socials were for particular purposes, for example yet another 'very successful' one held in 1902 to raise money for the school.⁶³⁵ Also in that year, there was 'a large attendance' at a farewell social for the headmaster. 'With songs and dancing the evening was pleasantly passed', and 'a splendid supper was provided, and served by the ladies'.⁶³⁶ Special instructions were issued for those attending a 'basket social' in the same year:

A card should be placed in each basket, bearing the name of the lady providing it. The gentleman purchaser of any basket will claim to share the refreshments contained in it with the lady whose name is attached, but will not thereby acquire any interest in the basket itself.⁶³⁷

Te Aroha residents were encouraged to participate in these events. In 1889 a 'Grand Dramatic Entertainment - Concert and Dance' provided a coach to 'leave the Club Hotel at 7 p.m. to convey Te Aroha friends to and from the concert'.⁶³⁸ It was expected that Waiorongomai residents would reciprocate: for instance, in October 1891 they were criticized for not attending a fancy dress ball at Te Aroha. This showed 'very bad taste on their part, and should be remembered by the Te Aroha folks the next time they (Waiorongomai) get up a concert or dance'.⁶³⁹ Perhaps residents were conserving their energies, for later that month about 80 couples attended

⁶³³ *Te Aroha News*, 10 November 1888, p. 2.

⁶³⁴ For example, *Te Aroha News*, Waiorongomai Correspondent, 11 March 1909, p. 2, 20 April 1909, p. 3, 11 May 1909, p. 2, Waiorongomai Correspondent, 1 July 1909, p. 2, 7 April 1910, p. 2, 19 April 1910, p. 2, Waiorongomai Correspondent, 20 December 1910, p. 2, Waiorongomai Correspondent, 31 January 1911, p. 2, 21 February 1911, p. 2, 20 April 1911, p. 2, 6 June 1911, p. 2, 23 December 1911, p. 2, 26 April 1915, p. 2, 24 November 1915, p. 3, 17 November 1916, p. 2, 19 August 1922, p. 1.

⁶³⁵ *Te Aroha Correspondent*, *Auckland Weekly News*, 17 July 1902, p. 32.

⁶³⁶ *New Zealand Herald*, 4 March 1902, p. 3.

⁶³⁷ *Thames Star*, 2 July 1902, p. 2.

⁶³⁸ *Te Aroha News*, 27 April 1889, p. 7, 4 May 1889, p. 7, 18 May 1889, p. 2.

⁶³⁹ 'Te Aroha', *Observer*, 10 October 1891, p. 18.

one of the most successful dances ever held which marked the 'winding-up of a series of social evenings'.⁶⁴⁰ In March 1898, a 'very large number' from Te Aroha attended the first social of the season. The local newspaper considered it 'very pleasing indeed' that residents from both townships patronized 'each others' amusements'; the jealousy 'so very common in almost all neighbouring country districts' seemed 'to be conspicuous by its absence'.⁶⁴¹ The absence of any other mention of festive occasions at Waiorongomai in the twentieth century suggests that for anything other than small socials, residents had to go to Te Aroha. Coaches took people to the hotels on Saturdays and to church on Sundays.⁶⁴²

There were a variety of other activities. For instance, in 1889, after sports held in a farmer's paddock, a concert and dance was held in the evening.⁶⁴³ Some gatherings were not reported as when homes were used for private gatherings; for instance in 1886 a resident asked an Auckland newspaper about the rules for four-handed cribbage.⁶⁴⁴ In January 1895, 'a large number of Waiorongomai folk' held a picnic in the hot springs domain 'with the usual accompaniment of games and feasting',⁶⁴⁵ and no doubt many other unreported picnics and excursions were held. A mud-fight was noted in late 1882,⁶⁴⁶ and one entertaining event not easily categorized occurred in 1892:

On Friday evening last, while some visitors and others were playing kiss-in-the-ring on the green near Grey-street, a monkey got away from Mr Pennington's store, and without ceremony joined in the fun. The fair ones soon took to their heels, but the masculine portion of the assembly gave chase. They soon jammed the intruder into a corner, and when they stripped him of his flouncy appendages, they found him to be a true idiot.⁶⁴⁷

⁶⁴⁰ *Thames Advertiser*, 17 October 1891, p. 2.

