

JOHN SQUIRRELL: A FARMER AND STOREKEEPER WHO
MINED (BRIEFLY) AT TE AROHA

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Abstract: *An English merchant's clerk, some years after his wife's death John Squirrell brought his sister and daughters to New Zealand to settle in the new Shaftesbury settlement, upriver from Te Aroha. His letters to English relatives provided details of their experiments with growing a variety of produce, which they sold locally or sent to the Auckland. He also took over a store, running it with the assistance of one of his daughters and struggling to obtain payment from customers before refusing to sell on credit. A leading member of the small Shaftesbury community, he did his best to assist its development.*

In 1888 a blacksmith and sometime miner, James Munro, convinced him to prospect ground in the Tui portion of the goldfield. Again, his letters provided details of their amateur and short-term, unprofitable efforts; lacking capital to open up their ground, it was soon abandoned. His investments in Waiorongomai mines were equally unprofitable.

In 1892 Squirrell acquired land at another settlement, at Gordon, further upriver. He struggled to develop this farm, and was involved in conflicts with other members of the settlement, especially after he became secretary of the association. He continued to farm elsewhere, and became involved in early dairy companies, again becoming caught up in controversy.

A man holding strong opinions on a variety of topics, and very willing to express them, he regarded himself as a radical but opposed the Liberal Government. In his personal life he had to cope with two daughters suffering from mental problems, one of them being admitted to the asylum. He spent all his life attempting to provide for his family, only attaining a modest standard of living.

HIS FAMILY BACKGROUND

John Squirrell was born in December 1840, in Stowmarket in Suffolk, to John, a tailor, and Harriet, née Squirrell, of nearby Bildeston, daughter of William, presumably a relative of her husband's father, another John. Squirrell's father had been born in 1809, and his mother five years previously. After their marriage at Bilderston in August 1832, they had seven children: Pleasance Martha, born in March 1833, Rosa Anna, born in February 1835, Frances Naomi, born in 1837, who died in 1841, Jane

Dinah, born in 1839, John, born in December 1840, Harriet Esther, born in 1842, and Mary Sophia, born in 1847 and who died in 1848. All except their last child, who was born and died in London, were born at Stowmarket. Both parents would die at Cavendish Square, London, his father in 1867 and his mother in 1880.¹

According to his obituary, Squirrell worked in the Bank of England; according to his wife's death certificate and his own account, he was a merchant's clerk in London for 25 years.² In 1864, when still living at Stowmarket, he married Maria Elizabeth Feltham, who had been born in 1841. They had four daughters: Florence Maria, born in September 1866 at St Pancras, London; Constance Elizabeth, born in Camden Town, London; Edith Beatrice, born in 1869 at Lee in Kent, and Mary Alice, born at the latter in 1872. In April 1874, his wife died there, of blood poisoning caused by childbirth; as the child's birth was not registered, it must be assumed that it was stillborn.³

According to a great-nephew, shortly after his wife died he decided to create a new life for himself and his four daughters in New Zealand.⁴ In fact, his wife had died seven years before he left England, arriving in Auckland at the beginning of September 1881 to prepare for his family's arrival.⁵ On 29 July 1881, his daughters left London under the care of his sister Pleasance Martha, then aged 45; Florence Maria was 14, Constance

¹ Birth Certificate of John Squirrell, 7 December 1840, vol. xii, p. 44, Stow 1, General Register Office, Merseyside, England; Death Certificates of Pleasance Martha [recorded as Martha Pleasance] Squirrell, 10 September 1894, 1894/3953; John Squirrell, 5 August 1924, 1924/5244, BDM; W.F. Bradley to Gilbert Archey (Director, Auckland Institute), 16 July 1957, MS 288, Library of the Auckland Institute and War Memorial Museum; The Squirrell Research Group website; ancestry.co.uk.

² *Te Aroha News*, 9 August 1924, p. 4; Death Certificate of Maria Elizabeth Squirrell, 19 April 1874, Lewisham 1d, 464, General Register Office, Merseyside, England; letter from John Squirrell, *Auckland Weekly News*, 10 November 1899, p. 13.

³ Death Certificate of Maria Elizabeth Squirrell, 19 April 1874, Lewisham 1d, 464, General Register Office, Merseyside, England; Birth Registers, English BDM; The Squirrell Research Group website; W.F. Bradley to Director, Auckland Institute, 16 July 1957, John Squirrell Papers, MS 288, Library of the Auckland Institute and War Memorial Library.

⁴ W.F. Bradley to Director, Auckland Institute, 16 July 1957, John Squirrell Papers, MS 288, Library of the Auckland Institute and War Memorial Museum; *Auckland Weekly News*, 10 November 1899, p. 13.

⁵ Tokanui Mental Hospital, Case File on John Squirrell, YCBG 5904/11, file 372, ANZ-A.

Elizabeth (Bessie) was 12, Edith Beatrice was 11, and Mary Alice was 9. They arrived on 28 October.⁶

SETTLING IN NEW ZEALAND

Squirrell was the second man (after Edward Francis Roche)⁷ to take up land in the Grant and Foster Settlement of Lincolnshire farmers at Shaftesbury,⁸ a teetotal settlement up-river from Waiorongomai.⁹ On 21 June he had been granted the first land order in the settlement, for 150 acres, being the middle portion of Section 36 Block 11 and all of Section 4 Block 111 Wairere Survey District, the latter being 106 acres and 30 perches.¹⁰ His sister paid the price, £255, for this land.¹¹ Certificates of title were granted in June 1883.¹² The earliest map of the district showed it as a rectangular block between the river and the main road, mostly consisting of swampy ground.¹³ By October 1882 it was valued at £675.¹⁴ Squirrell did not retain all his land for long, in September 1883 selling, for an unknown sum, Section 4 Block 111.¹⁵

⁶ New Zealand Shipping Company Passenger Lists, Folder 10, 1/72/1/2-7, MS Papers 4293, Alexander Turnbull Library.

⁷ See *New Zealand Herald*, 30 September 1903, p. 3.

⁸ *Thames Advertiser*, 1 June 1881, p. 3; *Waikato Times*, 17 May 1881, p. 2, 13 October 1881, p. 2, 10 January 1882, p. 2.

⁹ See paper on special settlements in the Te Aroha district.

¹⁰ Lands and Survey Department, Allotment Book no. 13, folios 139, 143; Certificates of Title, vol. 32, folios 281, 282, Land Information New Zealand, Hamilton.

¹¹ Register of Land Orders by Messrs Grant and Foster, Te Aroha, Lands and Survey Department, LS 22/2, ANZ-W; Crown Lands Board, *Auckland Weekly News*, 3 September 1881, p. 21: John Squirrell to Commissioner of Crown Lands, 25 January 1894, Lands and Survey Department, BAAZ 1108/103a, ANZ-A.

¹² Lands and Survey Department, Certificate of Title under Land Transfer Act, Register Book, vol. 32 folio 199; Allotment Book no. 13, folios 139, 143, Land Information New Zealand, Hamilton.

¹³ Lands and Survey Department, Plan SO 2055C, Land Information New Zealand, Hamilton; see also plan on Certificate of Title, Register Book, vol. 32 folio 199, Land Information New Zealand, Hamilton.

¹⁴ *A Return of the Freeholders of New Zealand ... October 1882* (Wellington, 1884), p. S 70.

¹⁵ Lands and Survey Department, Certificates of Title, vol. 32 folios 281, 282, Land Information New Zealand, Hamilton.

As his land was in a state of nature, it required a considerable amount of capital to develop. In contrast to Squirrell, Roche, who had 1,000 acres, immediately constructed a house costing £1,500, purchased 200-300 head of cattle, and commenced fencing. Being 'possessed of considerable means', he would 'no doubt make a very successful settler'.¹⁶ Squirrell, whose capital is not known but who was never noted as being wealthy, at first lived in a tent in what became known as Roche's Gully, which provided shelter from the local winds which would blow his brick chimney down in 1883.¹⁷ On the other side of the only road through the settlement was a small lake, 'in which I often bathed up to my neck in water'.¹⁸ By mid-October he had erected a house, and was 'daily expecting his family from the old country'.¹⁹ A visiting reporter considered him to be 'one of the most indefatigable of the settlers' because he was setting 'to work in a thoroughly practical manner'.²⁰ Late the following month the *Waikato Times* described him and the other two pioneers 'men of the right stamp, prepared to work, and possessed of the capital necessary to carry out extensive improvements'.²¹ In February 1882, they were reported to have started ploughing. 'All the settlers have expressed themselves highly pleased with their lot, and in every respect they are perfectly satisfied and contented'.²²

FARMER

Squirrel told the January 1883 meeting of the Auckland Waste Lands Board that he had completed his improvements, and his Crown Grant was issued once he had furnished his certificate of payment of the purchase money.²³ In 1884, he announced that he was selling pamphlets on the growing of tobacco as well as tobacco seed,²⁴ but there was no record of his

¹⁶ *Thames Advertiser*, 1 June 1881, p. 5.

¹⁷ *Te Aroha News*, 4 August 1883, p. 2.

¹⁸ *Te Aroha News*, 1 May 1886, p. 7.

¹⁹ *Waikato Times*, 13 October 1881, p. 2.

²⁰ Hamilton Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 29 October 1881, p. 17.

²¹ Editorial, *Waikato Times*, 26 November 1881, p. 2.

²² *Waikato Times*, 25 February 1882, p. 2.

²³ Auckland Land Board, Minute Book 1882-1884, p. 21, BAAZ 4091/1, ANZ-A; Crown Lands Board, *Auckland Weekly News*, 27 January 1883, p. 20; Nominal Primary Index No. 6, folio 162, Land Information New Zealand, Auckland.

²⁴ *Te Aroha News*, 27 September 1884, p. 2.

attempting to grow this plant himself. In August 1885, he bought between 500 and 600 gooseberry bushes,²⁵ which he did plant. In an 1886 letter to a brother-in-law in England,²⁶ he described the family's life on his farm:

When we were town birds ourselves we used to enjoy immensely our trips to Suffolk which gave us such immense appetites & good fare of a somewhat different kind from town food, with which we satisfied those hungry appetites, now we enjoy on our own farm all these good things in plenty, the eggs & the milk, the butter & the bacon, the fruit & fresh vegetables, the outdoor life & the almost perpetual sunshine of this land, which seems to grow pleasanter as time goes on and my past labours are producing new beauty around our home, the frame was beautiful from the first, but now new touches are always being put to the pictures & our little white house with its verandah shews up when we are on the surrounding hills, prettily set in trees, which sown as the smallest of seeds in some cases, are now 30 feet high. Some of them, I have about 500 young trees growing up in nurseries and many large boxes of tree seeds just set, for next year, of fruit trees. I have added this year about 175 to my previous stock and have a crop of young trees of my own from last year & this years cuttings, I am always extending operations & increasing my work so that I have about 2 months work on hand which should be done at once, we rise about 5 and are all at it from morn till night but the labour is pleasant, the 2 girls have their cows to milk & calves to feed in the morning then Mary goes to School & Bess goes to mind the Store.... Bess can sit & sew to fill up the time, while I keep at home working in garden orchard farm &c. I am gradually getting the little farm more into a paying system, have this day bought 10 fresh young heifers, young cattle can be bought cheap and they require no attention whatever & are always growing bigger, up to the present I have never even provided winter feed for them but I shall this year in order to be able to carry more through the winter, on previous years I have sold some as the winter came on & the feed grew short.

Pleasance looks after the fowls, we have just commenced keeping ducks, we didn't feed them after they had grown to fair size but left them to take care of themselves so at last they almost ceased to come home at all & lived mostly by the river, but one day they sailed away down stream, they were caught about a mile & a half away by a neighbour who caged them up in his fowl house till I went and fetched them in a big box on a wheelbarrow (9 of them) since then we have fed them in the evening & now they come

²⁵ *Te Aroha News*, 8 August 1885, p. 7.

²⁶ W.F. Bradley to Gilbert Archey, 16 July 1957, MS 288, Library of the Auckland Institute and War Memorial Museum.

home to sleep - they have just begun to lay - the boat is a great source of pleasure as we cross the river on Sundays and go for walks on new paths, & see beauties which we have not seen before, we cannot spare the time for walks except on Sundays and holidays, we have fine large willow trees on the river banks to fasten the boat to, they make the banks look very pretty with their bright green branches falling into the water, there is one about every hundred yards,²⁷ besides other trees of darker colours, and we are multiplying the willows by sticking cuttings in the banks, as they hold up the land & instead of the river washing away my land the sand gathers round the willows & so tends to enlarge our borders a little.

The trees I have planted this year are Apple, Pear, Plum, Nuts, about 2 dozen walnuts and about as many figs, also mulberry Quince &c. Our old Quince trees are full of blossom this year and one of the Pear trees has the most lovely blossom I have ever seen, a small tree but covered with blossom looking & smelling beautifully but no leaves out yet.

I have also set more gooseberries & Currants & have now about 800 of these, besides young ones of my own growing, of course I am growing these with the idea of selling them being on the river I can pack them & send them down to Auckland by steamer if I ever get more than I can sell locally....

Florence & Edith are still with Mrs Farley, we expect Edith home soon for a holiday if we had enough to do for 2 more hands of profitable work I should like them at home.²⁸

(Mrs Farley, wife of Thomas, an Anglican clergyman then based in Auckland but later transferred to the South Island before becoming a farmer in Australia,²⁹ had spent several weeks taking the waters at Te Aroha in May that year with her husband and other clergy and their wives.³⁰ Clearly Squirrell had met her then and had decided that she could provide his daughters with spiritual guidance.)

In the following month, he sought advice through newspapers about walnut trees, which he intended to plant if this would be profitable.³¹ His success as a farmer may be indicated by his farm not being listed by a visiting journalist in mid-1887 as one of the

²⁷ For the planting of these trees, see paper on the physical environment of the Te Aroha district.

²⁸ John Squirrell to 'Harry' (Bradley), 2 October 1886, John Squirrell Papers, MS 288, Library of the Auckland Institute and War Memorial Museum.

²⁹ See *Observer*, 26 April 1890, p. 9; *Auckland Star*, 28 July 1891, p. 5, 11 November 1891, p. 2; *Timaru Herald*, 19 April 1895, p. 3, 10 May 1898, p. 3, 19 January 1909, p. 3, 8 March 1909, p. 4.

³⁰ *Te Aroha News*, 15 May 1886, p. 2, 29 May 1886, p. 2.

³¹ 'To Correspondents', *Auckland Weekly News*, 20 November 1886, p. 15.

good ones.³² By December 1888 his sister had settled in Auckland and he was being assisted by three of his daughters, Florence, Bessie, and Mary. 'I wrote some time ago to Edith to come home but she thought I could not afford to keep any more, so wouldn't come, but I think she will come soon as I should like to have her at home again, there is plenty of out door work for them to do with the market gardening & fruit growing'. On the farm 'we have had a rough spring this year, much wind and some very late frosts which nipped off about half my young garden crops, this country is getting good out of its neighbour's misfortunes, the drought in Australia is making all our produce fetch a high price'. He had planted more fruit trees during the winter and was 'breaking up ground now for about 100 more' because the demand for fruit was 'greater than the supply here, our district being only about 10 years old'. The 'extra late frost' had killed 'all my potatoes down to the ground and most other things', which meant he had 'to resow the ground again and it wont make so very much difference'. They were 'consuming a great many apples now as we have plenty'. Mary was 'getting clever in Dairy farming can tell a good calf from a bad one so we get rid of those who do not promise well, and also of all the hes', meaning the bobby calves,

and only keep those who will grow up into good cows, so that our Stock is always improving, the kickers and poor milkers are all gone, we have a white cow who pinned the girls in a corner with her horns, and a black cow who knocked me down and danced on me, to say nothing of one who let the senses out of me for a short time by making a hole in my head, but this is all done with and all our cows are home raised pets - they will come up to us and let us put our arms round their necks and they give more milk than the duffers we got at first.

Our fowls get into the orchards and are learning to pick out the nicest eating apple trees - our two pigs on several occasions also managed to burrow underneath the sty and take a walk without leave among the fruit trees, I was going to bed one night when I heard some grunts outside and had to get Mary to bring a bucket of milk to get them back home again.³³

In 1892, he sought advice through an Auckland newspaper about ridding his land of hares:

I am setting out fruit trees, and every tree has the bark destroyed next day up to about a foot and a half from the ground.... Between

³² Special Reporter, 'A Trip to Te Aroha', *Auckland Weekly News*, 30 July 1887, p. 29.

