

THE TE AROHA BATTERY, ERECTED IN 1881

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Abstract: *As a local battery was a basic requirement for the field, after some proposals came to nothing a meeting held in January 1881 agreed to form a company to erect and operate one. Although prominent members of the new field were elected as provisional directors, raising capital was a slow process, as many potential investors feared to lose their investments. Once two-thirds of the capital was raised, the Te Aroha Quartz Crushing Company, formed in February, was registered in April. Its shareholders came from a wide area and had very varied occupations.*

A reconditioned battery, erected in what would become Boundary Street in Te Aroha, was opened with much festivity and optimism in April. It was handicapped by a lack of roads from the mines and insufficient water power, and when the first crushing made the poverty of the ore very apparent it closed after working for only two months. Being such a bad investment, shareholders were reluctant to pay calls. Sold in 1883 but not used, after being sold again in 1888 its machinery was removed; the building itself was destroyed in the following year in one of Te Aroha's many gales.

PLANNING TO ERECT A BATTERY

Without a local battery, testing and treating ore was difficult and expensive, and the success or otherwise of the goldfield remained unknown. When the field opened, the first claims were

well situated so far as crushing the quartz is concerned. The sides of the hills are so steep that there will be no difficulty in getting the quartz to the base by means of shoots, and the river banks, where undoubtedly most of the mills will be erected, are so near that there will be very little difficulty in getting the stuff conveyed to them. At first the motive power will most probably be by steam-engine supplied by water pumped from the river.¹

At that time, Adam Porter² was at Te Aroha 'making arrangements for the erection of a 15-stamp crushing mill, to be driven by steam'. It was 'not intended for any company or claim' but 'for the use of the general public'.³

¹ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 4 December 1880, p. 11.

² See paper on his life.

³ Own Reporter, 'Te Aroha Goldfield', *Thames Advertiser*, 3 December 1880, p. 3.

In the middle of December, when the owners of the *Morning Star* reported finding good gold, ‘several parties’ offered to erect a battery for them but nothing was decided.⁴ On 18 December, the *Te Aroha Miner* advocated ‘the erection of a 10-stamper battery for testing purposes’ and called upon ‘the principal mine holders and business people to subscribe the cost’.⁵ One suggestion in late December was that a canal be cut at a bend of the Waihou River so that water power could be utilized.⁶ Again, nothing came of this proposal.

On 7 January 1881, a ‘large and enthusiastic meeting’ comprising almost everyone on the field, including representatives of all the claims, discussed forming a company to erect a public battery.⁷ Porter was elected chairman, and the first speaker, a surveyor, Thomas Goodman Sandes,⁸ the sole owner of one claim and soon to be an owner of two others,⁹

said he had taken it upon himself to call this meeting, on the recommendation of several amongst themselves, who thought that something should be done to provide a battery to test what had already been got. If some such step was not taken, they might as well put on their hats and go to where they came from. Private parties had been talking of erecting batteries, but they all wished a guarantee and that in money, which they could not see their way to give, so it would be better to erect a battery for themselves. His proposition was that a company be formed of 2000 shares at £1 each, 10s paid up, and that the meeting proceed to elect a provisional directorate of nine gentlemen to carry out the resolution. It had been ascertained that the battery, with all appliances, could be purchased and erected on the ground for a sum considerably under £1000. A number of gentlemen in Auckland and elsewhere had informed him that they would help *Te Aroha*, when the people showed a disposition to help themselves. Of course the action they proposed taking re the forming of a company would not preclude private parties from following suit, indeed 10 head of stampers would be but a small

⁴ *Te Aroha Miner*, n.d., reprinted in *Thames Star*, 17 December 1880, p. 2.

⁵ *Te Aroha Miner*, 18 December 1880, reprinted in *Thames Star*, 18 December 1880, p. 2.

⁶ *Thames Advertiser*, 31 December 1880, p. 3.

⁷ *Waikato Times*, 8 January 1881, p. 2, 11 January 1881, p. 2.

⁸ See *Waikato Argus*, 8 May 1897, p. 2.

⁹ *Te Aroha Warden’s Court, Register of Te Aroha Claims 1880-1888*, folios 161, 223, BBAV 11567/1a; *Plaint Book 1880-1898*, 18/1881, BBAV 11547/1a, ANZ-A.

fleabite to the crushing power that would be required if the field turned out well.¹⁰

In reply to questions, Sandes explained that ‘half the capital would be called up at first, and if it was found necessary to enlarge the battery, the expense could be met by calling up the balance’. He revealed that David Limond Murdoch, general manager of the Bank of New Zealand,¹¹ and his business associates the leading Auckland merchants Josiah Clifton Firth¹² and the Morrin brothers, Thomas and Samuel,¹³ ‘had promised to assist’ financially. ‘The battery would be worked by steam power, and plenty of firewood could be obtained at a reasonable cost’. On Porter’s suggestion, it was agreed that the capital be ‘four thousand shares at ten shillings, five shillings paid up’.¹⁴

George Stewart O’Halloran,¹⁵ a local publican who had interests in two claims and one company,¹⁶ ‘said he had had a resolution placed in his hands. He did not know why, unless that he was the oldest hand here, with the exception of Mr George Lipsey’.¹⁷ This resolution, which was carried, was that the provisional directory comprise Porter; Henry Hopper Adams, miner and battery superintendent;¹⁸ Henry Ernest Whitaker, clerk and accountant and a son of the Attorney General,¹⁹ who had shares in three

¹⁰ Pigeongrams, *Thames Star*, 8 January 1881, p. 2.

¹¹ See S.R.H. Jones, ‘David Limond Murdoch’, *The Dictionary of New Zealand Biography*, vol. 2 (Wellington, 1993), pp. 340-341.

¹² See paper on the Battery Company formed to work the Firth and Clark battery at Waiorongomai.

¹³ See *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 2, pp. 660-661; Russell Stone, *Makers of Fortune: A colonial business community and its fall* (Auckland, 1973), pp. 131-139.

¹⁴ Pigeongrams, *Thames Star*, 8 January 1881, p. 2.

¹⁵ See paper on his life.

¹⁶ Te Aroha Warden’s Court, Register of Te Aroha Claims 1880-1888, folios 189, 207, BBAV 11567/1a, ANZ-A; *New Zealand Gazette*, 30 December 1880, p. 1796.

¹⁷ See paper on his life.

¹⁸ See paper on his life.

¹⁹ See paper on Harry and Charles: Henry Ernest Whitaker and Charles Stanislaus Stafford.

claims and one company;²⁰ Lipsey, the leading Pakeha landowner, who held interests in one claim and two companies;²¹ Charles David Lindsay McLean, formerly a miner at Thames and Ohinemuri,²² who at this time had no interests in local claims but who would later be a shareholder in eight Waiorongomai claims;²³ John Goldsworthy, a leading Thames mine manager and director of mining companies,²⁴ who had shares in two companies and would later have some in both Tui and Waiorongomai mines;²⁵ Edmund Fitzpatrick, a wealthy farmer and storekeeper at Ngaruawahia,²⁶ who had interests in two claims;²⁷ William Fraser, the previous warden,²⁸ who had interests in four claims and two companies, of one of which he was the legal manager;²⁹ and Sandes.

Allan Christey,³⁰ a former Thames miner who had become a contractor,³¹ and who had shares in four claims,³² then announced

²⁰ Te Aroha Warden's Court, Register of Te Aroha Claims 1880-1888, folios 181, 192, BBAV 11567/1a; Licensed Holding Grant Book 1880-1882, no. 1, BBAV 11549/1a, ANZ-A; *New Zealand Gazette*, 24 February 1881, p. 258.

²¹ Te Aroha Warden's Court, Register of Te Aroha Claims 1880-1888, folio 192, BBAV 11567/1a, ANZ-A; *New Zealand Gazette*, 30 December 1880, p. 1797, 20 January 1881, p. 111.

²² See *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 7, p. 27; *Observer*, 10 February 1917, p. 5.

²³ Te Aroha Warden's Court, Register of Te Aroha Claims 1880-1888, folios 13, 25, 30, 38, 39, 45, 53, 54, BBAV 11567/1a, ANZ-A.

²⁴ See paper on the Goldsworthy brothers.