⁶⁴¹ *Te Aroha News*, 29 March 1898, p. 2.

⁶⁴² For example, *Te Aroha News*, 25 January 1900, p. 2.

⁶⁴³ *Te Aroha News*, 21 December 1889, p. 2.

⁶⁴⁴ *Auckland Weekly News*, 8 May 1886, p. 15.

⁶⁴⁵ *Te Aroha News*, 19 January 1895, p. 2.

⁶⁴⁶ 'Waiorongomai', *Observer*, 18 November 1882, p. 153.

⁶⁴⁷ 'Waiorongomai', *Observer*, 20 February 1892, p. 18.

In all these, and other, ways, social life continued irrespective of economic circumstances. Some of the flirtations assisted by social occasions are noted in the paper on private lives.

CONCLUSION

As with many mining settlements, the first rush to the new goldfield meant the creation of a new village, which while the gold appeared to be plentiful expanded quickly and had shops, hotels, and a school erected. As the mining hopes faded, with occasional revivals, the village declined, although residents continued to have an active social life with a wide variety of activities – and as well participated in those provided more amply by its large neighbour, Te Aroha. During the twentieth century the settlement gradually disappeared as houses and shops disappeared and were replaced by farms, until nothing remained to indicate that a village had existed.

Appendix

Figure 1: D.H. Bayldon, ‘Plan of New-Town Te Aroha’, 16 January 1882, University of Waikato Map Library.

Figure 2: D.H. Bayldon, ‘Waiorongomai Township, Thames High School Endowment, Te Aroha’, July 1882, attached to J.F. Downey to Under-Secretary, Mines Department, 30 October 1931, showing roads and sections to be retained for goldmining purposes, Mines Department, MD 1, 6/61, ANZ-W [Archives New Zealand The Department of Internal Affairs Te Tari Taiwhenua]; used with permission.

Figure 3: D.H. Bayldon, ‘Township of Waiorongomai, Part of Section 13, Thames High School Endowment Block 12, Te Aroha Survey District’, 2 November 1882 (proposed extension to township), DP 241, University of Waikato Map Library.

Figure 4: G.H.A. Purchas, ‘Plan of Licensed Holdings Te Aroha Goldfield’, 2 ed., 1884, with ‘proposed line of tramway’ superimposed, 1887, Te Aroha Warden’s Court, Application for Tramway 1887, BBAV 11582/3a, ANZ-A [Archives New Zealand/Te Rua Mahara o te Kawanatanga, Auckland Regional Office]; used with permission.

Figure 5: E.A. Pavitt, 'Alemada [correctly Alameda] S.C., Te Aroha', 7 April 1888, SO 4868, University of Waikato Map Library.

Figure 6: Burton Bros, 'Waiorongomai – Thames Valley', 1884, taken from where the Upper Road passed under the Fern Spur Incline of the tramway, C.17239, Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa.

Figure 7: Waiorongomai township from access road, 1880s, Te Aroha and District Museum; used with permission.

Figure 8: Waiorongomai battery and township, c. 1910, Te Aroha and District Museum; used with permission.

Figure 9: John Samuel Hill, Waiorongomai Hotel, 1902, Eric Hill Collection.

Figure 10: John Samuel Hill, Waiorongomai Hotel, 1912, Eric Hill Collection.

‘A.B.’