³³ John Squirrell to 'Harry' (Bradley), 24 December 1888, John Squirrell Papers, MS 288, Library of the Auckland Institute and War Memorial Museum.

the codlin moth who spoils the fruit, the hares who eat the trees, and the Government Inspector who will soon devour the grower, the orchardist seems likely to have a lively time of it.³⁴

Some unwelcome plants soon arrived: six years later, the council instructed him to remove sweet briar.³⁵

In January 1896 the Bank of New Zealand had a lien over his farm, then comprising 43 acres three roods 10 perches in the middle part of Section 36 Block 11,³⁶ as security for a promissory note taken out in December. This land and its improvements, which included his house and store and an orchard, was valued by his bank at £200; Squirrell valued the buildings at £200 and the land at £250, while the bank's valuation was £150 and £50 respectively. As he had insured the house and store for £150 and the stock and furniture for £235, this security meant the bank provided further credit of £500.³⁷ By 1905 the rateable value on his farm had risen to £430.³⁸

In the early twentieth century, he expanded his dairy herd, taking his milk to the Manawaru Creamery.³⁹ The last report about his farm was published in 1914, when his horse took fright while carting boxes of fruit to Te Aroha; he 'soon found himself lying in a drain at the bottom of the cutting with the cart upside down on top of him. As he fell into the soft drain he received no harm, and managed to crawl out'.⁴⁰

STOREKEEPER

In September 1882, the firm of T.W. Carr and Son⁴¹ commenced erecting a large general store in 'the lower part' of Shaftesbury.⁴² A man

³⁴ *Auckland Weekly News*, 20 August 1892, p. 14.

³⁵ Piako County Council, *Waikato Argus*, 22 October 1898, p. 3.

³⁶ Nominal Primary Index No. 6, folio 162, Land Information New Zealand, Auckland.

³⁷ Bank of New Zealand, Auckland Register of Securities 1887-1896, no. 186, Bank of New Zealand Archives, Wellington.

³⁸ Piako County Council, Rate Book 1905-1906: Te Aroha Riding [no pagination], Matamata-Piako District Council Archives, Te Aroha.

³⁹ *Te Aroha News*, 26 January 1911, p. 2.

⁴⁰ Shaftesbury Correspondent, *Te Aroha News*, 6 April 1914, p. 2.

⁴¹ See paper on Thomas William Carr.

⁴² *Auckland Weekly News*, 30 September 1882, p. 21.

named Knight soon took it over until Squirrell formed a partnership with him on 3 February 1883, which lasted until June, when it became Squirrell's sole property.⁴³ In the following May he became the local postmaster as well.⁴⁴ In 1884, he advertised that the store, in Shaftesbury Avenue, would be open from nine o'clock in the morning until six o'clock in the evening six days a week and closing on Saturday night at seven o'clock.⁴⁵ He sold a wide range of products, for example in 1885 selling 880 kauri posts.⁴⁶

Particularly because of the decline in the local population, storekeeping alone could not provide him with a living. Shaftesbury had been expected to contain 225 settlers, comprising both families possessing capital, who were granted good-sized farms, and farm labourers, on small sections, who would replicate the English village structure by working for the wealthier farmers.⁴⁷ By late 1882, residents, mostly farm labourers, were leaving, and by 1884 three out of four houses had been abandoned.⁴⁸ By December 1885, of the 37 farm labourers and their families who had arrived in 1882, all but ten had been 'starved out'.⁴⁹ In October 1885, Squirrell explained the consequences of this decline to Sir George Grey:

When the work dropped, for a time they were kept hanging on in hopes of more work, living then (unfortunately for me) on goods from my store, which they have never paid for & landing themselves in £700 or £800 of debt to me, till I gradually grew stern & had to refuse further credit, they having by that time swallowed up 110 out of my 150 acres which I had to sell to pay for their goods.⁵⁰

⁴³ Te Aroha Warden's Court, Minute Book 1885-1886, folio 5, notes by Harry Kenrick, 10 November 1885, BBAV 11532/1a, ANZ-A.

⁴⁴ *New Zealand Gazette*, 8 May 1884, p. 782.

⁴⁵ Advertisement, *Te Aroha News*, 27 December 1884, p. 7.

⁴⁶ Advertisement, *Te Aroha News*, 4 July 1885, p. 7.

⁴⁷ *Te Aroha Mail*, 3 June 1882, p. 2; *Auckland Weekly News*, 19 August 1882, p. 9.

⁴⁸ *Auckland Weekly News*, 23 December 1882, p. 23; *Waikato Times*, Te Aroha Correspondent, 22 May 1884, p. 2, 16 December 1884, p. 2; *Te Aroha News*, 26 April 1884, p. 7, 27 September 1884, p. 2.

⁴⁹ *Waikato Times*, 8 September 1885, p. 2; *Thames Advertiser*, 11 December 1885, p. 3.

⁵⁰ John Squirrell to Sir George Grey, 20 October 1885, Grey New Zealand Letters, vol. 29, pp. 125-126, Auckland Public Library.

In October 1886, he told his brother-in-law that during the day his daughter Bess was minding the store for him while he worked on his farm. He had 'almost abandoned' it to her,

as the business is less than ever, the best business I have done lately is buying up my opponents stock when they smash up & go away, but the strange thing is that some new adventurer always starts up to take their places, one year is about the outside duration of these opponents, so I waste but little time over the business now but go every afternoon for an hour or so, and on Saturdays from 12 till 8, also at any other time that I am wanted, Bess can sit & sew to fill up the time.

He intended to sell the produce of his fruit trees and gooseberry and currant bushes in Auckland 'if I ever get more than I can sell locally, one reason why I hang on to the Store so is that I can sell my own produce there, besides getting every thing I want for farm or home at wholesale prices, which makes my expenses less than other peoples'.⁵¹

In May 1887, he was the main sufferer from a big gale. 'A quantity of goods placed in a large two-storey building adjoining his store, were much broken and injured by the rain, etc, through the building being overturned and generally wrecked'. This building belonged to another man, and 'fortunately Mr Squirrell's general store escaped, and the mishap will not in any way affect the carrying on of his business'.⁵² Later that month, he 'removed his business back to the site first occupied by him when commencing business at Shaftesbury, which adjoins his dwelling house'.⁵³ In addition to his 'commodious Store' he had become an agent for the New Zealand Insurance Company and the Frozen Meat and Storage Company.⁵⁴ In December 1888, in describing his storekeeping difficulties, he explaining that, in addition to selling his own apples he had

also bought a neighbours crop and he delivers me about 4 to 500lbs weekly. I expect he will continue doing that for about 4 months making 7 to 8000lbs which I must sell besides my own. I go out with the cart twice a week and if I find that is not enough shall have to go every other day. I am away about 12 hours, on a

⁵¹ John Squirrell to 'Harry' (Bradley), 2 October 1886, John Squirrell Papers, MS 288, Library of the Auckland Institute and War Memorial Museum.

⁵² *Te Aroha News*, 14 May 1887, p. 2.

⁵³ *Te Aroha News*, 28 May 1887, p. 2.

⁵⁴ *Te Aroha News*, 4 June 1887, p. 3.

wet day I have to emulate Mark Tapley⁵⁵ as I get pretty wet and have hard work to keep the contents of my cart dry. My return cargo includes 3 to 4 doz loaves of bread and other things which would spoil if wet, yet I have to keep weighing & selling fruit &c in the rain but on the whole my work is tolerably pleasant. I find my Stock (Store) a great burden to me and I have to keep working off portions at the other townships often forcing a sale by selling at a loss but I am gradually getting money in, - as I have bought a great deal of stuff at bankrupts sales (2 years ago) I make on the average cost price all round on my sales abroad, and of course I have a small home business in groceries and necessaries which about pays for the business expenses, so I am liquidating the business without loss and perhaps with a small profit.⁵⁶

As his shop would have benefited from constructing a bridge at Shaftesbury in 1900, he may have been one of the neighbouring settlers who subscribed towards its erection. Until then, Thompson's Track, which crossed the range from the Bay of Plenty, ended abruptly at the river, where in good weather a punt was used. 'The store and post office being on one side of the river, and the creamery and school being on the other, added to the awkwardness of the position'.⁵⁷ 'Squirrell's Store, Shaftesbury', was used as a polling place in 1902.⁵⁸ When Squirrell finally sold or closed his store is not known; after conducting it for over 30 years, he had been retired as storekeeper and postmaster 'for some time' before his death in 1924.⁵⁹

One of the main problems facing Squirrell, like all village storekeepers in the depressed years of the 1880s in particular, was to enforce payment of goods sold on credit. In 1883 he also tried to obtain monies owing to the original owners of the store, Carr and Son, having purchased the book debts of their bankrupt estate. In June 1883, he sued Joseph Snasdell for £17 8s 6d, which included £11 17s 7d 'on account of Carr's estate, which plaintiff had authority to collect'; Snasdell was ordered to pay £16 11s 10d.⁶⁰ In

⁵⁵ A character in Charles Dickens' novel *Martin Chuzzlewit*.

⁵⁶ John Squirrell to 'Harry' (Bradley), 24 December 1888, John Squirrell Papers, MS 288, Library of the Auckland Institute and War Memorial Museum.

⁵⁷ Te Aroha Correspondent, *New Zealand Herald*, 6 August 1900, p. 7.

⁵⁸ *Thames Star*, 15 November 1902, p. 3.

⁵⁹ *Te Aroha News*, 8 August 1924, p. 4.

⁶⁰ Te Aroha Magistrate's Court, Civil Record Book 1881-1884, 58/1883, BCDG 11221/1a, ANZ-A; Magistrate's Court, *Te Aroha News*, 9 June 1883, p. 3, 23 June 1883, p. 2.

February 1885, he successfully sued Snasdell for £11 5s 5d.⁶¹ On 23 October, William McLeod was ordered to pay £13 6s 1d, a debt he admitted owing; his failure to do so meant a judgment summons was taken out against him seven days later.⁶² The legal fees had increased the debt to £14 6s by the time a distress warrant was served on 22 November, but McLeod paid only £2 4s.⁶³ In November Squirrell sued Moses Neal, a miner,⁶⁴ for £97 19s 9d, 'of which £10 1s 9d was a sum due to Carr's estate, purchased by plaintiff'; judgment was given for £87 12s 3d.⁶⁵ Unable to pay, Neal filed as a bankrupt in December.⁶⁶ Payment for six other small debts were sought through the magistrate's court in November and December,⁶⁷ and presumably paid, but in two other cases it proved more difficult to enforce payment. George Turrell, a Maori, was ordered to pay £30 5s, did not, and after a judgment summons was taken out against him was ordered to pay £33 19s and the interpreter's fee of £1 1s by 8 February 1884 or be imprisoned for one month.⁶⁸ Despite a warrant of commitment being taken out against him in September, Turrell was not imprisoned; in 1902 Squirrell took out another judgment summons against him to enforce payment of £35 6s.⁶⁹ The same sequence happened with another Maori, Nepi, ordered to pay £3 and threatened with two weeks' imprisonment if he did not; despite a

⁶¹ Te Aroha Magistrate's Court, Civil Record Book 1884-1889, 8/1885, BCDG 11221/1b, ANZ-A.

⁶² Te Aroha Magistrate's Court, Civil Record Book 1881-1884, 152/1883, Judgment Summons issued 30 October 1883, BCDG 11221/1a, ANZ-A; Magistrate's Court, *Te Aroha News*, 27 October 1883, p. 2.

⁶³ Te Aroha Magistrate's Court, Home Warrant Book 1883-1928, 17/1883, BBAV 11498/1a, ANZ-A.

⁶⁴ See *Te Aroha News*, 18 October 1884, p. 7; letter from H.H. Adams, *Waikato Times*, 1 November 1884, p. 3.

⁶⁵ Te Aroha Magistrate's Court, Civil Record Book 1881-1884, 171/1883, BCDG 11221/1a, ANZ-A; Magistrate's Court, *Te Aroha News*, 24 November 1883, p. 2.

⁶⁶ *Thames Advertiser*, 21 December 1883, p. 2.

⁶⁷ Te Aroha Magistrate's Court, Civil Record Book 1881-1884, 154-156, 158, 184, 186/1883, BCDG 11221/1a, ANZ-A.

⁶⁸ Te Aroha Magistrate's Court, Civil Record Book 1881-1884, 157/1883, Judgment Summons issued on 8 January 1884, BCDG 11221/1a, ANZ-A.

⁶⁹ Te Aroha Magistrate's Court, Home Warrant Book 1883-1928, 37/1884, BBAV 11498/1a; Civil Record Book 1896-1907, Judgment Summons issued on 26 August 1902, BCDG 11221/2a, ANZ-A; *New Zealand Police Gazettes*, 1884, 1885.

warrant of commitment being taken out, he was not imprisoned.⁷⁰ In 1902 Nepi was sued once more for the original amount plus court costs.⁷¹ In 1884 he also sued for £13 16s 1d and £35.⁷²

As a result of these difficulties, in December 1884 Squirrell published an advertisement in the *Te Aroha News*:

In consequence of the great difficulty experienced in getting the Cash due for Goods NO FURTHER CREDIT can be given. All Debtors are requested to make friendly arrangements at once with respect to the payment of back debts. GREAT REDUCTIONS will be made in Prices, and everything SOLD for CASH ONLY.⁷³

It continued to be his policy in later years to sell only for cash.⁷⁴ In 1884, when he sued for £28, the value of goods sent to be auctioned, the auctioneer paid £5 8s into court, being the value of goods sold three weeks previously; as Squirrell had not received regular statements of account, he had sued for the full amount. The decision was that £23 10s be paid, unless the goods were returned within 24 hours, in which case the penalty would be 1s.⁷⁵ As nothing further was reported, the goods must have been returned. That Squirrell did not keep to his policy of never allowing credit was indicated in 1895, when a local bankrupt's largest debt, of £12, was to him.⁷⁶

In October 1886, Squirrell wrote that 'one man who has owed me £25 for 3 years says he has come in for £7000 in England so I hope to get my money, with regard to some others by means of the farm I can sometimes

⁷⁰ Te Aroha Magistrate's Court, Civil Record Book 1881-1884, 153/1883, Judgment Summons issued on 8 January 1884, BCD, 11221/1a; Home Warrant Book 1883-1928, 38/1884, BBAV 11498/1a, ANZ-A; *New Zealand Police Gazettes*, 1884, 1885.

⁷¹ Te Aroha Magistrate's Court, Civil Record Book 1896-1907, Judgment Summons issued 29 July 1902, BCDG 11221/2a, ANZ-A.

⁷² Te Aroha Magistrate's Court, Civil Record Book 1881-1884, Plaintiff 183 and Judgment Summons issued on 4 March 1884, BCDG 11221/1a; Home Warrant Book 1883-1928, 37/1884, BBAV 11498/1a, ANZ-A.

⁷³ Advertisement, *Te Aroha News*, 27 December 1884, p. 7.

⁷⁴ *Te Aroha News*, 28 May 1887, p. 2.

⁷⁵ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 30 April 1885, p. 3.

⁷⁶ Bankruptcy of Timothy Donovan, *Mercantile and Bankruptcy Gazette of New Zealand*, 13 June 1895, p. 318.

get something paid off the debts by taking it out in work so that store helps the farm & the farm the store'.⁷⁷ Two years later, Squirrell gave evidence when Julia Esther Taylor of Shaftesbury sought a protection order against her husband, John, for 'having habitually failed to provide for herself and children, without such failure having been caused by sickness or any other just cause'. Squirrell deposed that he had seen the defendant drinking in a Waiorongomai hotel:

Knowing he had some contract work, I asked him how it was he was not at it. He said he did not go on with the contract work as it was not good enough. He said, however, he could have gone on with some other work, but did not say why he did not do so. Before this time he was at work at Messrs Thompson and Herries' place [Ernest Claud Meysey-Thompson⁷⁸ and the future Sir William Herries⁷⁹ farmed together at Wairakau], and made some excuse for leaving. At this time I offered him work at a price he fixed himself: One half was to go against his store account, and one half to be paid in cash. He took the work and went on with it for about a fortnight, and then went away in the middle of it. By the amount of work he did it was clear he would earn £6 per month, receiving at least £3 per month in cash, which, together with Mrs Taylor's earnings, would be amply sufficient to keep them.⁸⁰

Because this arrangement was a private one between creditor and debtor, Squirrell had never taken Taylor to court. Three and a half months later, he mentioned in a letter that he had 'a man now working for me he is one of my largest debtors and I keep half his wages for the back debts and he lives on the rest and has something to spare but as he spends his money with me for the necessaries of life he doesn't cost me much in actual money'.⁸¹ The name of this man was not given, but in September 1889, when Julia Taylor sought payment of maintenance, her husband told the

⁷⁷ John Squirrell to 'Harry' (Bradley), 2 October 1886, John Squirrell Papers, MS 288, Library of the Auckland Institute and War Memorial Museum.