²⁵ Te Aroha Warden's Court, Register of Licensed Holdings 1881-1887, folios 2, 139, 193, 201, BBAV 11500/9a, ANZ-A; *New Zealand Gazette*, 30 December 1880, p. 1796, 24 February 1881, p. 258.

²⁶ See *A Return of the Freeholders of New Zealand ... October 1882* (Wellington, 1884), p. F 20; *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 2, pp. 714, 716; *New Zealand Herald*, 28 July 1922, p. 8; *Observer*, 5 August 1922, p. 7.

²⁷ Te Aroha Warden's Court, Register of Te Aroha Claims 1880-1888, folio 164, BBAV 11567/1a, ANZ-A; *Thames Star*, 1 December 1880, p.2.

²⁸ See paper on Harry Kenrick.

²⁹ Te Aroha Warden's Court, Register of Te Aroha Claims 1880-1888, folios 76, 192, 202, BBAV 11567/1a; Register of Applications 1880-1882, folio 103, BBAV 11505/3a, ANZ-A; *New Zealand Gazette*, 30 December 1880, p. 1797, 20 January 1881, p. 111.

³⁰ See *New Zealand Herald*, 27 December 1902, p. 5; *Observer*, 3 January 1903, p. 4.

that he was prepared to put down £100 with nine others, and have a battery erected in six weeks. He handed a paper to the Chairman, and requested that it be read to the meeting.

The Chairman consented, and read the paper as follows:- “The undersigned is prepared to supply and erect a ten stamp battery driven by ample steam power - with two berdans and every article necessary to work the mill, including [quick]silver, blankets, retorts, enamelled buckets, &c, and a week’s supply of coals for £1000. Stamps to be running six weeks.- A. CHRISTEY.” He said he could promise Mr Christey that if the Committee got no better terms his would be accepted.

The provisional directorate appointed McLean, Adams, and Goldsworthy to draw up specifications and call tenders.³³ In practice, Adams mostly prepared the specifications.³⁴ Determining the correct process was a challenge: one experienced miner, John McCombie,³⁵ warned that ‘the gold all through the district seems to be very fine, and it will require the very best of machinery to save it properly’.³⁶

RAISING CAPITAL

Early in January, Porter and Sandes were ‘requested to proceed to Waikato, Auckland, and the Thames to make further arrangements’.³⁷ The prospectus, published on 11 January, gave the terms for taking up shares as 2s 6d paid with the application and the same amount upon allocation. The directors were ‘sure’ than no further calls would be necessary ‘unless for the increase of the Crushing Power at some future date’.³⁸ One day after the meeting forming the company, Porter and Sandes visited Cambridge, where

³¹ See Thames Warden’s Court, Thames Claims Register 1868, folios 66, 228, 245, BACL 14397/1a, ANZ-A; *Thames Advertiser*, District Court, 9 June 1880, p. 3, Te Aroha Correspondent, 1 December 1880, p. 3.

³² Te Aroha Warden’s Court, Register of Te Aroha Claims 1880-1888, folios 154, 181, 185, 200, BBAV 11567/1a, ANZ-A.

³³ Pigeongrams, *Thames Star*, 8 January 1881, p. 2.

³⁴ *Thames Star*, 10 January 1881, p. 2, 25 April 1881, p. 2.

³⁵ See paper on Billy Nicholl.

³⁶ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 15 January 1881, p. 9.

³⁷ Pigeongrams, *Thames Star*, 8 January 1881, p. 2.

³⁸ Advertisement, *Waikato Times*, 11 January 1881, p. 3.

they reported an encouraging response, and that evening met Hamilton men who were interested in investing; ‘many of the gentlemen present were personally interested in the claims’. Porter explained that economics necessitated the crushing of stone locally, that local men had been appointed provisional directors to enable a speedy start to the construction, and that they had received two offers of batteries that would cost £1,000. Both companies and individuals could take up shares, and Porter expected the Aroha Gold Mining Company, which was working the Prospectors’ Claim,³⁹ to take at least 400.⁴⁰

William Steele, a prominent Hamilton land agent,⁴¹ who held shares in one company,⁴² chaired this meeting. He considered that the Aroha Company should take up several £100s-worth and that the ‘affair should be in more forward state’. He complained that only promises of support had been given and thought there could have been more active canvassing of each claim. The company’s future was more uncertain compared with two or three weeks previously, when Whitaker had indicated matters would be more definite by now. Sandes’ responded that representatives of claims had offered, at the Te Aroha meeting, to take up ten shares immediately, and they might take 50 once they had consulted their mates. The holidays were blamed for delays. The meeting agreed to support the company; one man wanted the government to assist it.⁴³

On 15 January, it was stated that members of the provisional committee were ‘not letting the grass grow under their feet’ but were ‘doing their utmost to accomplish the desired object without delay’. Applications for shares were ‘flying in’, and there was ‘every hope’ that when the mill was ready to start all the capital would have been raised.⁴⁴ On the same date, the *Observer’s* Waikato correspondent reported that ‘Adam and Tommy have been stumping the district as a deputation from the Mountain of Love to raise funds for the erection of a battery. They have been extremely successful - who could resist them?’⁴⁵ The answer was that many

³⁹ See paper on this company.

⁴⁰ *Waikato Times*, 11 January 1881, p. 2.

⁴¹ See *Descriptive Handbook of the Waikato* (Hamilton, 1880), pp. 26, 56; *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 2, p. 752; *Waikato Argus*, 22 September 1898, p. 2.

⁴² *New Zealand Gazette*, 30 December 1880, p. 1797.

⁴³ *Waikato Times*, 11 January 1881, p. 2.

⁴⁴ *Thames Advertiser*, 15 January 1881, p. 3.

⁴⁵ ‘Waikato Whisperings’, *Observer*, 15 January 1881, p. 170.

could, especially in Auckland and Thames. When they went to Auckland, investors showed little interest because the new Tiki gold find, near Coromandel township, had their attention.⁴⁶ ‘They have met with very little encouragement in Auckland, but do not despair of success in their laudable undertaking’.⁴⁷ After the representatives visited Thames, Te Aroha residents were ‘much disappointed at the meagre support’ received and expressed ‘great surprise’ at the ‘want of success’.⁴⁸ The *Te Aroha Miner* reported that

The utter neglect of the Thames people to give the Te Aroha Battery Company the slightest support has been the subject of unfavourable comment during the past few days. Apologists for them will probably say that they are not bound to invest money in a project they have no confidence in,

but as gold won at Te Aroha would benefit New Zealand, it had ‘no hesitation in saying that every colonist should consider it his duty to extend a helping hand’.⁴⁹ Despite the ‘cold water’ from Thames, the company was being pushed ahead ‘without the assistance of our fair weather friends’.⁵⁰

By 20 January, 1,000 shares had been sold in Te Aroha, and the *Te Aroha Miner* anticipated that a total of 1,500 would be bought there. It expected 500 to be sold in the Waitoa and Piako districts, with the rest being bought in Waikato.⁵¹ Te Aroha businessmen had bought 500, and some claimholders were taking shares jointly in the name of the claim.⁵² It was argued that the reason why many claims had not applied for any yet was because shareholders lived at a distance from Te Aroha.⁵³ By the beginning of February the total sold had only reached either 2,250 or 2,500.⁵⁴ The canvass in the Waikato had been ‘tolerably successful’, about

⁴⁶ *Thames Star*, 13 January 1881, p. 2.

⁴⁷ *Thames Advertiser*, 13 January 1881, p. 2.

⁴⁸ *Thames Star*, 18 January 1881, p. 2; Te Aroha Correspondent, *Thames Advertiser*, 20 January 1881, p. 3.

⁴⁹ *Te Aroha Miner*, n.d., reprinted in *Thames Star*, 21 January 1881, p. 2 and *Waikato Times*, 25 January 1881, p. 2.

⁵⁰ *Te Aroha Miner*, 20 January 1881, reprinted in *Thames Star*, 21 January 1881, p. 3.

⁵¹ *Te Aroha Miner*, 20 January 1881, reprinted in *Thames Star*, 21 January 1881, p. 3.

⁵² Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 13 January 1881, p. 3, 15 January 1881, p. 2.

⁵³ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 20 January 1881, p. 2.

⁵⁴ *Waikato Times*, 1 February 1881, p. 2; *Thames Star*, 1 February 1881, p. 2.