WAIRONGOMAI

— TOWNSHIP —
— Thames High School Endowment —
— TE AROHA —

D.H. Bayldon
Authorized Surveyor
July 1882

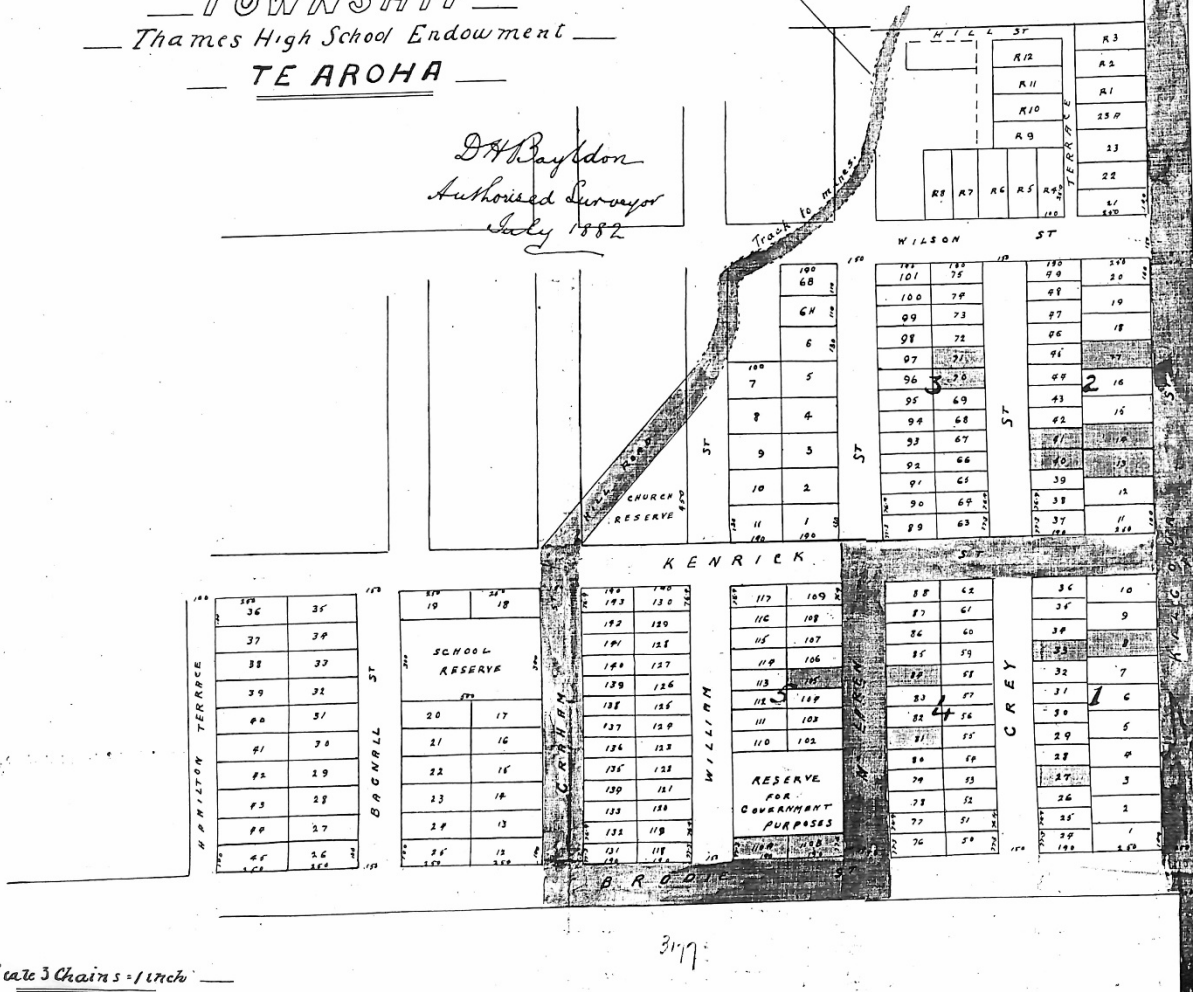


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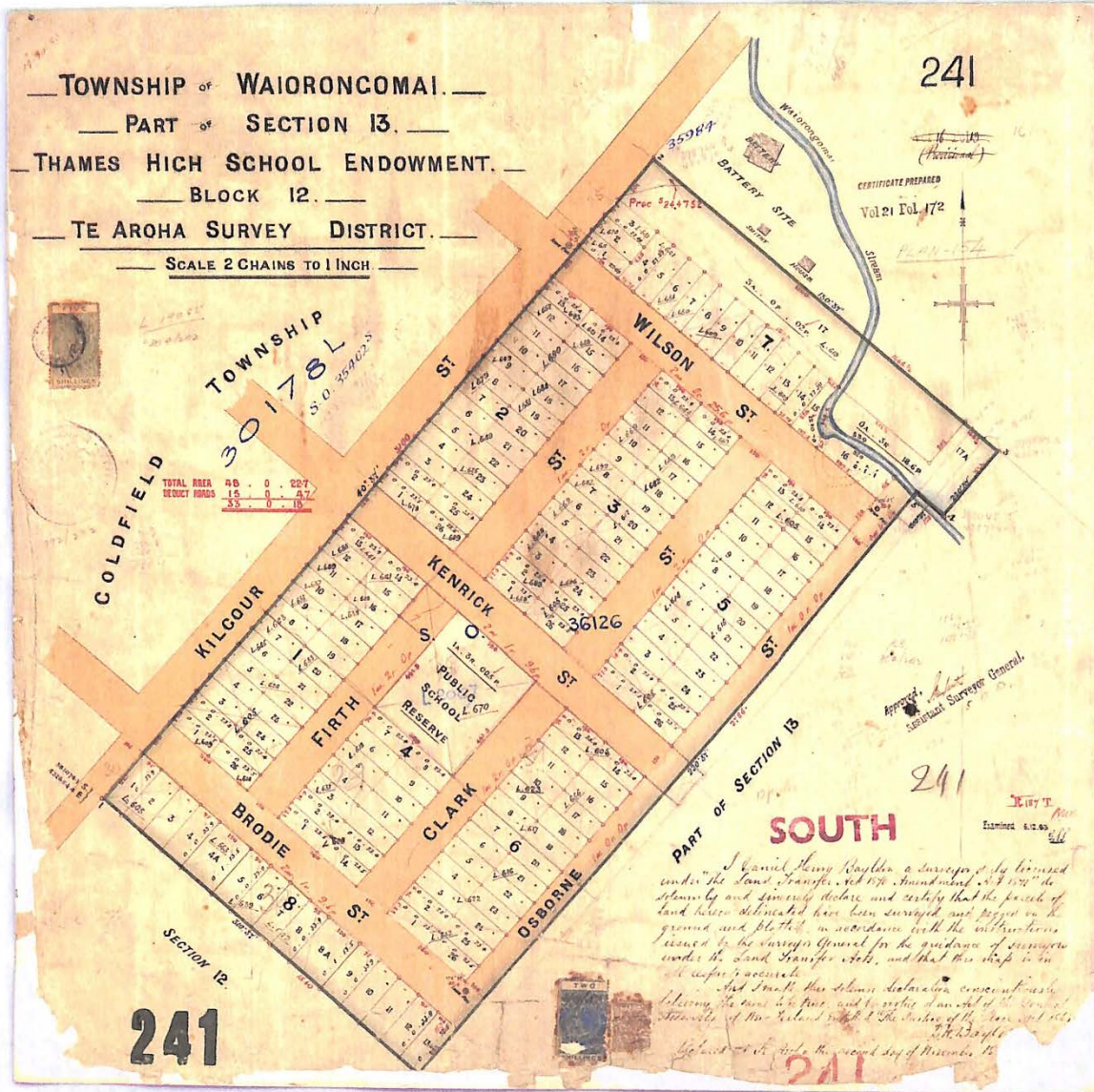