⁷⁸ See *Auckland Star*, 15 September 1880, p. 2; *Te Aroha News*, 23 January 1889, p. 2, 26 June 1889, p. 2, 7 December 1889, p. 2; *New Zealand Gazette*, 6 March 1890, p. 255; *Observer*, 19 April 1890, p. 6; R.S. and D.C. Herries, *Memoir of Sir William Herries KCMG* (London, 1925), pp. 5, 54.

⁷⁹ See Herries.

⁸⁰ Magistrate's Court, *Te Aroha News*, 8 September 1888, p. 2.

⁸¹ John Squirrell to 'Harry' (Bradley), 24 December 1888, John Squirrell Papers, MS 288, Library of the Auckland Institute and War Memorial Museum.

magistrate that ‘I have done a good deal of work for Mr Squirrell, storekeeper, but half my earnings are deducted towards paying the back debts incurred before my wife got separation’.⁸² This arrangement whereby a debt was paid off by doing work may have been used on other occasions.

Squirrell was sued only twice. In 1883, Robert Mackie, a Te Aroha butcher,⁸³ successfully sued him for £20 6s 1d, presumably for meat supplied.⁸⁴ Almost two years later, he was sued for £1 12s 8d, for newspapers supplied, which he denied having ordered. ‘After some very voluminous evidence had been gone into’, a lawyer ‘produced a letter written by defendant, which brought the case to a speedy conclusion, as defendant said he had quite forgotten ever having written such a letter, but could not dispute the claim having seen it’.⁸⁵

INVOLVEMENT IN THE COMMUNITY

Squirrell was a leading member of the small Shaftesbury community. In January 1884, he was a member of the school committee and was re-elected until at least 1889;⁸⁶ the loss of the local newspaper for most of the 1890s makes it impossible to know when he ceased to be a member. In mid-1895 an Auckland newspaper refused to publish his letter ‘detailing a series of irregularities that he alleges took place’ at Te Aroha ‘in connection with the school committee election’ because the matter was ‘long past, and at the time the Board of Education declined to interfere’.⁸⁷ (There was no record in the board’s minutes of its having considered his complaint.)⁸⁸ In the following year he was elected as secretary of the school committee at

⁸² Magistrate’s Court, *Te Aroha News*, 4 September 1889, p. 2.

⁸³ See paper on Robert and Elizabeth Mackie.

⁸⁴ Te Aroha Magistrate’s Court, Civil Record Book 1881-1884, 185/1883, BCDG 11221/1a, ANZ-A.

⁸⁵ Te Aroha Warden’s Court, Plaintiff Book 1880-1898, folio 5, BBAV 11547/1a, ANZ-A; Magistrate’s Court, *Te Aroha News*, 14 November 1885, p. 2.

⁸⁶ *Te Aroha News*, 5 January 1884, p. 2, 1 May 1886, p. 7, 7 May 1887, p. 2, 28 April 1888, p. 2, 27 April 1889, p. 2.

⁸⁷ *New Zealand Herald*, 17 June 1895, p. 3.

⁸⁸ Auckland Education Board, Minutes of Proceedings 1892-1895, YCAF 5491/8a, ANZ-A.

Gordon, where he had settled.⁸⁹ In 1906 he would chair the meeting of the householders of nearby Aratiatia held to elect their school committee.⁹⁰

In 1884, he was one of three residents who asked the council if they could improve the roadway at the settlement because it had not done this work, as requested.⁹¹ In July 1886 he complained to it about the bad state of the roads.⁹² An indication of his status was that he chaired a meeting of residents who had been 'starved out' but did not wish to lose their three acres. After the meeting, he wrote a letter to Sir George Grey on the lines desired by the meeting,⁹³ adding 'a few remarks' in a covering letter:

Personally I have nothing to complain of having been a purchaser of 150 acres for which I paid at once, thereby avoiding any complications, I am simply acting in this matter as a friend to the working men here, who by the bankruptcy of Mr Grant [who had founded the settlement] have fallen into fresh hands & cannot get what they are entitled to.

If the pressure of your many engagements do not leave you time to peruse this, please throw it aside, but kindly attend to the workmens petition.

I was a settler here before these people came and as farmer, storekeeper, & postmaster, have had intimate relations with all the settlers and I can certify that the men whose names are attached to the enclosed have been here the 3 years required, and have suffered much hardship in trying to remain. They state that an agreement was made with them in England to find them work during the 3 years, work was found for a time and then suddenly withdrawn leaving these 36 families stranded, in a place which now finds work for about 4 men out of these settlers.

He then described how the men had to seek work elsewhere whilst their wives and families remained on their sections, often having to beg for food from their neighbours when their husbands could not send money. The founders of the settlement had promised to give them the land if they remained on it for three years, but now Edward Wingfield Hanmer, the

⁸⁹ *New Zealand Herald*, 1 May 1896, p. 3.

⁹⁰ *New Zealand Herald*, 3 July 1906, p. 7.

⁹¹ *Te Aroha News*, 18 October 1884, p. 2.

⁹² Piako County Council, *Waikato Times*, 6 July 1886, p. 2.

⁹³ *Te Aroha News*, 5 December 1885, p. 2.

founders' agent,⁹⁴ appeared to be trying to take their land off them, in a manner he described in detail. He concluded by offering to provide additional information.⁹⁵ Grey responded by thanking him 'for your extremely clear and intelligent letter. It was a great assistance to me', and he promised to assist. In a letter to the settlers, Grey referred to 'an exceedingly clear and full letter from Mr Squirrell'.⁹⁶ Perhaps because of Squirrell's intervention and Grey's subsequent actions they did not lose their land; but being unable to survive financially, most did leave.⁹⁷

In other ways Squirrell supported the original aims of the community, in 1885 helping to run meetings for the Band of Hope, a children's temperance organization.⁹⁸ He chaired a children's entertainment in September, and, after the usual songs and recitations, the second half of the programme was 'an original play entitled "Blue Beard," composed by Mr Squirrell, who also took the leading part in it, and caused much amusement'.⁹⁹

In 1903 he became registrar of dogs for the Te Aroha Riding of the Piako County Council; he was last recorded as acting in this capacity in December 1906.¹⁰⁰

JAMES MUNRO TEMPTS HIM TO BECOME A MINER

In May 1888, as he later recounted,

when going round on my business journeys a man I knew asked me if I would put money into a good thing if I knew of one, I said I would if I was sure it was a good thing, he then showed me a piece of heavy mineral which was evidently worth something by

⁹⁴ See Te Aroha Correspondent, *Thames Advertiser*, 10 September 1881, p. 3; *Waikato Times*, 9 October 1884, p. 2; *Te Aroha News*, 18 April 1885, p. 7.

⁹⁵ John Squirrell to Sir George Grey, 20 October 1885, Grey New Zealand Letters, vol. 29, pp. 124-129, Auckland Public Library.

⁹⁶ *Te Aroha News*, 5 December 1885, p. 2.

⁹⁷ See *New Zealand Herald*, 24 April 1886, Supplement, p. 1; *Auckland Weekly News*, 15 May 1886, p. 15.

⁹⁸ *Te Aroha News*, 22 August 1885, p. 2.

⁹⁹ *Te Aroha News*, 10 October 1885, p. 2.

¹⁰⁰ County Council to John Squirrell, 24 February 1903, Piako County Council, Letterbook 1902-1903, p. 248, Matamata-Piako District Council Archives, Te Aroha; Te Aroha Magistrate's Court, Criminal Record Book 1896-1907, 79/1906, BCDG 11220/1b, ANZ-A.

its weight and appearance, he told me that his son had discovered a good reef at the Tui Creek, and that this specimen was out of it, but that they had not the money necessary to take it up. I promised to go and see it.¹⁰¹

James Munro was the man who made this offer; his son was Donald, then aged either 27 or 24 (his birth had not been registered).¹⁰² James was a blacksmith, first at Thames in the early goldrush days and then at Waitekauri and Waiorongomai.¹⁰³ During the mid-1880s his attempts to become a contractor were unsuccessful.¹⁰⁴ As an indication of the state of his finances, in 1889 he was sued by a storekeeper for £5 1s 10d-worth of goods supplied; he had been permitted to obtain these on credit until the debt had reached £3 18s.¹⁰⁵

During the 1870s Munro had been a shareholder in Thames mining claims that were soon abandoned because of lack of success.¹⁰⁶ He was granted two claims at Waitekauri in 1876, but did no work on either.¹⁰⁷ In 1883, along with his son Donald and others, he was a partner in three claims near Te Aroha, which they soon abandoned.¹⁰⁸ His first involvement with Waiorongomai mining was to take up a claim with another man near the settlement in May 1883; they abandoned it six months later.¹⁰⁹ In

¹⁰¹ John Squirrel, 'Mining at Tui Creek N. Zd.: How I Came to Go Mining', n.d. [August and December 1888], p. 1 of typescript, John Squirrel Papers, MS 288, Library of the Auckland Institute and War Memorial Museum.

¹⁰² Death Certificate of Mary Ann Munro, 21 July 1889, 1889/3368, BDM.

¹⁰³ Birth Certificate of Mary Ann Munro, 13 August 1870, 1870/186, BDM; *New Zealand Gazette*, 19 October 1876, p. 715; *Waikato Electoral Roll, 1884*, p. 15.

¹⁰⁴ *Te Aroha News*, 31 January 1885, p. 2, 20 June 1885, p. 2, 29 August 1885, p. 2, Piako County Council, 26 February 1887, p. 2, 19 March 1887, p. 2.

¹⁰⁵ Magistrate's Court, *Te Aroha News*, 15 June 1889, p. 7.

¹⁰⁶ Thames Warden's Court, Register of Claims 1872-1874, nos. 1, 39, 157, 171, BACL 14397/8a; Register of Claims 1875-1876, folios 4, 119, 127, BACL 14397/9a; Register of Grahamstown Claims 1876-1878, nos. 520, 529, BACL 14397/11a, ANZ-A.

¹⁰⁷ Thames Warden's Court, Report Book of Mining Inspector, no. 2, 1876-1878, folios 64, 90, BACL 14451/1a, ANZ-A.

¹⁰⁸ Te Aroha Warden's Court, Register of Te Aroha Claims 1880-1888, folios 285, 304, 305, BBAV 11567/1a, ANZ-A.

¹⁰⁹ Te Aroha Warden's Court, Register of Te Aroha Claims 1880-1888, folio 283, BBAV 11567/1a, ANZ-A.

December that year, at the banquet celebrating the first cleaning up at the new battery, Munro responded to the toast to ‘mining interests’ with ‘a speech which for good feeling and an evident desire for the good of the district would be difficult to equal’.¹¹⁰ In 1885 he was out-bid in an attempt to buy the Vulcan.¹¹¹ For one year from April 1886 he owned the Young Caledonian with another miner, Peter Buchan;¹¹² although when asking the council to connect it to the tramway he claimed it was payable, they failed to find good ore.¹¹³ Also in 1886, his application to be manager of the tramway was declined, as was his request in January 1888 on behalf of the Te Aroha Prospecting Association for financial assistance to prospect at Waiorongomai.¹¹⁴ A vocal opponent of the monopoly enjoyed by the Battery Company,¹¹⁵ he was a prominent champion of Waiorongomai’s interests.¹¹⁶ He also attempted to become a farmer by becoming a member of the Gordon Special Settlement Association, mainly comprising Waiorongomai residents, of which he was treasurer in 1885 and 1886 and chairman in 1887 and 1888.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁰ *Te Aroha News*, 8 December 1883, p. 3.

¹¹¹ *Te Aroha News*, 19 September 1885, p. 2.

¹¹² For his career at Waiorongomai, see Te Aroha Warden’s Court, Register of Te Aroha Claims 1880-1888, folios 144, 317, BBAV 11567/1a, ANZ-A; *Te Aroha News*, 31 October 1885, p. 2, Piako County Council, 7 August 1886, p. 2. Was he the Peter Buchan referred to in *Auckland Weekly News*, 16 October 1886, p. 1?

¹¹³ Te Aroha Warden’s Court, Register of Te Aroha Claims 1880-1880, folio 144, BBAV 11567/1a; Register of Applications 1883-1900, 47/1886, BBAV 11505/1a, ANZ-A; Thames School of Mines, Assay Book 1886-1887, sample from Young Caledonian tested for Munro on unrecorded date, School of Mines Archives, Thames; Piako County Council, *Waikato Times*, 5 August 1886, p. 2.

¹¹⁴ *Te Aroha News*, 21 August 1886, p. 2, Piako County Council, 24 December 1887, p. 2, Piako County Council, 21 January 1888, p. 2.

¹¹⁵ For example, *Te Aroha News*, 16 August 1884, p. 2, 7 February 1885, p. 7.

¹¹⁶ For example, *Te Aroha News*, 12 July 1884, p. 7, 25 October 1884, p. 2, 6 December 1884, p. 2, 31 January 1885, p. 2, 5 June 1886, p. 2, 3 July 1886, p. 2, 19 May 1888, p. 2, 7 July 1888, p. 2.

¹¹⁷ Gordon Special Settlement, Lands and Survey Department, BAAZ 1109/103a, ANZ-A; *Waikato Times*, 10 November 1885, p. 2, 7 September 1886, p. 2; *Te Aroha News*, 18 April 1885, p. 2, 10 April 1886, p. 2, 14 January 1888, p. 2, 26 December 1888, p. 2.

His son Donald was a plumber, living at Waiorongomai.¹¹⁸ In 1883 he was one of seven owners of three claims near Te Aroha, soon abandoned.¹¹⁹ In the following year, an advertisement warned that his 30 shares in the Colonist Company would be forfeited if the latest call remained unpaid.¹²⁰ In 1886, he was granted 89 acres at the Gordon Special Settlement,¹²¹ but there was no record of his having farmed there. That he was sued in February 1888 to enforce payment of £2 15s 6d and the following year to obtain £4 2s 2d¹²² suggests either that he had very little money or that he was reluctant to part with what he had, neither supposition being encouraging for his mining with Squirrell.

MINING AT TUI

In August 1888, when Squirrell wrote a letter to his English relations about his experiences as a miner, he described his first visit to where Munro's specimen had been found:

A few days afterwards 4 of us made a journey to the Tui Creek about 3 miles north of Te Aroha, on our way there we decided that as it was desirable not to let any one know what we were about lest they should lay claim to it sooner than ourselves, we agreed that I as a stranger should go to visit the mines up the hill, and that my friends should show me about, no one would be likely then to suspect anything, or follow us all day, and on returning we arranged to slip aside from the track and go to see the newly discovered reef.

So we spent the morning climbing up the hill, which we found was pretty stiff work as the mud was considerable in places, and the ascent steep, after about an hour & a half of toiling relieved by an occasional rest on a log we arrived at the mines, this last hour and a half was in the bush we having had a previous hours climb up the hill side before entering the range.

I cannot attempt to describe the Bush scenery, it would need a man well acquainted with the names of the numerous forest trees

¹¹⁸ *Waikato Electoral Roll, 1884*, p. 15; *Tauranga Electoral Roll, 1887*, p. 18.

¹¹⁹ Te Aroha Warden's Court, Register of Te Aroha Claims 1880-1888, folios 285, 304, 305, BBAV 11567/1a, ANZ-A.

¹²⁰ *Te Aroha News*, 1 August 1885, p. 7.

¹²¹ *Waikato Times*, 7 September 1886, p. 2.

¹²² Te Aroha Magistrate's Court, Civil Record Book 1884-1889, 21/1888, BCDG 11221/1b; Civil Record Book 1889-1896, 115/1889, BCDG 11221/1c, ANZ-A.

and also with the faculty of portraying the beauty of a New Zealand forest, varied by its occasional glimpses through openings, of wide stretches of the country lying outstretched below like a dark green map with the shining beads of river here & there, and in one place a large swamp lake glistening in the sun in the background where the distant ranges which in this country seem always to bound every horizon.

When well up the hill we came to the mines, we inspected the "Ruakaka" and the "Champion" claims, both since turned into Companies, there were cuttings into the surface of the hill side, and a shanty containing a forge to sharpen tools in & other blacksmiths' work. In one place we came to a tunnel in which 2 men were working by the light of a candle, one held the drill in the roof of the tunnel while the other struck it with the hammer, the tunnel was supported by timber and water dripped in here & there running out along the floor, outside we could see better what kind of ore they were getting, the quartz was divided into two heaps, on the one side was the galena ore a mixture of silver & lead on the other another kind of ore the value of which we had to take for granted being new chums at that kind of the thing, several of the miners said they didn't understand the kind of stuff they were getting out, but they were told it was all right, before coming back we rested in their whare being invited to partake of tea &c, we then returned down the hill and when more than half way down were taken aside by our guide and in a short time were inspecting the newly discovered reefs, after chipping off pieces here & there I came to the conclusion that the stone was the same as in the other mines, and agreed to take up the matter.