1,500 being taken.⁵⁵ A month later, a smug Ohinemuri correspondent commented on the slow response:

Some may think that although Te Aroha has been able to boast of a posse of capitalists flocking to the spot, that they have not been of much practical use to the field, whilst at Waihi – although practically left to their own resources – the erection of a battery will take place in less time than the Te Arohans talk of it.⁵⁶

A *Waikato Times* columnist was ‘not surprised’ that the shares ‘did not “go off” freely’. He reasoned that ‘the appearance of one of the principal promoters’ was ‘sufficient to excite suspicion in the hearts of the most confiding’.⁵⁷ This appears to indicate, not the repellent visage of this person, but the suspicion that if a leading vendor was the salesman, then it must be a poor proposition. After his unsuccessful visit to Auckland, Sandes felt obliged to write a long letter to the *New Zealand Herald* denying that the company was a speculative venture. Only those interested in the development of the field had been canvassed, ‘but even these seem to be apathetic over the matter. One would surely think that a man who had very large landed interests at stake in the immediate neighbourhood’, presumably Firth, who had not taken up any shares,

would try and help to erect a test battery to prove whether or no gold existed in payable quantities, but in this case these very men stand aloof. Merchants, too, who are supplying goods and liquor to the field, all take the same position. One and all exclaim, “No, thank you, we have had enough to do with batteries.”

The miners had been expecting outside support, and its absence would ‘force them to put money in the battery which they would otherwise have spent on working the ground’. He pointed out that without a battery there was no point in mining. Aucklanders had expressed ‘very great doubt’ that there were good reefs: he assured them that there were. As the battery would enable private parties to test their gold before putting up their own plants, he contended it was ‘for the general good to erect a company affair, because, supposing the whole thing to be a dead failure, the total loss could not amount to much over £400, and that, distributed amongst many, would

⁵⁵ *Thames Advertiser*, 2 February 1881, p. 3.

⁵⁶ Ohinemuri Correspondent, *Thames Advertiser*, 2 March 1881, p. 2.

⁵⁷ ‘Pauvre Diable’, ‘Entre Nous’, *Waikato Times*, 1 February 1881, p. 2.

be very little felt'. He then gave an example of how snobbery could be a reason for not subscribing by describing one potential investor's response to the prospectus:

When a gentleman looked at it he tore it up and threw it away in disgust because the word "Esq" was placed after the names of some working miners on the provisional directory. In order to sooth his ruffled feathers I would respectfully inform him that it was a printer's indiscretion simply, the copy having called each plain Mr. I hope he will accept this as an apology.

The letter concluded by emphasizing the need to test whether there was any gold. If there was none, they should 'pack up and go home again'; if it existed, Te Aroha had the best advantages of any goldfield in the country, being situated in a good agricultural region near Auckland.⁵⁸

A *Waikato Times* editorial emphasized that the main reason for the reluctance to buy shares was unfortunate past experiences with mining speculations:

The proposal ... is one which, under certain wise and prudent restrictions, ought, and we trust will, commend itself to public attention. We approach the subject fully alive to the fact that, in the past, public confidence in similar goldfields undertakings have, in not a few instances, been grossly abused. The pursuits of the miner are, in their very nature, precarious. Reefs and auriferous drifts occur under the most extraordinary circumstances, and then again these "leads" disappear without the slightest apparent cause, so far as geological phenomenon indicates, or scientific research can detect. This is one of the "fortunes of war" against which no human foresight can provide, and however dire the consequences may become, no one can be blamed for the result. There is another description of goldfields catastrophe similar in effect, although differing widely in cause – we mean the bubble schemes and "duffer" companies promoted by unscrupulous "speculators" and the professional goldfields harpie. In the *modus operandi* of the latter, spurious specimens and salted reefs play important parts. There is no disguising the fact that, by such nefarious practices, a deal of swindling has been promoted, and public and private confidence flagrantly abused. Under these circumstances, it is not surprising that, in the matter of goldfields investment, public feeling should have become somewhat shy, if not suspicious.... In connection with goldfields pursuits, it would also seem as if the arch-fiend himself

⁵⁸ Letter from Thomas Goodman Sandes, *New Zealand Herald*, 12 January 1881, p. 6.

had been at work, so barefaced and unscrupulous have proceedings of this class, from time to time, been rendered.... We can see nothing to warrant the faintest suspicion that the proposal is other than *bona fide*. The capital sought is, perhaps, in excess of means at the disposal of a private individual in a place like this, where accumulated wealth to any great extent does not exist; on the other hand, the amount is not sufficiently large to warrant the belief that it would be worth the while of any ring, or individual members of such ring, to promote the undertaking with a view to their own personal aggrandisement, or even emolument. In a word, we can see nothing in the proposal but evidence of its *bona fides*, and, as such, we have no hesitation in recommending it to public sympathy and support. A few pounds invested in a battery cannot become a dead loss; on the other hand, there are reasonable prospects for supposing that it may be rendered a great gain. Even if things come to the worst, it would tend to alleviate the public mind, which, at the present moment, is being swayed by hopes and fears, incidental to fresh discoveries and new goldfields' rushes.⁵⁹

Despite the lack of enthusiasm amongst investors, Sandes and the editorial writer were correct: a test battery was needed to enable the value of the lodes to be tested. A meeting of the provisional directors held in late January that was intended to consider accepting tenders for a battery postponed this decision 'pending the arrival of returns from Hamilton and Cambridge'. Whitaker 'was instructed to proceed to Waitoa' to canvass that district for shareholders, 'several prominent settlers in that neighbourhood having signified their willingness to take up shares'.⁶⁰ These last-minute efforts to increase investment succeeded, it being reported that Whitaker had been 'very successful in inducing Waitoans to take up shares';⁶¹ no figures were provided to support this statement.

Looking back, the mining inspector commented to the warden, Harry Kenrick,⁶² that 'notwithstanding the rush and excitement was at its height, neither the Companies, claimholders, private parties, or storekeepers, not all these put together could be induced to' provide sufficient capital; hence the public meeting and the formation of a committee to 'rake out' money from Te Aroha, Auckland, Thames, Hamilton, Cambridge, and the

⁵⁹ Editorial, *Waikato Times*, 15 January 1881, p. 2.

⁶⁰ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 29 January 1881, p. 9.

⁶¹ *Thames Star*, 27 January 1881, p. 2.

⁶² See paper on his life.

Waikato.⁶³ Kenrick responded that ‘the large amount of “shepherding” frightened capitalists away – they would not erect a Battery where no Quartz was being sought for’.⁶⁴

FORMING THE COMPANY

The inaugural meeting of what would be called the Te Aroha Quartz Crushing Company, attended by 30 shareholders, was held in O’Halloran’s hotel on 5 February. Charles Gould, a large landowner at Waitoa,⁶⁵ who did not have shares in any claims, was chairman. The *Waikato Times*, which reported that the proceedings were ‘very unanimous and enthusiastic throughout’, considered that ‘great credit’ was due to the Waitoa settlers for ‘subscribing largely for shares when they found that there was a difficulty in floating the company. The shareholders marked their appreciation’ by electing ‘three well-known settlers’, Gould, John Bealby Smith, and Reuben Parr, as directors.⁶⁶ Smith, a farmer,⁶⁷ had interests in one claim and one company.⁶⁸ Reuben Parr also farmed at Waitoa,⁶⁹ and was an owner of one claim and had shares in one company.⁷⁰ The other directors were Adams and Fitzpatrick; they appointed Whitaker as legal manager. The unsuccessful candidates nominated were O’Halloran, Porter, James Gribble, James Lavery, and Patrick Quinlan. Gribble, an experienced mine manager,⁷¹ was an owner of two claims.⁷² Lavery, a builder,⁷³ had shares in

⁶³ J.M. McLaren to Harry Kenrick, 27 May 1881, Mines Department, MD 1, 85/990, ANZ-W.

⁶⁴ Note by Harry Kenrick, n.d., on J.M. McLaren to Harry Kenrick, 27 May 1881, Mines Department, MD 1, 85/990, ANZ-W.

⁶⁵ See paper on his life.

⁶⁶ *Waikato Times*, 8 February 1881, p. 2.

⁶⁷ See paper on the Waitoa Find.