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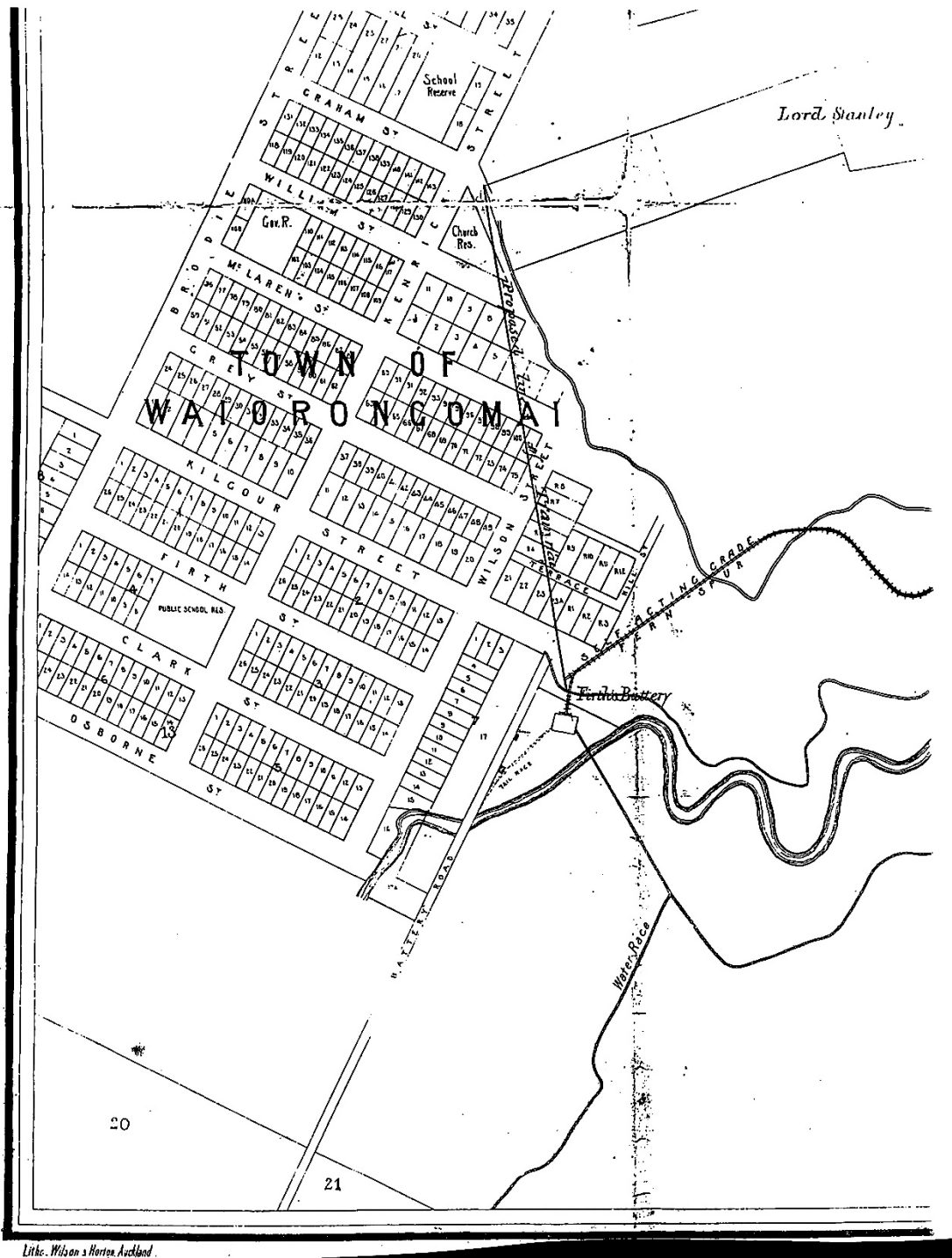