I may say at once that this involved the payment of £40 into court for first years rent & Survey expenses.

The site of these reefs (there appeared to be 2 of them) was on the sides of a gully the creek running down between them, when I was quite satisfied, we returned down the hill, and the next day the pegs were driven in to mark the boundaries that we claimed, we then gave notice at the court for 30 acres of ground as a licensed holding christening it by the title of "Silver Queen."¹²³

On 19 May, Squirrell and Donald Munro advertised that they had applied for 30 acres, to be known as the Silver Queen Gold and Silver Mining Company, at 'Tui Creek, about half a mile from Ruakaka Township on the north-east, and about half a mile north west from [Edward] Cameron's camp'.¹²⁴ They stated they would invest £2,000,¹²⁵ a large sum

¹²³ Squirrell, 'Mining at Tui Creek', p. 1 of typescript.

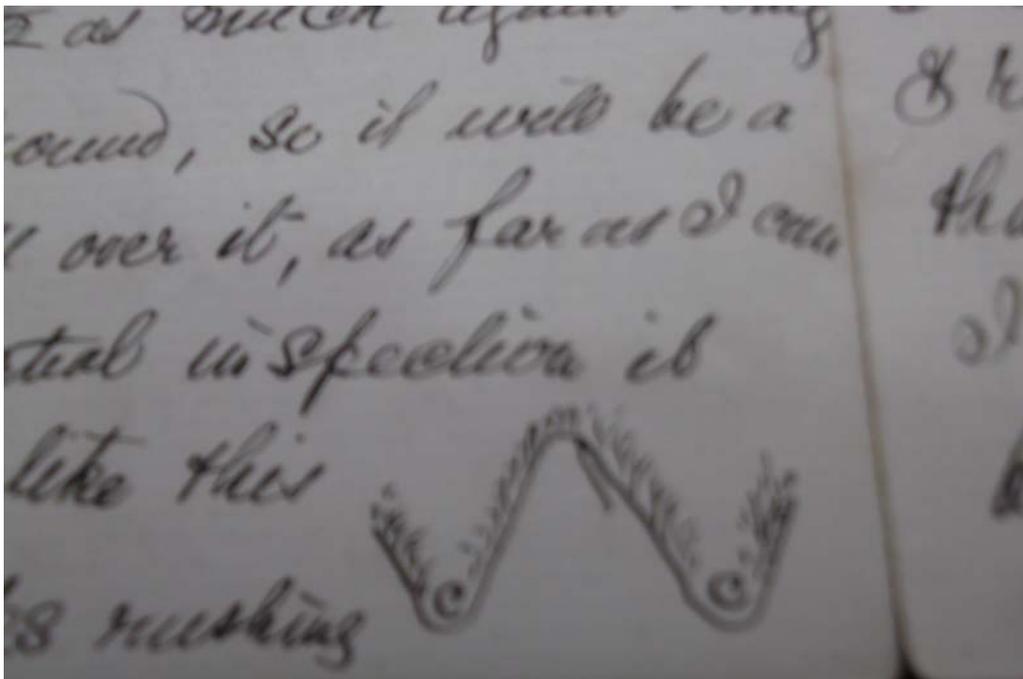
¹²⁴ See paper on his life.

¹²⁵ Advertisement, *Te Aroha News*, 19 May 1888, p. 7.

they did not possess. Squirrell described his amateur attempt to be a miner to his family in England:

We then had to wait 2 months while the survey was being made and also to give others an opportunity of opposing our claims in the event of their having pegged it out before us, when the day came there was no opposition and it was granted to us.

Meanwhile we paid a visit to it to try to find the survey lines, but could do no work as it was not yet ours. The surveyor is supposed to cut a clear track all round the 30 acres, we found one such line, and some signs of another partly marked but not cut, and up to the present we have been content with that having had no time to hunt up the other 2 lines, 30 acres of ground taken level includes about 1/2 as much again owing to steepness of the ground, so it will be a long time before we go all over it, as far as I can see by the plan and a partial inspection it appears to be something like this



the two "c's" are the creeks rushing down hill. On one side it contains 4 creeks but each two of them combine into one so that while 4 creeks run into the property above, only 2 run out of it below, these creeks are full of large & small stones and the vegetation on both sides make them somewhat difficult to follow.

There are plenty of Tui birds who sing always the same peculiar little song, the rushing water makes such a noise that you cant make yourself heard a hundred yards away if you shout, but if we get up the hill a little way we can hear very well.

At the end of our two months waiting we set to work at once but the weather became very bad this was in July. I went one day

alone in the rain but the mud & rain made it so tiresome going up the track that before I had got far enough I thought I must be there, and turned off into the bush, I found my way down to the creek but missed the reef. I followed the water downwards hoping to find it, this was slow and rather tiresome work I being encumbered by an oilskin coat to keep out the wet, I could not find it at all, and I returned somewhat disgusted with myself for being principal owner in a property which I was unable to find alone.

When I next went I had someone to show me and took more care to note the proper place to leave the track so as to know my way better in future.

The first thing to be done was to build a whare to shelter ourselves in when it rained and as a place to leave our tools &c in, so I and Mr [James] Munro went down and chose a spot on the hill side just above our present work, the first thing was to level a site, no easy task, as first the ground was covered with roots and under them was full of stones, however with tomahawk, pick and shovel we finally made some level ground, then we had to cut down a lot of straight young trees in short and long lengths to build our frame with. We took a good straight growing tree about 4 inches thick which we left in the ground and used for one end setting a pole at the opposite end of the ground and nailing a ridge from the standing tree to the pole. When dinner time came we found we had excellent appetites, and after feeding I laid down my waterproof and stretched myself on the ground awhile, while Mr Munro had a smoke, I looked up through the bright green foliage, the sun was shining on the tops of the trees, and the blue sky peeping through, the white clouds were skudding along overhead showing a good breeze outside but we were sheltered down below, while lying there I came to the conclusion that this sort of thing was decidedly superior to sitting in an office in dingy London, that in short it was work & picnic combined, and at this stage decidedly pleasant, but we soon jumped up & went on with our house, the next day we had to hunt for nikau trees to make our thatch of, at first we didn't run across any but by and bye we found about half a dozen and soon had them down.

I as a new chum bushman distinguished myself by making my tree fall the wrong way on to several other trees the peculiar result of which was that while the bottom end went up in the air the top part which I wanted didn't come down so I had to cut down a few more trees to get at it, then we stopped to have a free feed out of the inside of the top, which was something like raw turnip with a nutty sort of flavor, I wasn't hungry enough to care for it, but to any one lost in the bush it must be very pleasant, if they only have the means of cutting down the trees to get at it.

Then we cut off the long leaves and partly slid & partly carried them down the hill and made our roof I seating myself astride the

ridge pole & tacking them on with nails, there was a wandering white cow with a bell on which disturbed my equanimity as I was afraid it might be fond of nikau leaves and eat our thatch which came down nearly to the ground but it didn't.

When we had finished the outside we put up the frames of three bunks, we had put canvas on the roof under the thatch this was old drapery wrappers, so our cabin is covered all over with my name and address, and there will be no doubt about the ownership of the mansion in the mind of any wandering stranger who may take refuge there - we have not put any door on yet, I suppose in time we shall have it properly padlocked as the other miners huts are.

Then to work with pick & shovel, drill & gad, fuse & dynamite, waking the echoes of this silent land with our reports, and sending messages to those below letting the world know that something was going on up in the hills, we first shovelled a floor in front of the reef, and decided to put in a charge of dynamite, the question arose who was to hold the drill and who to strike the heavy hammer. If I struck & missed Mr Munro's hand wouldn't have been much use for that day at least, and if he struck & missed my hand mightn't have been of much use any more at all, I declined however to run the risk of hitting him, and he said there was no chance of his missing, so I held the drill and he hammered away, after each blow I had to take out the drill an inch or so, turn it round and put it back firmly in time for the next blow while he struck about once in 2 seconds, we have to stop every two or 3 minutes to clear the hole out & put water in it, it takes from 20 min to 1/2 an hour to get in the length of the drill, when my hand has no room to hold the drill any longer we have to stop - then the dynamite is put in and the detonating cap, then the fuse & after stopping up the rest of the hole with dirt & ramming it in we set light to it and ran to some hole in rock round a corner & wait a minute, then follows a powerful report and the fragments fly in showers like a rain of bullets in a battle, we wait a minute for the smoke & fumes to clear off and go to see what work is done, a big piece or two thrown down and a lot of cracks in the reef which make it possible for us to get out a lot more quartz with our picks, sometimes we pull down a big lump and have to jump out of the way sharp to prevent our legs from being damaged, we lay them up on a pile till the time comes when the [Champion Company's] furnace will be erected down below, then we can send these heaps down, to be smelted, and get our money for them, whether they will pay for the expense or not remains to be seen. Munro strikes the hammer with his right hand and I with my left, but I am learning to do both as a good miner should, of course I have plenty to learn at first of the ways of doing things, we supposed we were mining for silver ore but after a few days work I bought a prospecting dish which is an iron pan which

they wash stuff in when looking for gold, Munro tried some loose sand in it down in the creek and the next minute I heard him shouting with delight come here come here! I went and he pointed out grains of gold in the dish, we said O be joyful, and several times in the day and since then we have tried occasionally but have seen no more, but it infused a vein of extra hope into the proceedings, after getting out a ton or two of the kind of the ore this reef was composed of, we decided to try somewhere else. The next reef we started on was of a different sort what is called a Galena reef that is with a good deal of lead in it, we worked on this for a day and got out about a ton of stuff one chunk weighed about 2 cwt and we had to take care of our toes when that came down, we did not need to use dynamite with this reef, the ore is embedded in stone of a softer kind we have to get this out with the pick all round the harder quartz, as we generally work underneath the portion we want we have to call out when we see it is coming down, and we jump out of the way to save our legs and toes, all outside pieces we send tumbling down the hill and the quartz with mineral in it we stack up in a pile ready to be smelted some day.

We have seen Mr [Alexander] Parkes¹²⁶ who was paid £1000 to come here and superintend the putting up of the furnaces for smelting, he is supposed to be very clever on metals we showed him pieces from 3 different reefs and he spoke well of them and took away about 1/4 of a cwt to be tested in his furnace at Karangahake, we are still waiting to know the result.

The reefs are rather puzzling, they are generally supposed to follow a straight course yet we lose them sometimes and cant find them in a hurry, we tunnelled into the ground for one just where we thought it ought to be, taking the line from where we found it a short way off, and three of us were working most of the day and could not find it - some days we spend hours prowling about trying the surface of the ground & breaking the stones which we see in the ground in order to discover new reefs if possible, as the more we find the greater will be the value of the ground, in the mean time we are under the rules of the mining act which enables the government to cause our property to be forfeited if not being worked by a number of men, and this would be beyond our means to pay for, more than a month or two, this seems hard, but it is wise & necessary otherwise all the mining ground would be locked up for speculative purposes, we get the ground on very moderate terms, but we must make good use of it or give it up to those who will, in order that the country may prosper, and work may be found for as many hands as possible.

One man has ground on which lies big boulders with metals in them and he has been looking for the reef for 2 years out of which

¹²⁶ See paper on the Tui mines.

they came, but cant find it, we also have big boulders in our creek full of mineral, and as yet we are uncertain whether they fell down from a reef up above or whether they are the top of reef lying under the creek, there are many things to puzzle us but they will be found out in time, I have had to knock off for a week to get my spring sowing done at home, unfortunately this week has been mostly wet, perhaps my partners have been at work, but I don't think so, when I don't go no one goes, so I must make another start in a day or two.

The girls have named our new kitten "Tui" in honour of the mine and I hope the cat wont turn out to have a bad name.¹²⁷

That they wanted to discover new reefs because 'the greater will be the value of the ground' implied an intention to sell rather than work their claim. On 1 September, it was reported that 'Messrs Squirrell and Munro have commenced operations on the Silver Queen Licensed Holding, Tui, and already discovered reefs'.¹²⁸ Their hopes of using a Parkes furnace were dashed when his furnace at Karangahake was closed down in November after only three weeks' work and Parkes himself left the colony,¹²⁹ never to return. In Squirrell's words, 'Mr Parkes the expert on whom we built our hopes has suddenly vanished to Queensland and the furnace which was to be built to smelt our ore has vanished likewise that is to say it wont be erected at present'.¹³⁰

On 24 December, he wrote that 'as respects the mining there is nothing much to report, up to the present it has been all trouble & expense and nothing likely to be got out of it yet'.

I am still working several days in the week in the mines, but if some good does not soon come out of it shall have to give it up, it wants capital to do the work as there is no visible gold like in Australia, but it has to be extracted by very costly processes about £30,000 is being spent at Waiorongomai in erecting Batteries crushing machines furnaces &c with immense chimneys, and if these works succeed we shall do, if they fail we shall have to vegetate again and live on our own cabbages for 5 or 10 years till some other industry turns up to maintain the families who will eat our produce.

¹²⁷ Squirrell, 'Mining at Tui Creek', pp. 2-4 of typescript.

¹²⁸ *Te Aroha News*, 1 September 1888, p. 2.

¹²⁹ *Te Aroha News*, 10 November 1888, p. 2, 14 November 1888, p. 3, 24 November 1888, p. 2, Ohinemuri Correspondent, 4 December 1888, p. 2.

¹³⁰ Squirrell, 'Mining at Tui Creek', p. 4 of typescript.

A few months ago we thought our mine would turn out well, a clever mineralogist Mr A Parkes was paid £1000 to come here to set up a patent furnace which was to make our fortunes but although the furnace was erected and was reported a perfect success it immediately afterwards stopped & Mr Parkes flitted in [to] Queensland, and our hopes died down to nothing, we had given him some of our ore & he spoke highly of it, one mine near ours is floated into a company and some thousands are being spent in wages on it, but we haven't the money to do anything with ours....

Some day I will send you some mineral specimens from our mines here, the awkward part of the affair is that what looks so well is not worth much, and the richest stone I should throw away not being able to tell its value, there is no end of glitter in the stone and specks that look something like gold, but it is always something else.¹³¹

At the warden's court hearing of 2 April 1889, the mining inspector applied for the forfeiture of the ground for non-working.¹³² 'John Squirrell said he and Jas. Munro (a shareholder), had done a good deal of work on the ground. Donald Munro, however, had never done anything to assist in working the property. If allowed a little further time he thought he would be able to arrange for having the ground worked'.¹³³ Another report quoted him arguing that the license should not be cancelled. He

pointed out that they had four reefs to work on, had taken out several tons of stuff, and had been assured by Mr Parkes that it was valuable, but when after that gentleman rather unexpectedly departed, it did cast a damper on the shareholders. The claim had cost him, personally, £70 and if he could get others to join him, and get rid of one shareholder who had done nothing, the ground would be sufficiently manned.¹³⁴

The warden, after noting that the claim was 'off the general run of reefs, and in comparatively new country', granted an adjournment for one

¹³¹ John Squirrell to 'Harry' (Bradley), 24 December 1888, John Squirrell Papers, MS 288, Library of the Auckland Institute and War Memorial Museum.

¹³² Te Aroha Warden's Court, *Plaint Book 1880-1898*, 9/1889, BBAV 11547/1a, ANZ-A.

¹³³ Warden's Court, *Te Aroha News*, 3 April 1889, p. 2.

¹³⁴ Warden's Court, *Waikato Times*, 6 April 1889, p. 2.

month.¹³⁵ Shortly after this hearing, in a postscript to his letter with the heading ‘Mining at Tui Creek’, Squirrell wrote that the

break down of the Parkes furnace, which was erected and failed to extract the gold & silver took all the steam out of us and we left off working, the mining inspector has dropped down on us for not working the ground, and claimed to have it forfeited, I appeared at the Court and defended myself, he gave me a months grace to see what I can do, if I can’t get some one into it with money I shall have to abandon it, Somebody will make a fortune out of it some day.¹³⁶

The last comment reinforced the fact that, as was clear from his earlier remarks, he had little if any knowledge of geology, a lack of expertise shared by James Munro and many others mining at Tui. At the subsequent warden’s court sitting, as he admitted not being able to make satisfactory arrangements to work the ground, it was forfeited, although the rent paid, £15, still had three months to run.¹³⁷

In his last attempt to make money from mining, in October 1895, during the boom, he applied for the Golden Queen at Tui, being 30 acres ‘formerly known as Silver Queen’, but almost three weeks later withdrew the application ‘as I find it was previously pegged out by another’.¹³⁸

WAIORONGOMAI MINING

In July 1888, Squirrell applied, along with James Munro and two miners, a blacksmith, a farmer, and a hotelkeeper, for the Celtic at Waiorongomai, which was granted on 7 August,¹³⁹ and never heard of again. In November, Munro applied for Beelzebub, one man’s ground, which was granted on 18 December.¹⁴⁰ On 1 January 1889, it was re-registered with

¹³⁵ Warden’s Court, *Te Aroha News*, 3 April 1889, p. 2.