⁶⁸ Te Aroha Warden’s Court, Register of Te Aroha Claims, folio 228, BBAV 11567/1a, ANZ-A; *New Zealand Gazette*, 30 December 1880, p. 1796.

⁶⁹ See *Descriptive Handbook to the Waikato*, p. 69; *Thames Advertiser*, 3 July 1880, p. 4; *Waikato Times*, 3 May 1881, p. 2; for his career, see *Te Aroha News*, 30 December 1925, p. 1; *Observer*, 9 January 1926, p. 4.

⁷⁰ Te Aroha Warden’s Court, Plaintiff Book 1880-1898, 2/1880, BBAV 11594/1a, ANZ-A; *New Zealand Gazette*, 20 January 1881, p. 110.

⁷¹ See *Thames Advertiser*, 17 October 1873, p. 2, 13 November 1880, p. 3; *Waikato Times*, 6 July 1880, p. 2, 4 September 1886, p. 2.

one other company.⁷⁴ Quinlan, proprietor of the British Hotel,⁷⁵ had interests in two claims and 50 shares in the company.⁷⁶

It was decided that calls would be no more than 2s 6d per share at any one time.⁷⁷ Whitaker said that ‘he took a great interest in the company. If it was successful, he would take a small bonus for office rent and expenses; if not successful, the question of salary would be allowed to lapse’. Porter reported that, although there had been little assistance from Thames and even less from Auckland, Hamilton and Waikato residents had been ‘quite favourable’. Applications had been received for 2,500 shares, and ‘he did not anticipate any difficulty of placing the remainder’. The company had raised £600 already.⁷⁸

Not till 11 April did Whitaker apply to register the company, for it had taken four months to sell 2,922 shares. As this was more than two-thirds of the required capital, it could be registered. Of this number, 126 shares had not been sold but were held in Whitaker’s name in trust for the company. There were 77 shareholders, not including Whitaker, who did not hold any personally; in three cases, shares were held jointly.⁷⁹ Just before registration, it was claimed that the Patatere Land Association had bought 200 shares,⁸⁰ but no parcel of this size was listed, nor did leading Patatere landowners become shareholders. As shares were recorded as belonging to individuals, it is not possible to determine whether the Aroha Company or any claims held shares. If the company did hold shares, these must have been amongst the 100 in Porter’s name. No shareholder held a higher number. Others with this number of shares were Smith, Joseph and Charles Gould’s joint holding, ‘Davy Morgan, Te Aroha, Storekeeper’, who was Rewi Mokena and was not a storekeeper (unless he had an unrecorded

⁷² Te Aroha Warden’s Court, Register of Te Aroha Claims 1880-1888, folios 156, 201, BBAV 11567/1a, ANZ-A.

⁷³ See *Descriptive Handbook to the Waikato* (Hamilton, 1880), p. 66; *Te Aroha News*, editorial, 8 November 1884, p. 2, 28 January 1888, p. 2.

⁷⁴ *New Zealand Gazette*, 20 January 1881, p. 111, 28 April 1881, p. 476.

⁷⁵ See paper on his life.

⁷⁶ Te Aroha Warden’s Court, Register of Te Aroha Claims 1880-1888, folios 166, 178, BBAV 11567/1a, ANZ-A; *New Zealand Gazette*, 28 April 1881, p. 476.

⁷⁷ Company Files, BBAE 10286/7d, ANZ-A; *Thames Star*, 7 February 1881, p. 2.

⁷⁸ *Waikato Times*, 8 February 1881, p. 2.

⁷⁹ *New Zealand Gazette*, 28 April 1881, p. 476.

⁸⁰ *Auckland Weekly News*, 9 April 1881, p. 9.

interest in a store), Richard Knibb Davis, who was an Auckland accountant and commission agent,⁸¹ and Falconer Larkworthy, a banker resident in England who also owned an estate at Waitoa.⁸² Neither Davis nor Larkworthy held interests in any claims.

Apart from Davis, the only other Auckland shareholder was James Frater, a Thames sharebroker,⁸³ who held 25 shares, presumably for resale. Murdoch, Firth, and the Morrin brothers had promised to invest, but had not done so. Firth and Murdoch had visited the principal claims in December,⁸⁴ but clearly had had second thoughts. The smallest shareholdings were a draper and a baker, both of Hamilton, each with five, and a miner, with four. Apart from the one resident of England and the two in Auckland, all the remaining shareholders lived relatively close to Te Aroha: seven at Thames, four at Paeroa, one each at Ohaupo, Tamahere, Ngaruawahia, Piako, and Matamata, eight at Waitoa, 13 at Cambridge, and 15 at Hamilton. The largest number, 20, lived at Te Aroha.

The sums earlier reported as having been subscribed were all exaggerated. The largest amount raised was at Te Aroha, with £704, then Cambridge with £535, Thames £415, Waitoa (once the Gould brothers' shares are included there rather than for Te Aroha, as the list of shareholders would have it) £380, Hamilton £242, and Auckland £125. The remaining holdings were by single individuals: £100 in England, £50 at Paeroa, Ngaruawahia, Ohaupo, Piako, and Matamata, and £25 at Tamahere.

There were three Maori shareholders: Rewi Mokena, his father Mokena Hou,⁸⁵ and Wirope Hoterene Taipari.⁸⁶ The latter two gave their occupation as farmers, but are not included in the occupations listed here as their farming was notional; likewise, Rewi Mokena is not included as a storekeeper. Of the other shareholders, three claimed to be gentlemen, but

⁸¹ See *Waikato Times*, 5 July 1884, p. 3; *Thames Advertiser*, 9 June 1886, p. 2; *Te Aroha News*, 3 July 1886, p. 2.

⁸² See *Waikato Times*, 22 July 1880, p. 2; G.R. Hawke, 'Falconer Larkworthy', *The Dictionary of New Zealand Biography*, vol. 1 (Wellington, 1990), pp. 237-238.

⁸³ See *Auckland Weekly News*, 4 September 1897, p. 30.

⁸⁴ Own Reporter, 'Te Aroha Goldfield', *Thames Advertiser*, 20 December 1880, p. 3.

⁸⁵ See paper on his life.

⁸⁶ See paper on Maori and goldfields revenue.

John Wood was really a butcher,⁸⁷ and Edmund Fitzpatrick was a storekeeper. The one pensioner listed was a retired magistrate. There were 15 farmers, six hotelkeepers, seven miners, six storekeepers, four surveyors, three builders and three merchants, two each of butchers, bakers, drapers, chemists, auctioneers, brewers, clerks (but one was more than a mere clerk: George Edgecumbe was business manager of the *Waikato Times*),⁸⁸ and solicitors, one of whom, Frederick Alexander Whitaker, brother of Harry, also being a member of parliament;⁸⁹ he would later invest in four Waiorongomai companies.⁹⁰ There was one carpenter, mining agent, engineer, coach proprietor, law student, blacksmith, accountant, jeweller, land agent, sharebroker, contractor, and banker. The directors showed their faith in the company by holding 100 shares in the case of Smith and (jointly with his brother Joseph) Gould, 75 in the case of Parr, with Adams having 60 and Fitzpatrick 50.⁹¹ Directors had to hold 25 shares.⁹² Sandes, who convened the meeting that formed the company, had this number also.⁹³

CONSTRUCTION

In mid-January, when only about 1,000 shares had been taken up, tenders were called to erect the battery. It was anticipated that there would be 'good competition'.⁹⁴ George Fraser, head of a leading engineering firm in Auckland,⁹⁵ went to Te Aroha 'on business in connection with the Battery';⁹⁶ if he did put in a tender, he did not win the contract, and did not buy any

⁸⁷ See Te Aroha Correspondent, *Thames Advertiser*, 2 December 1880, p. 3, *Te Aroha News*, 7 September 1921, p. 3.

⁸⁸ See *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 2, pp. 740, 745; *New Zealand Herald*, 12 March 1930, p. 14.

⁸⁹ See *Descriptive Handbook to the Waikato*, pp. 25, 27; *Observer*, 29 October 1881, p. 104; *Waikato Times*, 11 June 1887, p. 2.

⁹⁰ *New Zealand Gazette*, 23 March 1882, p. 490, 27 April 1882, p. 647, 17 August 1882, p. 1131, 27 September 1883, p. 1369.

⁹¹ *New Zealand Gazette*, 28 April 1881, p. 476.