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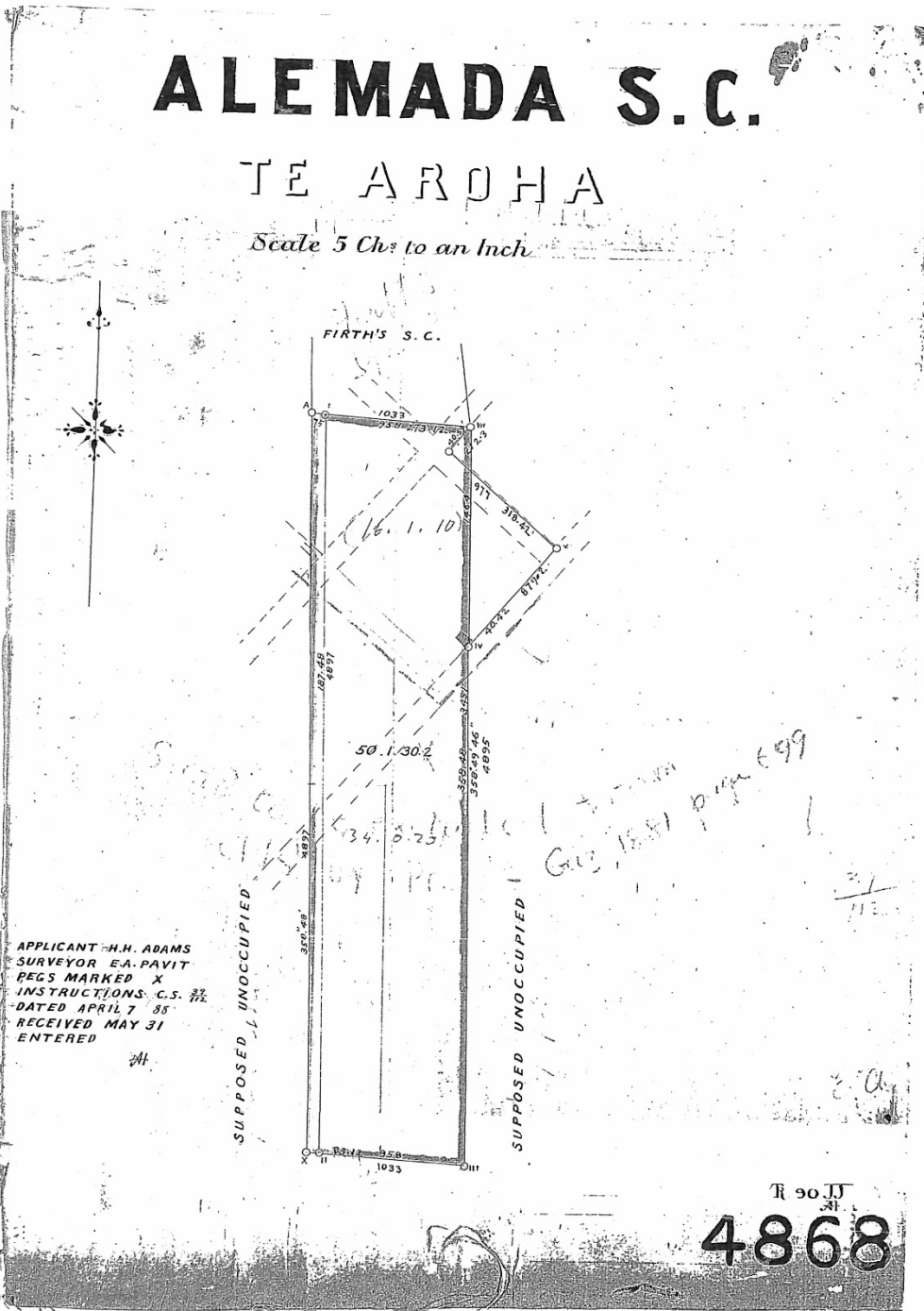