¹³⁶ Squirrell, ‘Mining at Tui Creek’, (April 1889 postscript), p. 4 of typescript.

¹³⁷ Warden’s Court, *Te Aroha News*, 1 May 1889, p. 2; Te Aroha Warden’s Court, Register of Licensed Holdings and Special Claims 1887-1909, folio 27, BBAV 11500/8b, ANZ-A.

¹³⁸ Te Aroha Warden’s Court, Mining Applications 1895, 38/1895, BBAV 11582/4a, ANZ-A.

¹³⁹ Te Aroha Warden’s Court, Register of Applications 1883-1900, 55/1888, BBAV 11505/1a, ANZ-A.

¹⁴⁰ Te Aroha Warden’s Court, Register of Applications 1883-1900, 136/1888, BBAV 11505/1a, ANZ-A.

four owners, one of them Squirrell, each having a quarter interest. Four months later, Squirrell bought the interest of one of the owners.¹⁴¹ This claim immediately vanished into obscurity also. In March 1889, he applied for 15 acres on behalf of the Oceana Gold and Silver Mining Company, declaring that he would invest £500 in working it.¹⁴² He was granted the Oceana at the same hearing that deprived him of the Silver Queen.¹⁴³ A month later, he successfully applied for permission to prospect it with two men for three months.¹⁴⁴ In January 1890, when the mining inspector sought its forfeiture for non-working, Squirrell agreed that the license should be cancelled because 'at the present moment I cannot see my way clear to carry on work'.¹⁴⁵

HIS GORDON FARM

Mining having depleted, not enhanced, his finances, he returned to farming by joining the Gordon Special Settlement Association. In 1892, George Robert Beeson, a Waiorongomai carpenter,¹⁴⁶ asked permission to transfer two sections at Gordon to Squirrell, who, according to Beeson, was planning to establish a branch store there.¹⁴⁷ The area acquired, 97 acres one rood and 38 perches, adjoined the river, and cost him £165.¹⁴⁸ It was largely undeveloped. In March 1890, Beeson informed the Ranger that he

¹⁴¹ Te Aroha Warden's Court, Register of Te Aroha Claims 1880-1888, folio 328, BBAV 11567/1a, ANZ-A.

¹⁴² *Te Aroha News*, 16 March 1889, p. 7.

¹⁴³ Warden's Court, *Te Aroha News*, 26 June 1889, p. 2.

¹⁴⁴ Te Aroha Warden's Court, Register of Applications 1883-1900, 42/1889, BBAV 11567/1a, ANZ-A; Warden's Court, *Te Aroha News*, 26 June 1889, p. 2.

¹⁴⁵ Te Aroha Warden's Court, Plaintiff Book 1880-1898, 11/1890, BBAV 11547/1a; John Squirrell to Clerk of Court, 1 February 1890, Te Aroha Warden's Court, Plaints 1890, 11/1890, BBAV 11572/2a, ANZ-A.

¹⁴⁶ See *Te Aroha News*, 27 May 1909, p. 2.

¹⁴⁷ G.R. Beeson to Commissioner of Crown Land, 20 November 1892; Memorandum by Ranger, 6 December 1892, Lands and Survey Department, BAAZ 1108/103a, ANZ-A.

¹⁴⁸ Lands and Survey Department, Certificate of Title Under Land Transfer Act (with map), Register Book, vol. 86 folio 4, Land Information New Zealand, Hamilton; John Squirrell to Commissioner of Crown Lands, 1 December 1893, Lands and Survey Department, BAAZ 1108/103a, ANZ-A; Terese McLoughlin and Gladys Davison, *Gordon Centenary 1884-1984* (Matamata, 1984), pp. 3-4.

had sown 15 acres with grass seed, but when inspected in March 1892 ‘the land said to have been sown was overgrown with Rushes and Titree. It could not be considered cultivation’. Beeson, who had never lived on the land, in 1892 claimed to have burnt off and surface sown about 30 acres with grass seed, 20 of which was ‘in splendid grass’, to have planted 150 shelter trees and 60 fruit trees, and to have ploughed 10 acres. Benjamin Bayley, the Crown Lands Ranger,¹⁴⁹ discovered a house valued at £10, two acres ploughed, and twenty chains of drain dug, making a total valuation of £39.¹⁵⁰

Officials soon doubted whether Squirrell intended to settle there, or whether he, like other members of the association, was holding land for speculative purposes. He certainly wanted to retain his land against what he believed to be a conspiracy to deprive him of it. His long letter of 1 December 1893 to the Commissioner of Crown Land in Auckland made dramatic charges and revealed his plans. ‘From information I recd a few days ago I learned that a conspiracy was on foot to get my section forfeited and that the parties concerned in it had got at the ranger and given him false information and now the statement is going round the settlement that my section is to be forfeited’. He claimed to have done all the improvements required for one year ‘by putting a main drain through the centre of the section at a cost of £10 besides other smaller improvements’, and had spent £180 ‘for past payments and improvements’. When Bayley, visited, in his absence, he was shown over the land by a man ‘who must have shown him as little as possible’ and had misinformed him about the work done.

It must have been the owner of the next section who did me this service as he has been trying ever since I bought to induce me to sell it to him and the last time he offered me £35 bonus to sell it to him & all cash down, but I told him I had bought it for use & not for speculation, he then said well “youll be turned off it in less than 6 months” there are 3 of these men hanging together,

who were threatening to have other settlers' properties forfeited unless their land was sold to them. Squirrell admitted to only one defect: ‘a house of sawn timber 14 x 10 with door, chimney, and window, but I am not at

¹⁴⁹ See *Evening Post*, 20 June 1890, p. 3; *New Zealand Herald*, 30 July 1903, p. 5.

¹⁵⁰ Memorandum by Benjamin Bayley (Ranger), 6 December 1892; G.R. Beeson to Commissioner of Crown Lands, 20 November 1892, Lands and Survey Department, BAAZ 1108/103a, ANZ-A.

present actually living in it although I make use of it, it has been lived in for months together since my occupation, but not by me personally'. He planned to erect a permanent residence. The Ranger had warned him, that as Beeson had not resided permanently either, the land was liable to forfeiture. 'I could not understand his tone of hostility to me the first time he had seen me & before he had seen over the section, but from what I heard after I concluded that the Chairman of the settlement', Bernard Montague,¹⁵¹ 'had prejudiced him as he was working on the road at the time, and he is very mad with me for being opposed to him in politics just now, when he was using every effort to make every Gordon Settler vote one way, which they did with the exception of myself'. (They had voted for the Seddon Government.) Squirrell's informant did not name the members of the conspiracy against him, but did not deny the three names Squirrell mentioned to him. 'The Ranger told me himself on the road that he saw 20 acres in grass while passing yet I was told afterwards that he was going to report that there was only 7 or 8 acres'. Squirrell reported having '16 grown beasts shut in there for 10 months and they had calves to the number of 6 more and as the land is not heavily grassed it would require 30 acres in grass to have carried them, & kept them growing & fat, as they are, and besides my son in law', David Foughey,¹⁵² 'put in other cattle part of the time'. He had dug a drain 21 chains long, but another person had told Bayley that he had only made one of 10 chains, the remainder being an existing creek. 'I told the Ranger that if there was a deficiency in the improvements in the past I must make it up but I think it should be shown that such is the case, but as regards insufficiency of residence on the part of the last owner it is impossible for me to go back in point of time & put that right'. He hoped that another of his daughters would 'be married before long and go to live on this section near her married sister', Mary Alice Foughey,

in which case both the husbands & the wives would help each other.... I am expecting my prospective son in law every day to confer with me on the subject, and as he is a good carpenter the first thing he would do would be to build a proper dwelling house, but as this is not quite settled I could not very well tell the ranger about it, but when the young man comes from Auckland, and hears it reported all over the place that the section is to be forfeited, he may be afraid to put his capital into it.

¹⁵¹ See paper on his life.

¹⁵² See *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 2, pp. 837-838.

He denied any intention of going against government policy by using his section for speculation,

although I have been offered a good bonus & could make £50 by selling it, I do not intend to make one penny out of my son in law (if the marriage comes off) as while offering it to him at less than the price offered me by another I have arranged to return to my daughter any amount left over the original cost, after paying for subsequent improvements, I will be able to make it easy for him to take the whole thing, cattle & all, & pay as convenient to him, in all this I am trying to carry out the wishes of the government and making sacrifices personally, but my object in life is to see my children settle comfortably & safely.¹⁵³

(This marriage did not eventuate, and only one other daughter was married, in 1906, to an Auckland carpenter, not a Waiorongomai farmer.)¹⁵⁴ Squirrell sought assurance that his title was secure and that

we are not at the mercy of the 3 or 4 conspirators who have been making a sort of reign of terror in the settlement for the last 2 years by threatening anyone not in their particular swim with forfeiture, the chief of the 3 is the Chairman of the Settlement who was formerly a member of the fenian organization in Ireland and seems to have a special talent for intrigue & intimidation.

The letter concluded with a list of improvements made by Beeson and himself.¹⁵⁵ Whether the chairman, Montague, was ever a Fenian is not known, but he was born in Belfast, his wife was born in County Clare, they were Roman Catholics, and he publicly supported Home Rule for Ireland.¹⁵⁶ Eleven days after this long letter was written, an anonymous letter in Squirrell's handwriting was sent to the Commissioner of Crown Lands. A

¹⁵³ John Squirrell to Commissioner of Crown Lands, 1 December 1893, Lands and Survey Department, BAAZ 1108/103a, ANZ-A.

¹⁵⁴ Marriage Certificate of Edith Beatrice Squirrell to Joseph Hawkins, 15 June 1906, 1906/3156, BDM.

¹⁵⁵ John Squirrell to Commissioner of Crown Lands, 1 December 1893, Lands and Survey Department, BAAZ 1108/103a, ANZ-A.

¹⁵⁶ Death Certificates of Johanna Montague, 9 January 1904, 1904/627; Bernard Montague, 18 August 1912, 1912/5823, BDM; Register of Te Aroha Baptisms 1884-1949, nos. 4, 20, 45, 76, Catholic Archives, Auckland; *Te Aroha News*, 19 August 1911, p. 2.

copy of a letter from Beeson about the latter's improvements, it included the comment, 'I can quite understand those two men trying their best to cause a forfeiture, of course B --- wants it, and the other man is a tool in his hands'.¹⁵⁷ B --- clearly was Barney, as Bernard Montague was commonly known.¹⁵⁸

The chief clerk's memorandum of 8 January 1894 recorded that there was no indication the house had been lived in for a long time, half the chimney was down, no improvements had been made, and Squirrell was not living on the land. Bayley, who did not expect him to live there because his store was some miles away, denied being hostile, but 'from his long connection with Official life' asked questions 'sharply ... with a view of getting his work done quickly'.¹⁵⁹ Consequently, the commissioner informed Squirrell that his land would be inspected in July and that arrears of rent must be paid and improvements made or the land would be forfeited.¹⁶⁰ Three days later, Squirrell claimed he had not been told how much he owed, and enclosed the amount. He went through the Bayley's report point-by-point, disagreeing with every one, but did promise to improve the house and to keep a record of his personal occupation. As to having a business seven miles away,

I had occasion years ago to build a store at Shaftesbury when there were many people there, who have since left, (about 30 houses having been pulled down & removed since) and as that was the 2nd move I had made in this district I do not wish to build at present another large store on the Gordon Settlement, my old store is a half way house from Te Aroha (whence all the Goods come) and my sister lives there, and can watch the goods during my necessary absences, but he is under an entire misconception about my business being 7 miles away as 3/4ths at least of my business is on the Gordon settlement, I am 2 days a week on the settlement all day delivering goods & doing other work, and two other days in the week I go to Te Aroha &

¹⁵⁷ Anonymous [copy by John Squirrell of letter from George Robert Beeson] to Commissioner of Crown Lands, 12 December 1893, Lands and Survey Department, BAAZ 1108/103a, ANZ-A.

¹⁵⁸ See 'Barney and his Cow', *Te Aroha News*, 29 August 1888, p. 2.

¹⁵⁹ Memorandum by Chief Clerk, 8 January 1894, Lands and Survey Department, BAAZ 1108/103a, ANZ-A.

¹⁶⁰ Commissioner of Crown Lands to John Squirrell, 22 January 1894, Lands and Survey Department, BAAZ 1108/103a, ANZ-A.

Waiorongomai to sell the Gordon Settlers Butter &c & to fetch them bread & meat & to do other things for them, thus 4 days out of 6 every week (all the year round without any exception) are spent either on or in connection with, the Gordon settlement, & [on] the other 2 I may be there or I may be at my sisters.

The Store, House, & small farm, at Shaftesbury are really my sister's, as it is her money that is in them, and I can't remove her to the Gordon, as there are no shelter trees there, she is 60 years old and could not sleep in the storms which we have here, they are very violent and 3 or 4 houses have been blown down by them since I have lived in this district.

Although denying not having made any improvements, he promised to make up any deficiencies 'as fast as possible' and complained that Bayley had taken his information 'from a Settler who had threatened to get me turned off if I refused to sell the section to him'.¹⁶¹ Asked for his response, Bayley noted that Squirrell's

statement about the house is absolutely untrue the Chimney was down & the house such as it was not fit for a dog kennel in the next place I went over the ground alone where I could not ride I walked I carefully inspected it all by myself took no information from any one & not one iota of my Report is incorrect to the minutest particular & his own letter convicts himself of breaches of both residential improvement & rental conditions.¹⁶²

Accordingly, the Commissioner informed Squirrell that most of his letter was irrelevant, he must make improvements, and someone must live on the land.¹⁶³

This prompted another long letter from Squirrell claiming he had bought timber and 'arranged with a man to line, ceil, & otherwise improve the small house wh. I will paint myself when Done'. He had taken posts to fence 'a good sized paddock, which I will clear myself & I have arranged with a man to plough it, when it must be left fallow till the spring'.

¹⁶¹ John Squirrell to Commissioner of Crown Lands, 25 January 1894, Lands and Survey Department, BAAZ 1108/103a, ANZ-A.

¹⁶² Memorandum by Benjamin Bayley, n.d. [February 1894]. Lands and Survey Department, BAAZ 1108/103a, ANZ-A.

¹⁶³ Commissioner of Crown Lands to John Squirrell, 14 March 1894, Lands and Survey Department, BAAZ 1108/103a, ANZ-A.

Arrangements had been made with others for more ploughing and draining, but, as for supplying a registered substitute,

I am quite unable to pay a man to permanently work “government stroke” & must do my own residence, as far as it must be done, under any circumstances as soon as the house is completed, I shall do a certain amount of day residence, when working there, and also will use it as a deputy store in connection with the business I do on the settlement, but under the circumstances reported to you I still hope to be allowed to sleep on my 40 acre Section, on account of the dangerous state of my daughter.

(The last, unexplained, comment referred to Constance Elizabeth, as explained later.) In conclusion, he insisted that he was ‘straining every nerve & will continue to do so. I did not at first know how the conditions really stood, could you not let me have a copy of the conditions with the plan on it, same as supplied to other settlers’. He added a postscript that the government had previously ordered him to build a house and reside on his 40 acres at Shaftesbury and that ‘some modification in the Land Act should be made to meet such cases’.¹⁶⁴ The Commissioner responded that there was ‘no necessity whatever to give me all the details of your business. I do not wish to go into them as they only concern yourself, but I must insist upon the conditions of Residence and Improvement being complied with’.¹⁶⁵

In May 1894 Squirrell had become secretary of the Gordon Special Settlement Association. Montague, the chairman, in the following month attended a meeting of the Crown Lands Board ‘as a deputation from the Association’ to complain that absenteeism was preventing the establishment of dairying. He claimed only ten of the 24 settlers lived on their land and that those who had settled ‘had to barter their butter to the storekeepers for groceries, as money was not obtainable’.¹⁶⁶ Squirrell immediately repudiated these claims, citing himself as an example of virtuous toil:

The Gordon settlers were very much astonished and intensely disgusted to read in your paper that “a deputation from the

¹⁶⁴ John Squirrell to Commissioner of Crown Lands, 23 March 1894, Lands and Survey Department, BAAZ 1108/103a, ANZ-A.