⁹² Company Files, BBAE 10286/7d, ANZ-A.

⁹³ *New Zealand Gazette*, 28 April 1881, p. 476.

⁹⁴ Own Reporter, 'Te Aroha Goldfield', *Thames Advertiser*, 20 January 1881, p. 3.

⁹⁵ See *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 2, pp. 370-371; *Observer*, 10 August 1901, p. 5.

⁹⁶ *Te Aroha Miner*, n.d., reprinted in *Thames Star*, 15 January 1881, p. 3.

shares in the company, although he did have 50 in the Aroha Company.⁹⁷ The plant was sited at the foot of Boundary Street.⁹⁸ Being 'beside the small lagoon' it would 'utilize the pond as a tailings pit. Steam power will be employed, and firewood used to drive the engine until cheaper coal is available'. Water would be taken from the Tutumangaero Stream.⁹⁹ Adams produced the necessary plans,¹⁰⁰ and late in February, after considering three tenders, that of the Thames engineering firm of Price Bros, for £886 but not including the concrete foundations, was accepted.¹⁰¹ Alfred Price, the senior partner,¹⁰² had sufficient faith in the company's prospects to buy 50 shares,¹⁰³ but did not acquire interests in any claims.

Late in February, under Adams' supervision work 'at last' started with the digging of the foundation.¹⁰⁴ Construction was delayed by timber not being delivered on time, partly because heavily laden barges could come up-river only very slowly.¹⁰⁵ In the middle of March, although 'fully three weeks ago the first shipment of timber' had arrived, 'only the frame of the building' had been erected because of 'the scarcity of timber, the steamers not being able to take it up as fast as it is required'.¹⁰⁶ The machinery was assembled under Adams' supervision.¹⁰⁷ By late March, the contractors were 'pushing forward the work most energetically',¹⁰⁸ and by mid-April it was 'all but finished':

The building is a thoroughly substantial one, and is about the largest on the field. The directors have not yet fixed the rate they intend to crush at; but I am informed that it will be about 15s per ton. This impression has got abroad, and many of the claim

⁹⁷ *New Zealand Gazette*, 30 December 1880, p. 1796.

⁹⁸ Plan of Machine Site, on transfer 356/500, dated 23 August 1883, Te Aroha Warden's Court, Certified Instruments 1883, BBAV 11581/4a, ANZ-A.

⁹⁹ *Thames Advertiser*, 15 January 1881, p. 3.

¹⁰⁰ Own Reporter, *Thames Advertiser*, 25 April 1881, p. 3.

¹⁰¹ *Waikato Times*, 27 February 1881, p. 2.

¹⁰² See *Auckland Weekly News*, 7 March 1907, p. 23; *Observer*, 9 March 1907, p. 5.

¹⁰³ *New Zealand Gazette*, 28 April 1881, p. 476.

¹⁰⁴ Pigeongram, *Thames Star*, 24 February 1881, p. 3.

¹⁰⁵ *Thames Star*, 3 March 1881, p. 3; Te Aroha Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 19 March 1881, p. 9.

¹⁰⁶ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Thames Advertiser*, 16 March 1881, p. 3.

¹⁰⁷ *Thames Star*, 22 March 1881, p. 2; *Thames Advertiser*, 24 March 1881, p. 3.

¹⁰⁸ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 2 April 1881, p. 9.

holders are growling at the rate, which is considered too high and most unreasonable. At the steam batteries at the Thames about 10s is the price, and surely the directors of the Aroha battery will not charge more than 13s per ton.¹⁰⁹

Ten days later the terms were announced: one load, 20s; five loads, 15s per load; ten loads, 12s per load; over ten loads, 10s per load.¹¹⁰

OPENING DAY

The battery was officially opened at noon on Saturday 23 April. A 'large number' of Thames, Auckland, and Waikato residents were invited to the luncheon, cheap tickets being offered on the steamer 'Pataki'.¹¹¹ Visitors came from Waikato, Paeroa, Thames, and 'the surrounding districts', totaling 'fully two hundred people ... and several ladies'.¹¹² Once they were shown over the works, the machinery was started after the smashing of 'the customary bottle of champagne' and the equally customary giving of three cheers for its success.¹¹³ A correspondent emphasized the jollification at a time when Te Aroha needed cheering up:

The starting of the battery here to-day, was made the occasion of a pleasant little display of public spirit which will confer its own reward upon all interested, and one of those red letter days of general festivity that break the monotony of work in our rising young towns with all the merriment and enjoyment of a picnic holiday. John Bull, as a rule, can only take a pleasure sadly, and any attempt at rejoicing is but a more crushing display of melancholy, anything that tends therefore to promote cheerfulness in public communities is a something to be glad of, and it was hailed as a healthy sign that Te Aroha saw an opportunity for a little relaxation in the starting of the important operations of the battery company, and when one member of the community or another contributed something towards the general interest of the town or the general jollification.

¹⁰⁹ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Thames Advertiser*, 14 April 1881, p. 3.

¹¹⁰ *Thames Advertiser*, 25 April 1881, p. 3.

¹¹¹ *Thames Star*, 19 April 1881, p. 2, 22 April 1881, p. 2.

¹¹² *Thames Star*, 23 April 1881, p. 2.

¹¹³ *Thames Star*, 23 April 1881, p. 2.

Local residents provided the necessities for the banquet. Quinlan contributed ‘the beer required by the many headed one’.¹¹⁴ The ham was given by the wife of a merchant, Edward O’Brien Moore;¹¹⁵ he had an interest in one claim and two mining companies as well as 50 shares in this one.¹¹⁶ Charles Stanislaus Stafford, a farmer who, with Whitaker, leased the nearby Wairakau Estate,¹¹⁷ provided the beef; he had acquired interests in one claim and two mining companies and had 25 shares in the battery company.¹¹⁸ John Leech Allen and Whitaker gave the bread; Allen had no interest in any claims nor in this company. Thomas Caldwell, manager of Gould Bros’ farm at Waitoa,¹¹⁹ provided cheese. An owner of one claim,¹²⁰ he did not have any shares in this or any other company. Bullock, who had no investments either in the goldfield or this company, provided butter. T. Craig, not identified but likewise not an investor in any claims or companies, provided mustard. O’Halloran, who also had no investments, provided luncheon for the directors and shareholders.¹²¹

The ‘Patiki’ arrived half an hour before the ceremony, bringing several prominent Thames citizens ‘and a number of ladies who honoured Te Aroha with their presence’.

At 12 o’clock the connecting gear was attached, and a bottle of champagne was duly suspended from the fly-wheel, amidst the cheers of the spectators, and the wheels began to revolve, the stampers to rise and fall with heavy thuds, and the berdans

¹¹⁴ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 26 April 1881, p. 2.

¹¹⁵ See *Thames Advertiser*, 30 November 1880, p. 3, 10 June 1882, p. 3; *Thames Star*, 23 October 1883, p. 2.

¹¹⁶ Te Aroha Warden’s Court, *Plaint Book 1880-1898*, 2/1880, BBAV 11594/1a, ANZ-A; *New Zealand Gazette*, 30 December 1880, p. 1796, 20 January 1881, p. 111, 28 April 1881, p. 476.

¹¹⁷ See paper on Harry and Charles: Henry Ernest Whitaker and Charles Stanislaus Stafford.

¹¹⁸ Te Aroha Warden’s Court, *Register of Te Aroha Claims 1880-1888*, folio 153, BBAV 11567/1a, ANZ-A; *New Zealand Gazette*, 30 December 1880, p. 1796, 20 January 1881, p. 111, 28 April 1881, p. 476.

¹¹⁹ See *Thames Advertiser*, 7 May 1881, p. 3; Magistrate’s Court, *Waikato Times*, 17 December 1881, p. 2.

¹²⁰ Te Aroha Warden’s Court, *Register of Te Aroha Claims 1880-1888*, folio 190, BBAV 11567/1a, ANZ-A.