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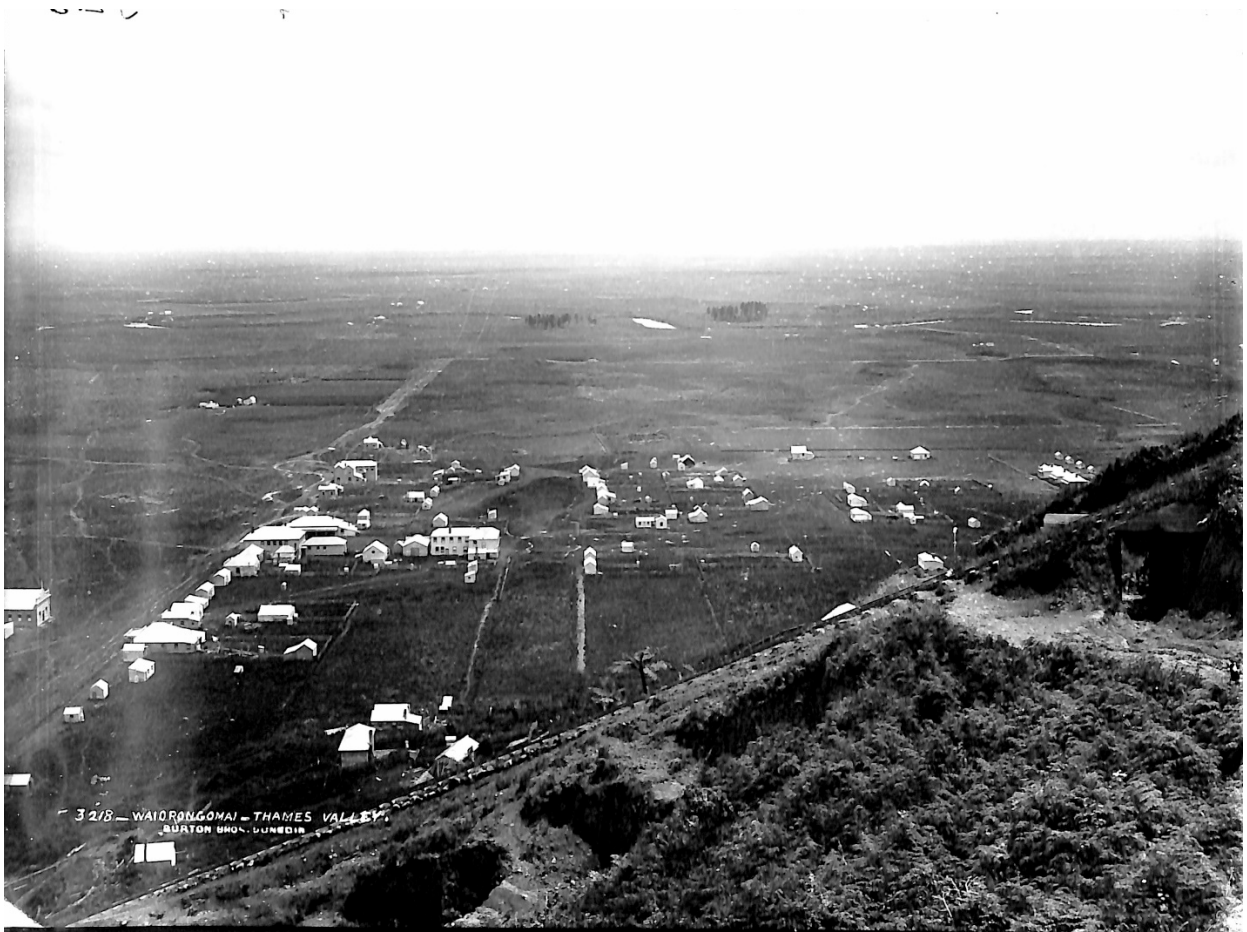


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