¹⁶⁵ Commissioner of Crown Lands to John Squirrell, 9 May 1894, Lands and Survey Department, BAAZ 1108/103a, ANZ-A.

¹⁶⁶ *New Zealand Herald*, 6 June 1894, p. 6.

Gordon Special Settlement Association had interviewed the Land Board, etc.” The Gordon Special Settlement Association has a committee of 7 persons, and six of them know nothing of this unauthorized proceeding. I have not been able to find a single settler up to the present who will own to having had anything to do with sending a deputation, and it is quite clear that one member of the committee, unknown to the rest, and without the knowledge of the settlers generally, has slipped away to Auckland and hoaxed the Land Board into believing him to be deputed by the settlers, his object being to injure his neighbours by turning them off their land, in order that he and his few friends may apply for the forfeited sections to add to their cattle runs. It is further stated in your paper that a list has been sent of these so-called “absentees” to Wellington, we can only guess who are in this list, but if the bogus deputationist had the preparation of it, some of the best settlers of the place are on it. I have no doubt but what my name has a place of honour on the list, the “evictor” of the settlement having a special animosity to me, and this is the kind of “absentee” I am: I sleep in my house on the Gordon Settlement several nights each week, for some time past I have been on my section nearly every day except the 2 days a week that I go to Te Aroha and Waiorongomai to sell the Gordon settlers’ butter, and to bring back bread, meat and other goods for the Gordon Settlement; besides my whole time being devoted to this settlement. I have now a man working with 3 horses and a double-furrow plough, another man clearing and burning, and even my daughter is helping in the work of clearing.

(She was probably Mary Alice, wife of David Foughey, also farming at Gordon.)

Yet while we are all hard at work on the Settlement, an enemy is conspiring to turn us off as absentees.... The fact is, the settlement for the last 2 years has been quite a success, and the only trouble it now suffers from is that one man whose heart seems full of hatred to his fellows, is simply going mad with his insane desire to get certain settlers “evicted” whom he happens to dislike, and he seems to stick at nothing to effect his purpose.¹⁶⁷

Acting quickly, Squirrell obtained the signatures of 17 of the 22 settlers, including all members of the committee apart from Montague, to a petition expressing their ‘disgust and indignation’ at his going to the board

¹⁶⁷ *Te Aroha News*, 9 June 1894, press cutting in Lands and Survey Department, BAAZ 1108/103a, ANZ-A.

and attempting ‘to injure his brother settlers by getting them off their land’. Montague was also asked to resign as chairman, not only because of this behaviour but also because he had ‘never been elected by a majority of the association’.¹⁶⁸ Squirrell’s letter to an Auckland newspaper was condensed before publication:

The Association has a committee of seven, of which he is one, and none of the other six knew of this “deputation” till they read it in the paper, to their intense disgust and astonishment. Out of 22 settlers, only three or four besides Mr Montague knew of his design. He spoke as on behalf of the settlers, and recounted various grievances (which do not exist) and made statements which were not true. The principal statement made by him was that there were 24 settlers, of whom 14 were absentees. Now I have challenged him in the local paper to mention the names of, not 14, but 4 settlers who are both absentees and non-improvers. In his address to the Board, he said the settlement was “languishing,” and couldn’t live because of these absentees, but the settlement has been fairly prosperous for the last two years. There was a time when the settlers seemed hardly able to hold on, but a man who is now denounced as an absentee came upon the scene, and spent about £300 on a flaxmill and on the land connected with it, which set the place quite on its feet. Nearly all the settlers benefited by this expenditure, and some of those who benefited most are now eager to get these sections forfeited, although money is still being spent on them; but, because the owner is absent, he is attacked by these men, who have no sense of gratitude.¹⁶⁹

When Bayley visited his land on 2 July, Squirrell signed a declaration that he had lived on his selection from 12 April until that date.¹⁷⁰ Bayley reported that the necessary cultivations had been completed and ‘Substantial Improvements effected’, that the rent was paid to date, and he was living there. ‘He resides some 4 days on Selection during week remainder of time on road or at Shaftesbury had opened another small store on Selection’.¹⁷¹ Accordingly, the commissioner told Squirrell that the only

¹⁶⁸ John Squirrell to Commissioner of Crown Lands, 14 June 1894, 19 June 1894, with appended petitions, Lands and Survey Department, BAAZ 1108/103a, ANZ-A.

¹⁶⁹ Letter from John Squirrell [condensed], *New Zealand Herald*, 27 June 1894, p. 6.

¹⁷⁰ Declaration re Deferred Payment Selection, 2 July 1894, Lands and Survey Department, BAAZ 1108/103a, ANZ-A.

¹⁷¹ Benjamin Bayley, Report for July 1894, Lands and Survey Department, BAAZ 1108/103a, ANZ-A.

thing preventing the issuing of a Crown Grant was proof that he or a registered substitute had lived on the land for six years.¹⁷²

Three days later, Montague's response to Squirrell's having convinced Bayley that he was a bona fide settler was to write to the commissioner claiming it was

the custom in this settlement when the Crown Lands Ranger comes into the Settlement the absentees also Come into the settlement although they have not being in the Settlement for months or years and when the Ranger presents them with the residential declaration they sign it and Clear out again. Under these circumstances we Respectfully ask your Bord for a inquirey and all the Bonafid settlers will give evedince if wanted.¹⁷³

Bayley described Montague's claim as 'a wild assertion'. Although absentees did arrive when he visited, on the last occasion 'the only reputed Absentee who signed any Declaration was John Squirrell ... & as very strong ill feeling exists between Messrs Montague & Squirrell the reason for Mr Montague's letter is very apparent'.¹⁷⁴

On the same day that Montague wrote to the commissioner, the *New Zealand Herald's* Te Aroha correspondent reported on the 'unsettled state' of the settlers through some of them trying to have sections forfeited by those who, despite not living on the land, were making improvements. He was sure that the board would

take a reasonable view of the matter, and decline to forfeit allotments upon which a fair amount of work has been done, and where there is every prospect of the owners eventually residing upon the land. There are men who will make first-class settlers, and are in a position to improve their land, so as to gradually prepare it for occupation, but who from various causes are unable at present to live upon it, and it seems a pity for a few jealous people to be able to annoy them by complaints to the Board.¹⁷⁵

¹⁷² Commissioner of Crown Lands to John Squirrell, 4 August 1894, Lands and Survey Department, BAAZ 1108/103a, ANZ-A.

¹⁷³ Bernard Montague to Commissioner of Crown Lands, 5 July 1894, Lands and Survey Department, BAAZ 1108/103a, ANZ-A.

¹⁷⁴ Commissioner of Crown Lands to Benjamin Bayley, 10 July 1894; Benjamin Bayley to Commissioner of Crown Lands, 10 July 1894, Lands and Survey Department, BAAZ 1108/103a, ANZ-A.

¹⁷⁵ Te Aroha Correspondent, *New Zealand Herald*, 5 July 1894, p. 6.

The board did decide it 'could not take cognisance of general and unsupported charges as made in this letter'.¹⁷⁶ At the end of the month Squirrell responded to Montague's claim that the correspondent knew nothing about this or any other deferred payment settlement:

Now, I ought to know something about the matter, being secretary of the Settlement, and having been in the thick of the fight for some time, and when I read the paragraph I thought it a remarkable good one, and I read it to several other Gordonites, and they also thought it very good indeed. I do not know who your correspondent is, he seems to be somewhat a mystery, but if all his paragraphs are as true, and as much to the point, he is a model correspondent. As regards Mr Montague, the facts have gone against him, so he is cross with the newspapers for recording the facts. He began by cursing the local papers, and now he abuses yours. He doesn't say what is wrong in the article referred to, but adopts the old legal maxim, "having no case, abuse the other side." Since he wrote that letter he has ceased to be chairman, the settlers having met and turned him out. His constituting himself into a deputation to the Land Board without the knowledge of the settlers was too much for the community, and they have expelled him from the chairmanship and the committee, so the "engineer is hoist with his own petard."¹⁷⁷

On 3 August, Montague, still writing as if he was the chairman of the association, again wrote to the press urging the board to enquire into the absentees. 'We are thinking about publishing the names of those who have been doing this for years. We think that it is a pity that we should have to make enemies of our neighbours by moving in this matter', for if the board and its officers 'would do their duty, we would be good friends with our neighbours, and the settlement would go on all right'.¹⁷⁸ Squirrell did not respond. Confirmation that his assessment of Montague's behaviour was not just personal bias came in a letter to the commissioner from an absentee. After explaining all the work he had done, he added that 'anyone who knows Mr Montague's deep cunning ways also knows quite well that he does not wish to see any of the absentees to settle down in the Gordon - all he wants is to get their land at little or nothing'.¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁶ *New Zealand Herald*, 24 July 1894, p. 3.

¹⁷⁷ Letter from John Squirrell, *New Zealand Herald*, 30 July 1894, p. 3.

¹⁷⁸ Letter from Bernard Montague, *New Zealand Herald*, 3 August 1894, p. 3.

¹⁷⁹ S.B. Rosie to Commissioner of Crown Lands, July 1894 [received 11 July], Lands and Survey Department, BAAZ 1108/103a, ANZ-A.

In April 1895, Squirrell was re-elected as secretary of the association.¹⁸⁰ Two months later, he was a witness when Montague charged John Carroll with using provoking and insulting language at a meeting at Gordon chaired by Squirrell. Carroll worked at Waihi while his family lived at Gordon, and when asked whether Gordon was not 'the most natural place for Mr Carroll to go to?', Squirrell answered: 'Yes. But he doesn't seem addicted to going to the most natural place. (Laughter in court)'.¹⁸¹ Elected to the committee in 1897,¹⁸² in the following year he was re-elected secretary when Montague was elected chairman once more.¹⁸³ No more reports of clashes between these two have been traced, largely because most issues of the *Te Aroha News* for these years have been lost. On 15 October 1897 he was granted a certificate of title to his land, but on 14 December the following year transferred it to John Brady, who owned the adjoining sections,¹⁸⁴ despite his protestations of not being a speculator.

As a consequence of his involvement in farming, in 1901 he was elected to the committee of the Waikato Farmers Club.¹⁸⁵ In 1905 he became secretary of the Manawaru Co-operative Dairy Company, incorporated in August 1901; he was not a shareholder.¹⁸⁶ It faced competition from rival dairy factories in the district.¹⁸⁷ In July 1909, in response to a suggestion that the company pay interest on its shares, Squirrell explained that 'interest cannot be paid without taking part of the earnings derived from the milk of the present suppliers, and giving it to those who deserted' it 'and tried their best, at the time of leaving it, and afterwards, to wreck the Company, and very nearly succeeded in doing so'. After adding that the directors had decided to increase the bonus on the last two months of the

¹⁸⁰ *Te Aroha News*, 10 April 1895, p. 2.

¹⁸¹ Magistrate's Court, *Te Aroha News*, 5 June 1895, p. 2.

¹⁸² *New Zealand Herald*, 9 April 1897, p. 3.

¹⁸³ *Te Aroha News*, 7 April 1898, p. 2.

¹⁸⁴ Lands and Survey Department, Certificate of Title under Land Transfer Act, Register Book, vol. 86 folio 3, Land Information New Zealand, Hamilton; McLoughlin and Davison, pp. 3-4.

¹⁸⁵ Company Files, BADZ 5181, box 164 no. 1026, ANZ-A; *New Zealand Herald*, 27 November 1901, p. 6.

¹⁸⁶ Company Files, BADZ 5181, box 164 no. 1026, ANZ-A; *New Zealand Herald*, 15 November 1902, p. 7, advertisement, 10 March 1905, p. 8; *Auckland Star*, 29 July 1903, p. 7; *Te Aroha News*, 15 August 1905, p. 2.

¹⁸⁷ *Te Aroha News*, 7 August 1906, p. 2.

season despite the price of butter having fallen, he concluded: ‘As to the other letter, by the funny man, who never signs his name, I do not consider it worth notice’.¹⁸⁸

In contrast, a Manawaru correspondent argued that the company’s lack of success was caused by the fact that it had been formed to sell land rather than to make butter.¹⁸⁹ ‘Manawaruites’ believed it to be ‘a pity that our worthy neighbour, Mr J. Squirrell, should put our esteemed estimate of his veracity to be breaking point in regard to his pretentious statements’ about the ‘high payments and soundness of the company despite its balance sheet, which he had just issued, containing no provision ‘for paying a penny interest on the £1,222 18s 1d capital paid-up, or a penny for depreciation. The fact of their assets, property, machinery, and plant being assessed at cost price is a thing unheard of in any sound concern, and is quite sufficient to cause grave doubts in the minds of its shareholders as to its stability’.¹⁹⁰ ‘One of the Old Crew’ claimed that ‘the wrecking of the old tub was the almost criminal incompetency of its chief cook and officers to steer a safe and sound course’, and claimed that those in charge were paying bonuses to themselves from members’ money, not from bona-fide profits. ‘If the profits of one of the many ventures (Manawaru Co-op stores, I hardly need say, are not amongst those) of Mr Squirrell in the world of finance should drop to nil, it would mean a fit, and when his billet as shipswife to the old derelict with its emolument is dispensed with I am afraid he will have another one’.¹⁹¹ (The only investment traced was ten shares (out of 25,000) in the National Glass Company, acquired in 1904.)¹⁹²

In a brief rebuttal to earlier statements, Squirrell denied that former shareholders (‘seceders’ was his term) had paid their shares in full: ‘They left long before they paid up their shares, and they only did that after a test case was taken into Court, and judgment was given against several of their number’.¹⁹³ Five days later, he responded to these latest letters about the ‘Squabble’ in detail. ‘I think it would have been better to have let sleeping dogs lie, but if the opponents of the Co-op will stir up these matters, they must take the consequences. “Manawaruite” states that I said

¹⁸⁸ Letter from John Squirrell, *Te Aroha News*, 3 July 1909, p. 3.

¹⁸⁹ Manawaru Correspondent, *Te Aroha News*, 8 July 1909, p. 2.

¹⁹⁰ Letter from ‘Manawaruites’, *Te Aroha News*, 10 July 1909, p. 3.

¹⁹¹ Letter from ‘One of the Old Crew’, *Te Aroha News*, 10 July 1909, p. 3.

¹⁹² Company Files, BADZ 5181, box 173 no. 1067, ANZ-A.

¹⁹³ Letter from John Squirrell, *Te Aroha News*, 10 July 1909, p. 3.

the Co-op made high payments. I have not said this, nor have I made any comparisons between that and other companies'. As to his claim 'that we have not paid interest on the paid-up capital, or a penny for depreciation', the balance sheet published in the same edition of the newspaper included a 'depreciation reserve account', which would 'no doubt be much increased after the next directors' meeting, as the necessary balance is in hand to do so'. As for the statement of 'One of the Old Crew' that the company was wrecked, it was 'anything but that with '25 suppliers and 50 per cent more milk this year than last, and good prospects ahead'. Claims of dishonesty in its establishment were false:

Soon after I became secretary a special general meeting was called, and the discontented ones demanded that an enquiry into the affairs of the company be made right from the beginning by an impartial and competent auditor. The Directors agreed to the proposal, and the opposition was allowed to nominate their own man, and they voted 15 guineas as fee. Copies of his report and balance-sheet were distributed to every shareholder, and he completely exonerated the Directors from all the charges made against them, and finished up with a big puff to the Company, prophesying a bright career in the future, if the shareholders would work together. I have still spare copies of this report by me to prove that what I say is correct, and I may say that before he began his investigation I gave him the names of some of those who were leading the opposition, and he went to them, and heard all they had to say, before he began his work. I was determined to have a thorough investigation, as I did not know myself who was right. Now the partial break-up of the Company was caused by the spreading of a mass of falsehoods about things and people, everyone of which was proved to be untrue, but that made no difference, the mischief went on all the same, as temper had got the better of judgment.

He gave an example of how missing accounts, allegedly taken by the first chairman to hide his wrong doing, were held by a director who headed the 'party who were spreading these wicked falsehoods against an innocent man's character'. As for not paying interest, it had been 'agreed that all profits shall go to those who bring milk'. He ended by claiming that some of the original shareholders had 'deliberately tried to wreck the Company'.¹⁹⁴

One week after this letter was published, the company agreed to go into liquidation, with Squirrell and two others appointed as its liquidators, and to amalgamate with the Thames Valley Co-operative Dairying Company, which took over its factory at Manawaru and its creamery at

¹⁹⁴ Letter from John Squirrell, *Te Aroha News*, 15 July 1909, p. 3.