¹²¹ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 26 April 1881, p. 2.

began to spin round their crushers, as Mrs C[atherine] Gould, of Waitoa [wife of Charles], named the battery the Te Aroha. After a liberal distribution of the good cheer provided, about twenty guests repaired to the dining-room of the Hot Springs Hotel, where a capital and substantial luncheon had been spread by Mr O'Halloran.¹²²

A special correspondent sent details of the luncheon by 'Pigeon Express' to the *Thames Star*, revealing not only the style of such an occasion but also the hopes and the implied fears about both battery and goldfield:

Mr George O'Halloran, in order to mark the occasion, prepared a sumptuous luncheon, which was laid in his large dining room, and to which he invited the directors of the battery company, their friends and visitors. It is needless to say that ample justice was done to the good things provided, the excellent bottled beer very plentifully supplied being duly appreciated by the visitors, many of whom had come from long distances.

The chair was occupied by Gould as chairman of directors and the vice-chair by Thomas Leitch Murray, manager of the Thames branch of the Bank of New Zealand and a Major in the Volunteers.¹²³ He held interests in one claim and in the Aroha Company, and although not an initial shareholder in the battery company had been convinced by Whitaker to buy 'a few' shares.¹²⁴ 'The usual loyal toasts of the "Queen," the "Governor," were given, and enthusiastically responded to. The "Army, Navy, and Volunteers" had coupled with it the names of Major Murray and Captain [Wiropo Hoterene] Taipari'. (Taipari formed and was Captain of the Thames Native Volunteers, the first Maori Volunteer Corps.¹²⁵ He had an interest in one claim and 40 shares in this company.)¹²⁶

¹²² Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 26 April 1881, p. 2.

¹²³ See *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 2, pp. 96-97.

¹²⁴ Te Aroha Warden's Court, Register of Te Aroha Claims 1880-1888, folio 176, BBAV 11567/1a, ANZ-A; *New Zealand Gazette*, 30 December 1880, p. 1796; *Thames Star*, 25 April 1881, p. 2.

¹²⁵ See *Thames Advertiser*, 12 January 1875, p. 2, 13 February 1875, p. 2, 6 September 1875, p. 3.

¹²⁶ Te Aroha Warden's Court, Register of Te Aroha Claims 1880-1888, folio 180, BBAV 11567/1a, ANZ-A; *New Zealand Gazette*, 28 April 1881, p. 476.

Both gentlemen responded. Major Murray remarking that the volunteers would be always found ready and willing to respond to the call of duty, and Taipari that he was very gratified at being present on such an occasion.

Mr Gould next proposed "Success to the Te Aroha Battery." He referred to the length of time which it had taken to get up the battery, but he was pleased to say that now it gave every satisfaction to the directors and shareholders. They had just passed through a season of depression, but with the opening of the battery he hoped better times were in store - not only for the goldfield, but for the agricultural interests. Prosperity to the goldfield meant a proportionate share to the farmers, and by the presence of a large body of miners and farmers, other persons would be induced to visit the district and settle down.

The toast was responded to in a most marked manner, and cheers, three times three, were given.

Hone Werahiko¹²⁷ said he felt quite sure of the future of the goldfield, and he hoped soon to bring to light a new discovery that would cause not a battery of ten head to crush the stone, but one of forty head.

Mr George O'Halloran proposed the health of Hone Werahiko, which was duly honored.

The Chairman next proposed, "The health of the contractors, Messrs Price and Patterson," and coupled with it the names of Messrs Sanderson and Turtle, directors of the company. (Cheers and they are "Jolly Good Fellows.")¹²⁸

(The company' would appear to be Price Bros, for neither were directors of the battery company. Patterson was probably either William Keddie Paterson or William John Paterson, both engineers of the same address at Thames;¹²⁹ neither was a shareholder in this company. Charles John Sanderson, a carpenter and builder at Te Aroha,¹³⁰ was not an original shareholder either. Samuel Turtle, an Auckland sharebroker and a director of several mining companies,¹³¹ had shares in one Te Aroha company,¹³² but was not an original shareholder in this one.)

¹²⁷ See paper on his life.

¹²⁸ *Thames Star*, 25 April 1881, p. 2.

¹²⁹ *Thames Electoral Roll*, 1880, p. 33.

¹³⁰ *Thames Advertiser*, 6 January 1881, p. 2.

¹³¹ For examples of his directorates, see *Thames Advertiser*, 31 December 1872, p. 3, 14 January 1873, p. 3; *New Zealand Gazette*, 16 September 1875, p. 610, 30 September 1875, p. 622; for his life, see *New Zealand Herald*, 17 June 1890, p. 4.

¹³² *New Zealand Gazette*, 24 February 1881, p. 258.

Mr Price said he hoped the present would not be the last occasion on which a gathering would take place to mark the completion of a quartz crushing battery. He would be always happy to do his share of the work.

Mr Patterson said he would rather put up a battery than speak an hour; but although not one of the contractors, he was pleased to work under such a man as Mr Price. He would be only too happy to assist in the erection of another battery. (Cheers.)

Mr H. Adams' health was next honored, and the Chairman in proposing the toast spoke very highly of the ability, energy, and perseverance of Mr Adams.

Mr Adams returned thanks. He had done all in his power to make the battery a success, and if it was not one it was not his fault.

Major Murray, before proposing the next toast "The directors of the Company," said it gave him great pleasure to be present on such an occasion. A splendid reception had been given the visitors. The energy of Messrs Parr, Gould, Smith, and Fitzpatrick had so impressed others that a measure of success awaited their labours which was very gratifying. Their action in taking the matter up had given confidence to other persons. (Cheers.)

Messrs Gould, Fitzpatrick and Parr acknowledged the toast, Mr Parr stating that in a few months he felt sure the battery would be a free one and without a debt.

Mr Murray in highly complimentary terms proposed the health of Mr H. Whitaker, the indefatigable manager and secretary. (Received with great applause.)

Mr Whitaker said Mr Murray had laid it on rather heavy, but he had heard it was a "great general," and supposed it was a way he had. It afforded him great pleasure to meet so many friends on such an occasion as the present one. He was very pleased when he succeeded in getting the Major to subscribe for a few shares for he knew like all Scotchmen, that no matter how adverse they might prove to be to going into anything, once in it was, "Eh, mon, it's a gude spec." (Laughter.) Many persons deserved more credit than he did, but he would say that from the commencement all had worked with a will. Although a damper had been thrown on the project at first by Auckland and Thames people and others that should have been the last to have done so, yet the directors had successfully overcome all the opposition. When they had but very little to encourage them they accepted tenders for the battery, and went on with the work. Too great credit could not be given to Mr Adams. He was, in fact, a wonderful man, and a great financier; he had financed the great "Watson," and he had heard a great deal about [John] Watson, [accountant] of Messrs Price

Bros.¹³³ However, the company had much to be obliged to Messrs Price Bros for their leniency. They had not come down upon them, but when they asked for money, well Reuben Parr and himself had just to rummage round for the calls. (Cheers.)

The Chairman proposed the host and hostess which was acknowledged by Mr O'Halloran.

The Vice-Chairman proposed the mining and agricultural interests coupled with the names of Mr Adam Porter and Mr [Samuel] Ticklepenny.¹³⁴

(Ticklepenny managed Samuel Morrin's estate near Morrinsville.¹³⁵ Although not an initial shareholder, presumably his presence implied that he had become one.)

Mr Porter said he was very pleased to be present. He considered the prospects warranted the erection of a battery. He thought, however, the Piako Council had not met the miners in a fair spirit in the matter of roads. He had written to the Council, offering on behalf of the miners a proportion of the cost of making roads, but he had not even had a reply. That was not the way the Thames County Council met the advances of the miners. (Cheers.)

Mr Ticklepenny responded for the agricultural interests.

The "Press" and the "Visitors" were also given and responded to, which brought the luncheon to a close.¹³⁶

THE BATTERY AT WORK

The battery was 'situated immediately outside the township, and about the centre of the field',¹³⁷ in what became Boundary Street. The ten stampers were driven by a 20-horsepower steam engine, and, being constructed by Price Bros, the *Thames Star* considered it 'quite unnecessary to say that the work has been done in capital style'. In the tables and

¹³³ See Charles William Vennell, *Men of Metal: The story of A. & G. Price Ltd* (Auckland, 1968), pp. 7, 27, 37-38.

¹³⁴ *Thames Star*, 25 April 1881, p. 2.

¹³⁵ See *Waikato Electoral Roll, 1879*, p. 11; *Waikato Times*, 26 May 1881, p. 2.

¹³⁶ *Thames Star*, 25 April 1881, p. 2.