Wardville.¹⁹⁵ Squirrell, still secretary as well as liquidator, wanted to make a call to raise money to pay all the debts, 'but a party of Shareholders, who were fully paid up', in 1911 started legal proceedings 'to compel us to call up all shares in full, and divide the result equally among the Shareholders'.¹⁹⁶ As calls were paid slowly and one debtor, who was 'a good mark', kept taking legal action to avoid paying his share, the liquidation was not concluded until late 1913.¹⁹⁷

HOLDING STRONG OPINIONS ON A VARIETY OF TOPICS

Squirrell had a lively interest in a variety of issues, as can be detected from the letters already quoted. His obituary mentioned that 'he was an ardent student of Esperanto ... in which he was probably as well versed as anyone in the Dominion'.¹⁹⁸ Another example of the variety of his interests was his letter to the *Te Aroha News* in 1902 that 'the comet was again visible last night in about the same position as when it first appeared'.¹⁹⁹ In a letter to England in 1886, he wrote that in 'the "Sword & trowel" of July 1886 (Mr [Charles] Spurgeon's magazine) you will find an article on a holiday of his which will give you an idea of our picnics up in the range'. Having written 'with such enthusiasm about our Sunny South', he assured his brother-in-law that he did 'not forget the beauties (of a somewhat different kind) of old England, I am an ardent federationist, but naturally now feel a far greater interest in our Australasian portion of the empire'.²⁰⁰ Two years later he sent the Christmas number of the *Auckland Weekly News*, a newspaper he purchased regularly,

also a local paper which is now published twice a week, so we have rather too much newspaper I sometimes think, as they leave

¹⁹⁵ John Squirrell to Registrar of Companies, 12 October 1909, Company Files, BADZ 5181, box 164 no. 1026, ANZ-A.

¹⁹⁶ John Squirrell to Assistant Registrar of Companies, 19 July 1911, Company Files, BADZ 5181, box 164 no. 1026, ANZ-A.

¹⁹⁷ John Squirrell to Assistant Registrar of Companies, 25 April 1912; John Squirrell to Registrar of Companies, 5 August 1913, Company Files, BADZ 5181, box 164 no. 1026, ANZ-A.

¹⁹⁸ *Te Aroha News*, 9 August 1924, p. 4.

¹⁹⁹ Letter from John Squirrell, *Te Aroha News*, 29 March 1902, p. 2.

²⁰⁰ John Squirrell to 'Harry' (Bradley), 2 October 1886, John Squirrell Papers, MS 288, Library of the Auckland Institute and War Memorial Museum.

too little time for solid books. I do not find that the distance makes any difference in the interest I feel in European affairs and I often wish for more details on these subjects, but of course there is less interest felt generally, and I imagine if the people of this country were examined on the Bulgarian question they would mostly know as little about it as of the politics of the moon.²⁰¹

He was implying that he was interested in such topics but that there was nobody in the district with whom he could discuss them.

His disapproval of Montague's allegedly Fenian past has been noted. In 1891 he wrote such a 'lengthy communication' to the Auckland press giving his solution to the 'Irish Problem' that only 'a passage from his detailed scheme' was published:

Let there be a mutual Imperial guarantee, the British Isles guaranteeing the integrity of the colonies, and the colonies guaranteeing the integrity of the British Isles. If the Irish leaders knew that the Colonial Empire had absolutely determined that there should be no diminution of the territory of the British head quarters, they would give up making any further attempt, either open or disguised, to obtain separation, and the Irish people would in the end become proud to form a part of that great Empire, to whose building up and maintenance so many eminent Irishmen have contributed, both in peace and war. As to Home Rule, once the danger of separation is absolutely done away with, the Irish could have as much Home Rule in the shape of local self-government as they required, and the English would be only too glad to get Irish local questions out of the Imperial Parliament. Let the population of the colonies agree to the proposal of a mutual Imperial guarantee, and let their determination be ratified by their respective Parliaments, and there would be an end for ever of the main difficulty in the way of the settlement of the Irish question. If the Irish leaders only want local self-government and not separation they will rally to this proposal, but if they oppose it, and fight against it, they would reveal their ultimate purpose, and must then run up their true colours. As to the land question, it must be settled by itself; there is the same problem there as here, namely, how to place the largest possible number of the people on a portion of land of their own, in a manner consistent with the principles of common honesty.²⁰²

²⁰¹ John Squirrell to 'Harry' (Bradley), 24 December 1888, John Squirrell Papers, MS 288, Library of the Auckland Institute and War Memorial Museum.

²⁰² Extract from letter from John Squirrell, *New Zealand Herald*, 28 January 1891, p. 4; reprinted in *Auckland Weekly News*, 31 January 1891, p. 17.

In May 1897 he wrote a long letter in response to the publication by the *Te Aroha News* of W.T. Stead's articles on Queen Victoria's reign. 'As your article begins with something like a challenge to those wicked Radicals who assert that the Queen is only a figure head, I hope you will allow an insignificant Radical to reply to the challenge, and also to criticize Mr Stead's somewhat apocryphal narrative'. He denied that the Queen had any role in decision making, smiled at the idea that the Emperor of Germany and everybody else in Europe considered her the 'greatest, wisest, and best woman that ever sat on a throne', and looked forward to the day when 'the great British Imperial Federation' was 'properly organized'. He praised Prince Albert for his sagacity, noting that after his death the Queen 'seemed completely lost', and pointing out that on the only occasion when she attempted to have her own way over the choice of the members of her household, the Prime Minister, Peel, had defeated her. He referred to Stead's claim that the Queen prevented war when Germany attacked Denmark in 1864, but provided no rebuttal.

I well remember the circumstances of this war, as I was much interested in it at the time. I attended the patriotic meetings of the Germans in London before the fighting began, and soon after its commencement visited the seat of war, but only got near enough to see the Danish prisoners and the German wounded brought away from the field. I then went on to Berlin, where I stayed two months reading the war news in the German papers, and also reading the English "Times" daily in the cafes where foreign papers were kept.

Clearly his knowledge of languages included German. When the Danish Princess Alexandra, who married the Prince of Wales, first arrived in London, he was standing on London Bridge, and he described the excitement. He denied that the Queen was skilled in languages, and compared the heroic Queen Louise of Prussia, who had roused her 'somewhat feeble husband' to fight against Napoleon, with 'our Queen, with her comparatively easy and selfish life and her hoarded 20 millions worth of property'. The Jubilee Celebrations were a celebration of the power of a nation guided by its statesmen, not its queen, and 'our great Empire, which though nominally monarchical', was 'really republican'.²⁰³ As copies of the

²⁰³ Press cutting of letter by John Squirrell dated 17 May 1897, *Te Aroha News*, n.d., in *Te Aroha Warden's Court, Newspaper Clippings 1895-1905*, BBAV 11532/1a, ANZ-A.

newspaper for this period have not survived, it is not possible to trace the controversy no doubt prompted by these opinions.

Being a self-confessed 'old Radical' did not mean he supported the Seddon Government, as he explained in an 1899 letter responding to the news that bank clerks were to be forbidden to work late hours:

I was a merchant's clerk in the City of London for 25 years before I came out here 20 years ago, and this class must be strangely different in the cities of New Zealand if they do not resent any interference on the part of the Government with their private affairs. I have many a time, with other clerks, stayed late in the evenings, when a rush of work had to be got through, and this we did entirely of our own accord, and without extra pay, doing it for our own credit, and that of the house to which we belonged, in order that it might be up to the mark in dealing with its correspondents, and on these occasions we would have been immensely astonished and disgusted if a city constable had marched in and asked us what business we had to be working late. It seems now that an attempt will be made to degrade every class of men into the supposed position of helpless victims, requiring protection by a paternal Government, and the constable will soon be poking his nose, not only into every factory and shop, but into every mercantile office, and last of all into the private homes, hitherto supposed to be a safe refuge from Government, so that we used to say that an "Englishman's house was his castle." Politics have changed now, so that the so-called Conservative party has become the advocate of personal freedom, while the sham Liberals are carrying a despotic interference into everybody's personal affairs, and many old Radicals like myself have to vote on the opposite to that which they belonged to in the Old Country.

The old tyranny had been replaced by that of 'a democratic dictator' who was destroying liberty 'under a pretence of advancing progress'. Whilst agreeing that the government had

both the right and the duty to interfere, say, in protecting women and children in factories, and in matters which greatly concern the health and well being of the people, but so far as people's personal affairs are concerned it is best to let everyone fight their own battles, the State simply keeping open a fair arena. We want energy and self-reliance in the individual, and not a habit of looking to the Government for help.

He looked forward to the day when workers had ‘educated themselves into such a state of self-respect as themselves to resent such constant interference with their affairs’ and to fight their own battles.²⁰⁴ He claimed to be the only resident of Gordon not to vote for the Liberal Party.²⁰⁵

The last examples of Squirrell’s political views that can be traced were his giving £2 2s in 1900 to the Patriotic Fund established to assist the British in the Boer War, by far the largest amount contributed by the residents of Shaftesbury,²⁰⁶ and, in 1914, his being voted to the chair at a meeting held at Shaftesbury by the conservative parliamentary candidate.²⁰⁷

Squirrell was not recorded as being active in religious matters. Although he was given a Church of England funeral,²⁰⁸ in the 1880s he had assisted a temperance body, the Wesleyans’ Band of Hope, by selling tickets for a concert for its organ fund and also participating in some of the movement’s entertainments at Shaftesbury.²⁰⁹ In October 1908, in replying to a letter about the importance of keeping the Sabbath Day holy, he forcibly supported the right of people to do gardening on a Sunday:

I have read in your paper that an inhabitant of Te Aroha, who prefers to hide his name, lately went prying about on a Sunday, looking over his neighbours’ fences to find out a worse man than himself in order that he might indulge in the luxury of condemning him, and seeing a man doing something useful invited society to boycott him, but no one seemed to respond, and one man had the courage to claim the right to do a little gardening on Sunday for the good of his health, and unlike the other signed his name like a man. He now makes a second attempt to persecute those who happen to differ from himself by saying “it is time that those in authority took a hand in this most objectionable habit.” I quote his exact words, but of course he means the opposite to what he says, he doesn’t want the authorities to take a hand in Sunday gardening, but to fine, or imprison the man who dares to do it. Well, I think the authorities

²⁰⁴ Letter from John Squirrell, *Auckland Weekly News*, 10 November 1899, p. 13.

²⁰⁵ John Squirrell to Commissioner of Crown Lands, 1 December 1893, Lands and Survey Department, BAAZ 1108/103a, ANZ-A.

²⁰⁶ *Te Aroha News*, 18 January 1900, p. 2.

²⁰⁷ *Te Aroha News*, 24 July 1914, p. 3.

²⁰⁸ Death Certificate of John Squirrell, 5 August 1924, 1924/5244, BDM.

²⁰⁹ Waiorongomai Band of Hope Minute Book 1883-1889, 3050/916, Methodist Archives, Auckland; *Te Aroha News*, 22 August 1885, p. 2.

would have a lot to do if they started that game. I myself often do a little gardening on a Sunday, as I think it promotes health of mind and body, besides producing something useful. I also get up at 5 o'clock on Sunday morning and later on take milk to the Factory. Bye-the-bye, does the nameless one ever eat factory butter, if so it is very wrong of him, as some of it comes from Sunday work; anyhow he should be thankful that he can lie in bed on a Sunday morning for the honour and glory of God, and when he does get up have nothing to do but pry into his neighbours' back gardens and call upon society and the authorities to persecute those who are so industriously inclined that they find it difficult to do a loaf for a whole day, and who don't think the Almighty is angry if they raise a flower or prune a tree.²¹⁰

'Respecter of the Sabbath' was offended by what it considered his boasting about gardening on Sunday, and using phrenological terms retorted that evidently Squirrell's 'bump of aggressiveness' was 'equal to his bump of self-esteem'.²¹¹

HIS SISTER

In Squirrell's first endeavours to make a successful home for his children in New Zealand he was assisted by his sister, Pleasance Martha. In December 1888 he wrote that she had 'quite settled down in Auckland, and having a Baptist Church to attend and some Sunday School work' seemed 'more happy than when here'.²¹² Possibly because of ill-health, she made her will in Auckland in August 1889,²¹³ and by 1893 if not earlier had returned to Shaftesbury, in January 1894 being recorded as living in Squirrell's old store to guard his goods.²¹⁴ In September that year, after suffering from dropsy and kidney disease for about 18 months, she died in Waikato Hospital, aged 60.²¹⁵ A Te Aroha correspondent wrote that

²¹⁰ Letter from John Squirrell, *Te Aroha News*, 17 October 1908, p. 3.

²¹¹ Letter from 'Respecter of the Sabbath', *Te Aroha News*, 22 October 1908, p. 3.

²¹² John Squirrell to 'Harry' (Bradley), 24 December 1888, John Squirrell Papers, MS 288, Library of the Auckland Institute and War Memorial Museum.

²¹³ Probates, BBAE 1569/1852, ANZ-A.

²¹⁴ *Waikato Electoral Roll, 1893*, p. 36; John Squirrell to Commissioner of Crown Lands, 25 January 1895, Lands and Survey Department, BAAZ 1108/103a, ANZ-A.

²¹⁵ Death Certificate of Martha Pleasance Squirrell, 10 September 1894, 1894/3953, BDM.

sincere regret was expressed in the Shaftesbury end of the district when it became known that Miss Squirrell ... had passed away at the Hamilton Hospital. Miss Squirrell was deservedly esteemed by all who knew her, and she will be much missed at Shaftesbury. She had been ailing for some time, and three weeks ago went over to Hamilton for treatment at the hospital, but rapidly became worse, and succumbed to dropsy and heart disease.²¹⁶

Her will, after leaving bequests to her English relatives and £5 to the Mt. Eden Baptist Chapel, gave the balance of her estate to Squirrell 'to be divided equally between himself & his children, the children's portions to be paid by him in such amounts and at such time as he shall think fit' until they were aged 30, when they were to receive the balance of their shares.²¹⁷ The total value of the estate, of which Squirrell was the executor, was £623 6s 3d.²¹⁸ Of this, he received approximately two-thirds, which would have assisted him to develop his land at Gordon.

HIS DAUGHTERS

As mentioned in his 1886 and 1888 letters to his brother-in-law, his four daughters had assisted him when he first settled in Shaftesbury. Little is known of the eldest, Florence Maria. She was still living with her family at Shaftesbury in 1893, although listed in the supplementary electoral roll rather than on the main roll like the others,²¹⁹ suggesting that she had just returned from elsewhere. She remained at Shaftesbury until 1902, but was not recorded in the 1903 electoral roll.²²⁰ She appeared again on the rolls as a resident of Shaftesbury in 1905 and 1908, but left before 1911 and never returned.²²¹ When she applied for aid on 23 January 1908 from the Auckland Charitable Aid Board, her incomplete request gave no reasons

²¹⁶ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 22 September 1894, pp. 22-23.

²¹⁷ Probates, BBAE, 1569/1852, ANZ-A.

²¹⁸ Testamentary Registers 1892-1896, folio 121, BBCB 4208/3, ANZ-A.

²¹⁹ *Waikato Electoral Roll, 1893*, p. 36; *Waikato Electoral Roll, Supplementary Roll, 1893*, p. 7.

²²⁰ *Bay of Plenty Electoral Rolls, 1896*, p. 49; *1897*, p. 47; *1899*, p. 63; *1900*, p. 60; *Ohinemuri Electoral Rolls, 1902*, p. 70; *1903*, p. 61.

²²¹ *Ohinemuri Electoral Roll, 1905*, p. 74; *Tauranga Electoral Roll, 1908*, p. 74; *Ohinemuri Electoral Rolls, 1911*, p. 125; *1914*, p. 95; *1919*, p. 110.

why she needed assistance, which accordingly was not given.²²² According to a brother-in-law she was 'mentally deficient',²²³ and never married. During her last years she suffered from chronic Bright's Disease or glomerulonephritis, a kidney disease, and died in the Knox Home in Auckland after a long illness on 30 March 1915 at the age of 48.²²⁴

The second daughter was Constance Elizabeth, the Bessie who had looked after her father's Shaftesbury shop during the 1880s while he worked on his farm. She presumably lived with her aunt in Auckland in the early 1890s, for on 17 July 1891 she was charged there under the Lunatic Act; on the certificate of two doctors, she was discharged.²²⁵ She was the unnamed daughter who, in early 1894, hoped to marry an Auckland carpenter.²²⁶ In March that year, Squirrell wrote of 'the dangerous state of my daughter',²²⁷ presumably a reference to her mental state after the marriage was called off. In September 1898, when she was living with her family, he charged her with lunacy, but as only one of the required two doctors would certify to her lunacy an order of committal was not made.²²⁸ In December, when he again charged her with being 'a Lunatic Not under proper care and Control', the doctors agreed, and she was committed to the Avondale Asylum.²²⁹ Admitted at the age of 30 in 'poor health and condition', her occupation was given as dressmaker. Her dementia, diagnosed as being caused by hysteria,

²²² Auckland Hospital and Charitable Aid Board, Applications for Relief 1894-1907, folio 496, YCAB 15245/2a, ANZ-A.

²²³ Joseph Hawkins, Application for a Reception-Order, 16 May 1924, Case File on John Squirrell, Tokanui Mental Hospital, file 372, YCBG 5904/11, ANZ-A.

²²⁴ Death Certificate of Florence Maria Squirrell, 30 March 1915, 1915/2514, BDM; *New Zealand Herald*, 7 April 1915, p. 1; *Black's Medical Dictionary*, 36 ed., edited by C.W.H. Havard (London, 1990), p. 306.

²²⁵ Auckland Magistrate's Court, Criminal Record Book 1891-1892, folio 70, no. 1114, BADW 10254/15a, ANZ-A.

²²⁶ John Squirrell to Commissioner of Crown Lands, 1 December 1893, Lands and Survey Department, BAAZ 1108/103a, ANZ-A.

²²⁷ John Squirrell to Commissioner of Crown Lands, 23 March 1894, Lands and Survey Department, BAAZ 1108/103a, ANZ-A.

²²⁸ Te Aroha Magistrate's Court, Criminal Record Book 1896-1907, 27/1898, BCDG 11220/1b, ANZ-A.

²²⁹ Armed Constabulary Force, Return of Charges taken at Te Aroha Lock-Up 1880-1903, 16/1898, in private possession; Te Aroha Magistrate's Court, Criminal Record Book 1896-1907, 33/1898, BCDG 11220/1b, ANZ-A.

had started when she was 21 and had never ceased.²³⁰ She was probably suicidal and certainly violent, ‘throwing things at people’, and had been ‘under treatment at a private “home” in Remuera’. The first doctor certified that she was melancholic and had said that she had seen ‘the Prince of Wales a month ago & he was very nice to her’. Her sister Edith had deposed that she had ‘broken her windows & smashed up any article she could get hold of, at times very noisy shouting, crying alternatively. Talking to imaginary people. Her chief delusion is that she is being persecuted by men’. The second doctor certified that on the

different occasions on which I have seen her she has all ways been in a condition of melancholy, and continually muttering & playing with her fingers. The appearance clearly indicates unsoundness of mind. Says she had a sister who died (This is not a fact). Says she has one brother (This is not a fact.)

Amongst other signs of madness was her claim that her uncle had recently been to see her, for she had no uncle in New Zealand. Her father wrote that ‘seven years ago she cut up her under clothing to make garments for a baby which she said she was going to have. Said the Prince of Wales had committed an outrage upon her in Auckland. Screams & shouts sometimes for 3 or 4 hours at a time and then starts singing’. Edith also wrote that Bessie was ‘constantly making great noise’, regularly fouled her bed, ‘often says men have been with her and that she is in the “family way,” and ate ravenously’. On the basis of their evidence she was diagnosed as ‘melancholic’. Once in the asylum her physical condition improved, but not her mental, for she was occasionally violent, in particular breaking windows. She did no work.²³¹ Her father paid 7s 6d each week towards her maintenance.²³² When he died in 1924, the only daughter mentioned in his obituary as still being alive was Mary Alice, although a brother-in-law thought Bessie might still be alive.²³³ Ignored by her sisters, she lived until

²³⁰ Avondale Asylum, Register of Admissions 1896-1901, no. 2353, YCAA 1021/3, ANZ-A.

²³¹ Avondale Asylum, Case Book 1898-1900, folios 103, 168, no. 2353, YCAA 1048/8, ANZ-A.

²³² Avondale Asylum, Maintenance Payment Register 1885-1899, folio 306, YCAA 1045/1, ANZ-A.

²³³ *Te Aroha News*, 9 August 1924, p. 4; Joseph Hawkins, Application for a Reception-Order, 16 May 1924, Case File on John Squirrel, Tokanui Mental Hospital, YCBG 5904/11, file 372, ANZ-A.

30 May 1929, aged 62, dying of senile decay and heart failure. Although she had entered the asylum as a Wesleyan, she was given a Presbyterian funeral.²³⁴

In 1906, at Squirrell's residence at Shaftesbury his third daughter Edith Beatrice 'quietly celebrated' her marriage to Joseph Hawkins of Waiorongomai.²³⁵ Aged 36, ten years older than her farmer husband,²³⁶ she would have three sons, who, when she died of measles and pneumonia 12 years after her marriage, were then aged ten, eight, and six.²³⁷ Her obituary, which made her Squirrell's second daughter, thereby ignoring the existence of Constance, stated that since coming to Shaftesbury she had 'been the close companion and friend of her widowed father', which certainly was the case because she had lived with him until her marriage.²³⁸

It is only those of us who have known her long, who know and appreciate all the excellent qualities of character and heart she possessed; and faithfully she performed the varied responsibilities imposed upon her. Like the modest violet, she preferred to remain in the shade, and, like it, cast sweet fragrance round to be enjoyed by any who cared to come under its influence. She undoubtedly realised that the highest and best in life is attained through service and sacrifice. Much sympathy is felt for her husband, three little boys and her father in their irreparable loss.²³⁹

Squirrell's relations with this son-in-law reached their nadir in April 1920, when he took Hawkins to court on the charge of assaulting him on 3 March 'by dragging him along the ground and beating his head and body against the ground and against the stock yard fence' on Hawkins' Shaftesbury farm.²⁴⁰ The hearing lasted two hours, the names of the disputants not being made public: after the magistrate heard some of the evidence, he conferred with both men in private, resulting in Squirrell

²³⁴ Death Certificate of Constance Elizabeth Squirrell, 30 May 1929, 1929/2486, BDM.

²³⁵ *Auckland Weekly News*, 21 June 1906, p. 34; *Observer*, 23 June 1906, p. 8.

²³⁶ Marriage Certificate of Edith Beatrice Squirrell, 15 June 1906, 1906/3156, BDM.

²³⁷ Death Certificate of Edith Beatrice Hawkins, 4 June 1918, 1918/12801, BDM.

²³⁸ *Te Aroha News*, 12 June 1918, p. 3; *Bay of Plenty Electoral Rolls, 1896*, p. 49; *1897*, p. 47; *1899*, p. 63; *1900*, p. 60; *Ohinemuri Electoral Rolls, 1902*, p. 70; *1903*, p. 61; *1905*, p. 74.

²³⁹ *Te Aroha News*, 12 June 1918, p. 3.

²⁴⁰ Te Aroha Magistrate's Court, Criminal Record Book 1919-1921, Hearing of 23 April 1920, BCDG 11220/3a, ANZ-A.

withdrawing the charge.²⁴¹ This assault may have been the result of Squirrell's declining mental state.²⁴²

In 1891, Squirrell's youngest daughter, Mary Alice, was the first of his children to marry, at the age of 19. Her husband, David Foughey, was 19 years her senior. He was a farmer living at Gordon, had been born in County Cork, and was a Roman Catholic, which may explain why the marriage took place in the Registrar's Office.²⁴³ The children were brought up as Catholics.²⁴⁴ Foughey had received his land order for the Shaftesbury settlement in September 1881, three months after Squirrell.²⁴⁵ According to the *Cyclopedia of New Zealand* (which gave the year of his marriage as 1881, when his bride would have been nine), he worked for Edward Francis Roche at Shaftesbury for eight years before, in July 1887, buying land at Gordon and being one of its first settlers. By 1902, he owned 244 freehold acres, and had 'planted every tree in the beautiful avenue which leads to his homestead'. They had three daughters and one son.²⁴⁶

For a period in the mid-1890s Foughey was in very poor health, and the response of the community was typical of many similar cases. In September 1894 he entered the Thames hospital because of a perinephritic abscess, a collection of pus around the kidneys, and remained there for 94 days.²⁴⁷ In February 1895 he spent seven days in the same hospital with chronic sinus, in August stayed for 20 days because of an abscess of the knee, and in September was hospitalized for 11 days because of an abscess of the back,²⁴⁸ possibly a consequence of the earlier infection around the

²⁴¹ *Te Aroha News*, 26 April 1920, p. 2.

²⁴² See Tokanui Mental Hospital, Case File on John Squirrell, file 372, YCBG 5904/11, ANZ-A.

²⁴³ Thames Hospital, Register of Patients 1884-1901, folios 60, 48, YCAH 14075/1a, ANZ-A [folio 67 recorded him as being Church of England]; Marriage Certificate of Mary Alice Squirrell, 2 June 1891, 1891/302, BDM.

²⁴⁴ For example, Register of Baptisms in the Parish of Te Aroha 1884-1949, no. 236, Catholic Archives, Auckland.

²⁴⁵ Register of Land Orders by Messrs Grant and Foster, Te Aroha, Orders dated 21 June 1881, 5 September 1881, Lands and Survey Department, LS 22/2, ANZ-W.

²⁴⁶ *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 2, pp. 837-838.

²⁴⁷ Thames Hospital, Register of Patients 1884-1901, folio 60, YCAH 14075/1a, ANZ-A; *Oxford Concise Colour Medical Dictionary* (Oxford, 1996), pp. 497, 554.

²⁴⁸ Thames Hospital, Register of Patients 1884-1901, folios 64, 67, 68, YCAH 14075/1a, ANZ-A.

kidneys. As an indication of his financial state, the charitable aid board met the cost of his August hospitalization.²⁴⁹ In late June 1895 the *Te Aroha News* reported that he had been forced to take to his bed once more because of the abscess in his side. Having been unable to work for 18 months, ‘in consequence of that and hospital expenses he is about stranded’, and a benefit concert was to be held for him and his wife and two small children.²⁵⁰ Just before the concert, which the newspaper urged all to attend, it reported that he had ‘been unable to work for nearly two years, consequently his section has been going back on him, and the family have been obliged to sell off the stock to provide themselves with bread’.²⁵¹ The result was a success, Te Aroha’s public hall being ‘comfortably filled’.²⁵² A correspondent’s account provided a good example both of how the community rallied round on such occasions and of the type of entertainment provided:

The case was so deserving of sympathy that a number of settlers at Shaftesbury, assisted by musical residents here, decided to hold this concert to help Mr Foughey, and the effort met with the public appreciation it deserved. The Hall was crowded, and a capital programme was tendered. Mr T[homas] Gavin,²⁵³ chairman of the Town Board, presided. Both parts of the programme opened with selections by the Te Aroha brass band, which were remarkably well played. The other items on the programme were as follow:- Song, “The Diver,” Mr [Thomas] McIndoe;²⁵⁴ pianoforte solo, “Irish Diamonds,” Mr Schroff; song, “At my window,” by Miss Wainwright, who sang particularly well; song, in character, “The Union Jack,” by Mr Hanby; song, “Whisper and I shall hear,” by Miss Hirst (who has a sweet, telling voice), with violin obbligato by Miss Stanley; song, “The Outpost,” Mr Gage-Brown; comic song, Mr Harry Tonge; song, “Swanee River,” by Miss Wainwright, with banjo accompaniment by Mr Ross; song, “They all love Jack,” by Mr Ross; song, “I fear no foe,” by Mr Gage-Brown; song, in character, “The Alabama Coon,” by Miss Craig, with banjo accompaniment by Mr Ross; violin solo by Miss Stanley, who played with great expression; comic song, “I’ve worked eight hours,” by Mr Hanby, who was

²⁴⁹ Thames Hospital, Register of Patients 1884-1901, folio 67, YCAH 14075/1a, ANZ-A.

²⁵⁰ *Te Aroha News*, 26 June 1895, p. 2.

²⁵¹ *Te Aroha News*, 3 July 1895, p. 2.

²⁵² *Te Aroha News*, 6 July 1895, p. 2.

²⁵³ See paper on his life.

²⁵⁴ See paper on his life.

admirably got up, and made some capital hits; Highland fling by Mr H. Tonge. The accompaniments were well played by Mrs Robson, Miss Wainwright, and Miss Sibley. Dancing was afterwards indulged in for some hours, and a very enjoyable evening spent.²⁵⁵

Subsequently, Foughey thanked all those who had made his benefit 'so great a success'.²⁵⁶ The sum raised was not stated, but would have assisted the family for a time, and Foughey's health improved somewhat in future years. He died, aged 68, in 1913 of 'chronic suppuration' and asthenia, meaning an abscess and debility, from which he had suffered for ten years.²⁵⁷ He left his widow a freehold property valued at £3,072; she would live until 1963.²⁵⁸

HEALTH, AND DEATH

In the only recorded health problem, in 1889 Squirrell was kicked by a horse, but soon recovered.²⁵⁹ At the age of 83, on 5 August 1924, he died of bronchitis that had led to pneumonia, in Tokanui Mental Hospital, where he had been admitted three months earlier through 'senile dementia and loss of memory' and being 'very feeble on account of his advanced age'.²⁶⁰ When admitted, he was described as 'a small spare man in fair bodily health considering his age'. His son-in-law Joseph Hawkins had arranged that he be removed from the 'Glencairn' Boarding House at Te Aroha to the asylum 'as his daughter had not offered to make the application', perhaps because she did not wish her father to be committed. Squirrell's memory was such that he could not provide the hospital with any information about his personal history or his family. Hawkins declared that he 'wanders about and does not recognise anyone. Mind a blank. Would wander off at night into the Domain at Te Aroha to be found there at night by the local Police. Did not know the landlady after having been with her for two years'. As

²⁵⁵ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 13 July 1895, p. 23.

²⁵⁶ Advertisement, *Te Aroha News*, 10 July 1895, p. 2.

²⁵⁷ Death Certificate of David Foughey, 1913/4416, BDM.

²⁵⁸ *Evening Post*, 2 February 1915, p. 4; Hamilton Probates, BCDG 4420/322, 4421/464/63, ANZ-A.

²⁵⁹ *Te Aroha News*, 24 August 1889, p. 2.

²⁶⁰ Death Certificate of John Squirrell, 5 August 1924, 1924/5244, BDM; Inquest on John Squirrell, Justice Department, J 46, 1924/857, ANZ-W.

there had been three previous attacks, details unrecorded, the mayor, a solicitor, and a local farmer had been watching over him.²⁶¹ On his first night in the asylum ward he complained that he could not sleep because of the noise, despite being the one making it; he also said that he could not sleep because of the bright light, but it was in darkness.²⁶²

CONCLUSION

A brief obituary stated that ‘his wife predeceased him some years ago’, an under-estimation, and mainly mentioned his Shaftesbury store and interest in Esperanto.²⁶³ It could also have noted the multiplicity of his attempts to earn a living, of which his mining ventures were the least successful. His involvement in mining had been prompted by the reports of valuable silver ore being found in the Tui district, but like so many others taking up mining at some stage of their lives, he was quite unskilled in geology or in mining techniques. What he called mining was really prospecting, with he and his partners hoping to discover good reefs and then sell their properties for a quick profit; there was no indication that he intended to abandon shop-keeping and farming to become a miner. His years as a merchant’s clerk in London were not a good preparation for becoming a farmer, but he was capable of learning. Although aided for a time by his sister and daughters, having two daughters with mental problems must have made his life very difficult for some years. Squirrell wrote in 1893 that his ‘object in life is to see my children settle comfortably & safely’,²⁶⁴ and he did his best, although he ended up leaving such a small estate that no duty was levied on it.²⁶⁵

By leaving some records his working and family life can be sketched in some detail, unlike the lives of most other people living in the district. His letters, both published and unpublished, revealed his politics and in

²⁶¹ Joseph Hawkins, Application for a Reception-Order, 16 May 1924, Tokanui Mental Hospital, Case File on John Squirrell, file 372, YCBG 5904/11, ANZ-A.

²⁶² Note by James Ian Robert Gray, 16 May 1924, Tokanui Mental Hospital, Case File on John Squirrell, file 372, YCBG 5904/11, ANZ-A.

²⁶³ *Te Aroha News*, 9 August 1924, p. 4.

²⁶⁴ John Squirrell to Commissioner of Crown Lands, 1 December 1893, Lands and Survey Department, BAAZ 1108/103a, ANZ-A.

²⁶⁵ Testamentary Register 1924-1925, BBCB 4208/17, folio 375, ANZ-A.

particular his personality, usually lost to posterity through lack of information.

Appendix

Figure 1: 'Map of Gordon Settlement', Terese McLoughlin and Gladys Davison, Gordon Centenary 1884-1984 (Matamata, 1984), p. 3: John Squirrell had Sections 5 and 5A in Block X, Mary Foughey had Section 25A in Block VII, and in 1897 David Foughey acquired Section 24 in Block VII.