¹³⁷ *Thames Advertiser*, 23 April 1881, p. 2.

berdans ‘the latest improvements have been introduced’.¹³⁸ ‘Everything’ had ‘an air of completeness and perfection’.¹³⁹ It had ‘two retorts, two pestle and mortar, and every convenience for quartz-crushing and testing’.¹⁴⁰ The double cylinder engine and Cornish boiler were sufficiently powerful to drive twice the number of stampers, and it drove five berdans as well. ‘Space has been left for enlarging the mill to 40 or more stampers should occasion require it’.¹⁴¹ By 1882 four buddles, a type of sluice box, had been added.¹⁴²

As the machinery had had ‘some years of service elsewhere’,¹⁴³ it was only a slightly modified version of old technology. When started, it was reported to be ‘working well and to the thorough satisfaction’ of Adams and the directors. For the first three days it worked ‘without a hitch, going as smoothly as if it had been at work for months’.¹⁴⁴ Adams was in charge for the first month, with Alexander Jamieson, who later worked in the Waiorongomai battery,¹⁴⁵ as his engineer; it was intended to make permanent appointments after that period.¹⁴⁶ None would be reported, and Adams was still in charge in June, if not later.¹⁴⁷

The plant was handicapped by lack of roads, water, and payable gold, and by the limitations of the technology. Although Porter accused the council of failing to respond to requests for roads, in May it ‘urgently’ requested a government subsidy for these: ‘Te Aroha battery finished and

¹³⁸ *Thames Star*, 23 April 1881, p. 2 (which gave the horsepower as 15); Own Correspondent, ‘Te Aroha’, *Thames Advertiser*, 5 April 1881, p. 2, and *AJHR*, 1881, H-17, p. 46 agree on 20 horsepower.

¹³⁹ Own Reporter, *Thames Advertiser*, 25 April 1881, p. 3.

¹⁴⁰ *Thames Advertiser*, 25 April 1881, p. 3.

¹⁴¹ *Thames Advertiser*, 23 April 1881, p. 2, 25 April 1881, p. 3; *Thames Star*, 16 March 1883, p. 3.

¹⁴² *AJHR*, 1882, H-17, p. 48.

¹⁴³ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Thames Advertiser*, 5 April 1881, p. 2; Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 5 April 1881, p. 2.

¹⁴⁴ *Thames Advertiser*, 30 April 1881, p. 3.

¹⁴⁵ See *Thames Star*, 23 April 1883, p. 2; *Thames Advertiser*, 1 January 1891, p. 2.

¹⁴⁶ *Thames Advertiser*, 19 April 1881, p. 3.

¹⁴⁷ *Thames Advertiser*, 1 June 1881, p. 3.

cannot be kept going unless roads are made up to claims proved auriferous'.¹⁴⁸

Water supply was a problem, as later when one was erected at Waiorongomai.¹⁴⁹ Water for the boiler and tables was supplied 'from the creek running past the Hot Springs Hotel, which is in line with it. The overflow from the tailings plant in rear of the mill finds its way into the river'.¹⁵⁰ Immediately upon opening, the battery could not be tested fully because lack of water meant only five stamps could be used.¹⁵¹ After operating for some days at half power, it was decided at the beginning of May to dam a stream to create a reservoir that could be filled during the night and 'more than supply all the water needed for the day'.¹⁵² In the middle of that month, a correspondent described the problems revealed by the crushings:

Many of the claims which have sent stone to the machine, and have obtained unsatisfactory returns, will, it is said, send further parcels when the wet weather comes, and there is a full supply of water to work the berdans. The gold is extremely fine, and it cannot be expected that more than a certain proportion shall remain on the plates. With this fact in view, although only a ten-stamper battery, five berdans were provided, so as to reduce the waste by the tailings to the least possible minimum. But even such rain as there has been is not sufficient to enable the value of the berdans to be realised.¹⁵³

At the end of the month, 'long continued want of rain' meant that the battery had to stop altogether.¹⁵⁴ As the water supply was 'totally inadequate', the mill had 'not been able to work with more than half the number of heads, since starting work'.¹⁵⁵

CRUSHING CEASES

¹⁴⁸ Piako County Council to William Rolleston, 11 May 1881 (telegram), Mines Department, MD 1, 82/11, ANZ-W.

¹⁴⁹ See paper on the Firth and Clark battery at Waiorongomai.

¹⁵⁰ *Thames Advertiser*, 25 April 1881, p. 3.

¹⁵¹ *Thames Star*, 27 April 1881, p. 2; *Waikato Times*, 30 April 1881, p. 2.

¹⁵² *Waikato Times*, 5 May 1881, p. 2.

¹⁵³ Hamilton Correspondent, *New Zealand Herald*, 28 May 1881, p. 5.

¹⁵⁴ *Waikato Times*, 31 May 1881, p. 2.

¹⁵⁵ *Thames Advertiser*, 1 June 1881, p. 3.

According to Whitaker's 1884 statement, before closing the battery worked for two months.¹⁵⁶ Although the main reason was the lack of good ore, the machinery was not as successful as first claimed. In September, the company agreed to assist the financially stretched tributers in the Morning Star 'by letting them have the battery free of charge, they themselves working it'.¹⁵⁷ After two months of occasional use, they decided to send their ore to Thames for treatment, believing there was 'something wrong with the battery here, or the water', because gold was 'not saved'. Experienced miners from other fields confirmed their opinion.¹⁵⁸ Sixteen years later, a mining correspondent wrote that 'the loss of gold was too palpable even in that unscientific age - about 60 per cent.... The gold was of a flaky character, and extremely liable to loss by flotation, and difficult to save, probably owing to its inaptness to amalgamate under the treatment then in vogue'.¹⁵⁹

These technical difficulties coupled with the failure of the ore to live up to expectations meant that the company was soon in financial difficulties. At the banquet, Whitaker had anticipated that 'in a very short time the battery would be free from debt'; just over a month later an extraordinary meeting was held to 'authorize a Bill of Sale of the Property of the Company in security of money to be borrowed, and to secure the repayment thereof'.¹⁶⁰ At this meeting, it was revealed that the cost of the battery and its buildings was £1,150, higher than anticipated. Shareholders were told that £750 of this amount was provided for and £350 was 'required to meet engagements'. The directors considered that it was 'not desirable to make a call at present for several reasons stated, and there was every prospect of getting rid of the remainder of the shares in the next few months'. Only about 60 remained to sell. It was claimed that the expenses were £1 a week. While they waited to discover 'what effect a little more time and judicious management might have upon the prospects' of the goldfield, the bank would advance the needed £350 'upon the personal security of the directors', who asked for the bill of sale as their security. The proposal, considered as

¹⁵⁶ Thames Magistrate's Court, Magistrate's Notebook 1883-1885, Hearing of 17 October 1884, BACL 13830/1a, ANZ-A.

¹⁵⁷ *Waikato Times*, 17 September 1881, p. 2.

¹⁵⁸ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Thames Advertiser*, 23 November 1881, p. 3.

¹⁵⁹ 'Werahiko', 'Our Te Aroha Letter', *New Zealand Mining Standard*, 6 March 1897, p. 5.

¹⁶⁰ *Thames Advertiser*, 25 April 1881, p. 3; *Thames Star*, 7 June 1881, p. 2.

preferable to a mortgage, was passed unanimously. After ‘an expression of confidence in the future prosperity of the goldfield, in spite of the temporary reaction upon the first rush, the meeting was dissolved’.¹⁶¹

THE END OF BOTH BATTERY AND COMPANY

After nearly two years of disuse, at a March 1883 auction the battery was sold to Adams for £390, a bargain considering that its official value was £1,100.¹⁶² He seems to have sold it five days later, when it was reported that the owners of the United claim at Te Aroha had bought it to crush a large quantity of quartz.¹⁶³ Other parties working near the township may have been involved in this purchase, for they wanted it to treat their quartz.¹⁶⁴ In July, Joseph Stacey, an Auckland confectioner,¹⁶⁵ who had interests in two Waiorongomai companies,¹⁶⁶ purchased it for £400.¹⁶⁷ In 1889, it was reported that one last crushing took place in 1884.¹⁶⁸

Despite no longer owning a battery, the company still existed and still owed money. Accordingly, in August 1884 the first call, of 2s 6d, was made, designed to liquidate debt before winding it up.¹⁶⁹ The response was a refusal to pay, and the consequent issuing of 24 summonses, mostly to residents of Hamilton and the Waikato; presumably people in other areas had already sold their shares. Amongst those being sued was a director, Adams. Only one person, William Wilson, a Te Aroha draper,¹⁷⁰ who had shares in four Waiorongomai companies,¹⁷¹ paid the £3 2s 6d demanded into

¹⁶¹ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 2 July 1881, p. 2.

¹⁶² *Thames Star*, 16 March 1883, p. 3, 22 March 1883, p. 2; *AJHR*, 1882, H-17, p. 48.

¹⁶³ *Waikato Times*, 27 March 1883, p. 2.

¹⁶⁴ *Waikato Times*, 20 March 1883, p. 3.

¹⁶⁵ See *Auckland Weekly News*, 9 May 1891, p. 20.

¹⁶⁶ *New Zealand Gazette*, 14 September 1882, p. 1264, 19 October 1882, p. 1522.

¹⁶⁷ Te Aroha Warden’s Court, Mining Applications 1889, BBAV 11582/4a, ANZ-A.

¹⁶⁸ *Te Aroha News*, 5 June 1889, p. 2.

¹⁶⁹ *Te Aroha News*, 16 August 1884, p. 7, 11 October 1884, p. 2.

¹⁷⁰ See *Thames Advertiser*, 30 November 1880, p. 3, 19 April 1882, p. 3.

¹⁷¹ *New Zealand Gazette*, 16 November 1882, p. 1733, 23 August 1883, p. 1214, 6 September 1883, p. 1266, 4 October 1883, p. 1437.

court. Three writs could not be served.¹⁷² Instead of paying the call, the remaining shareholders were

clubbing together to pay for the common defense. It is now some four years, they say, since the company was started. But one crushing was ever made at the battery, and though repeated applications have been made for a statement of accounts, no general meetings of shareholders have been called, and the thing has been allowed to dawdle on, salaries have been drawn for the last four years. Shareholders do not see the fun of this and are determined to spend the amount of their calls in law, rather than confess judgment and pay up.¹⁷³

When the case was heard, several Waikato shareholders sent William Macgregor Hay to defend them against calls ‘which they do not consider they are justly liable to pay’.¹⁷⁴ Hay, a Hamilton lawyer,¹⁷⁵ had invested in claims at Te Aroha and Waiorongomai but had not been an initial shareholder in this company.¹⁷⁶ The first suit to be heard on 17 October was against William Searancke, a land agent,¹⁷⁷ for £2 10s. Under cross-examination, Whitaker, who was still the manager, admitted that, although there was ‘no resolution of directors authorizing the sale’, all had consented:

All the Directors got written notices from me that this meeting to make a call was to be held - I can't say if Mr Adams got notice - I did not send one myself.... Gould Parr and Smith were present at Morrinsville at meeting of Waitoa Highway Board so we arranged to have a meeting of Directors at the same time - I was not present - did not see these gentlemen pass this resolution.¹⁷⁸

¹⁷² Thames Magistrate's Court, Civil Record Book 1883-1885, 390-394, 426-435/1884, BACL 13735/2a, ANZ-A.

¹⁷³ Hamilton Correspondent, *New Zealand Herald*, 7 October 1884, p. 6.

¹⁷⁴ *Waikato Times*, 16 October 1884, p. 2.

¹⁷⁵ See *New Zealand Gazette*, 30 September 1893, p. 4.

¹⁷⁶ Te Aroha Warden's Court, Register of Te Aroha Claims 1880-1888, folio 182, BBAV 11567/1a; Register of Licensed Holdings 1881-1887, folios 147, 148, BBAV 11500/9a, ANZ-A.

¹⁷⁷ See Sally Maclean, ‘William Nicholas Searancke’, *The Dictionary of New Zealand Biography*, vol. 1 (Wellington, 1993), pp. 446-447.

¹⁷⁸ Thames Magistrate's Court, Magistrate's Notebook 1883-1885, Hearing of 17 October 1884, BACL 13830/1a, ANZ-A.

There being no other witnesses, Kenrick 'held that there was no evidence to show that the call had been made, the production of what purported to be the minutes was not *prima facie* evidence of it having been made; the manager was not present at the meeting. This was fatal to the case, and the plaintiff would be non-suited, with costs'. The meeting had been attended by only three directors and 'the minutes were so irregular' that he declined to accept them. Similar cases against another ten shareholders were then withdrawn, with costs against the company.¹⁷⁹ Presumably because of Whitaker's incompetence, a hearing of the same suit against nine more shareholders was set down for 31 October but then withdrawn.¹⁸⁰ When the company was finally wound up was not recorded, but Whitaker was still acting as secretary in 1887 when Price Bros sought final payment. In his speech at the opening banquet, Whitaker had thanked this firm for its 'leniency', a policy it must soon have regretted. £101 was owed in 1882, and although some of this amount was paid off between 1882 and 1884, by March 1887 £25 was still owed. The following month an offer was made to accept £15 'in full settlement of our account', and as there was no ensuing correspondence it may be assumed this was agreed to.¹⁸¹

Once bought by Stacey, the battery was given a thorough overhaul.¹⁸² Up to £50 was spent replacing two-thirds of the roof, blown off in May 1883.¹⁸³ He planned to move it to the base of Butler's Spur at Waiorongomai and add another 30 heads.¹⁸⁴ Nothing came of this idea, nor of an 1886 suggestion of re-erecting it at the new Waiomu goldfield.¹⁸⁵ All Stacey gained from his purchase was potential expense: in February 1884 it was partly unroofed once again,¹⁸⁶ but no mention was made of the roof being

¹⁷⁹ Magistrate's Court, *Thames Star*, 17 October 1884, p. 2; *Te Aroha News*, 18 October 1884, p. 2.

¹⁸⁰ Thames Magistrate's Court, Civil Record Book 1882-1885, 438-446/1884, BACL 13735/2a, ANZ-A.

¹⁸¹ A. & G. Price Letter Book 1886-1888, pp. 149, 150, 240, A. & G. Price Archives, Thames.

¹⁸² *Thames Star*, 1 September 1883, p. 2; *Te Aroha News*, 15 September 1883, p. 2.

¹⁸³ *Waikato Times*, 15 May 1883, p. 2.

¹⁸⁴ *Thames Star*, 17 December 1883, p. 2.

¹⁸⁵ *Thames Advertiser*, 7 August 1886, p. 2.

¹⁸⁶ *Waikato Times*, 28 February 1884, p. 3.

replaced. Stacey mortgaged his machine site at Waiorongomai in March 1888 and surrendered it in June the following year.¹⁸⁷

Late in 1888, Edward Kersey Cooper, a mine owner at Waiorongomai and Waitekauri,¹⁸⁸ purchased the battery for an undisclosed sum, and removed the machinery to his Jubilee mine at Waitekauri.¹⁸⁹ The last evidence of Te Aroha's only battery was destroyed in June 1889, when the kauri timber was sold after the building collapsed during a strong gale.¹⁹⁰

CONCLUSION

Without a battery the ore could not be tested; but after a prolonged struggle to raise the capital the reconditioned battery proved that the ore was not worth testing. This outcome sealed the fate of the original Te Aroha goldfield.

Appendix

Figure 1: Plan showing battery sited at base of Boundary Street, acquired by Joseph Stacey on 23 August 1883 and surrendered on 8 June 1889, Certified Instruments 1883, transfer 356/500, BBAV 11581/4a, ANZ-A [Archives New Zealand/Te Rua Mahara o te Kawanatanga, Auckland Regional Office]; used with permission.

¹⁸⁷ Te Aroha Warden's Court, Mortgage by Joseph Stacey to Hubert Charles Hanchard, 1 March 1888; Surrender of Machine Site by Joseph Stacey, 8 June 1889, Certified Instruments, BBAV 11581/9a, ANZ-A.

¹⁸⁸ See paper on his life.

¹⁸⁹ *Waikato Times*, 29 September 1888, p. 2, 9 October 1888, p. 2, 29 November 1888, p. 2; *Te Aroha News*, 6 October 1888, p. 2, 5 June 1889, p. 2.

¹⁹⁰ *Te Aroha News*, 5 June 1889, pp. 2, 7.

