

DAVID McLEAN WALLACE: A WAIORONGOMAI BLACKSMITH  
WHO FOUNDED AN ENGINEERING FIRM

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THE UNIVERSITY OF  
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## DAVID McLEAN WALLACE: A WAIORONGOMAI BLACKSMITH WHO FOUNDED AN ENGINEERING FIRM

**Abstract:** *Born in Scotland and trained as a blacksmith, Wallace arrived in New Zealand in 1873, working at Ngaruawahia, Auckland, and Huntly before settling in Waiorongomai in 1885. Soon obtaining most of the available work, he acquired other blacksmiths' businesses. Shifting to Te Aroha in 1892, his business grew steadily, and in 1912 a private company comprising Wallace and his sons was formed. With the arrival of the motor car, the firm adapted to repair these, an adaptability assisted by his inventive skills. After patenting a popular miners' pick, he turned to inventions to benefit farmers.*

*Wallace was involved in many aspects of community life, serving on several committees, and for a while was on the borough council where, occasionally, when opposed by other councillors, he was a belligerent member. But in general he was popular and highly respected.*

### BEFORE WAIORONGOMAI

According to the *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, David McLean Wallace was born in Glasgow in 1852, but his marriage certificate indicated a date of 1855.<sup>1</sup> According to his birth certificate, he was born in 1853 to Charles Wallace and Ann, née Anderson, who had been married in Glasgow in February the previous year.<sup>2</sup> His death certificate revealed Charles to be an engineer.<sup>3</sup> According to family tradition recounted in the official history of the firm he founded, Wallace's real surname was McLean, as his mother had died giving birth to him and his widowed father, an innkeeper, had entrusted his care to the newly married Wallaces.<sup>4</sup> Whether they were related is not known, nor why this fertile couple would adopt a child in the first year of their marriage. And it is puzzling why his birth certificate did

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<sup>1</sup> *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 2, p. 830; Marriage Certificate of David McLean Wallace, 24 May 1881, 1881/1545, BDM.

<sup>2</sup> Birth Certificate of David McLean Wallace, 1853; Marriage Certificate of Charles Wallace and Ann Anderson, 14 February 1852, ancestry.co.uk.

<sup>3</sup> Death Certificate of David McLean Wallace, 8 October 1931, 1931/12636, BDM.

<sup>4</sup> Lesley Max, *Growing with the Land: D.McL. Wallace – 1884-1984* (Auckland, 1984), pp. 6, 8, 16.

not record the name of his birth mother; clearly whatever happened was an informal arrangement.

Charles Wallace arrived in Auckland on the 'Nelson' in January 1865; his family was not listed as accompanying him.<sup>5</sup> According to Ann's death certificate, she had arrived in 1864; according to another son's death certificate he had arrived in 1863.<sup>6</sup> They had settled in Ngaruawahia by December 1867, when a daughter was born.<sup>7</sup> A son was born in a Tararu hotel in October 1869,<sup>8</sup> at the northern end of the Thames goldfield. He invested in a Tararu company in that year, and in early 1871 'Mrs Charles Wallace' invested in another one.<sup>9</sup> Another daughter, their last child, was born at Ngaruawahia in 1872.<sup>10</sup> Wallace was engineer on the steamer 'Waipa', based at Ngaruawahia, which traded on the Waikato River.<sup>11</sup> In 1873 he and a stoker were fined for being drunk on duty and causing £200-worth of damage to a boiler.<sup>12</sup> He would remain in Ngaruawahia for most of his remaining years, dying in 1910 aged 83; he left four sons (including Wallace) and four daughters.<sup>13</sup>

Wallace arrived in Auckland on the 'Durham' in March 1873.<sup>14</sup> He had 'remained in Scotland to complete his education for a profession he intended to follow. As there was little scope in the professions in New Zealand in those days he decided that he had better learn a trade'.<sup>15</sup> He first worked as

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<sup>5</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 21 January 1865, p. 4.

<sup>6</sup> Death Certificates of Ann Anderson Wallace, 8 July 1904, 1904/1552; Archibald Anderson Wallace, 8 September 1920, 1920/2308, BDM.

<sup>7</sup> Birth Certificate of Janet Wallace, 7 December 1867, 1868/16115, BDM; Birth Notice, *New Zealand Herald*, 16 December 1867, p. 3.

<sup>8</sup> Birth Certificate of Charles Wallace, 26 October 1869, 1869/10954, BDM; Birth Notice, *New Zealand Herald*, 24 November 1869, p. 8.

<sup>9</sup> Advertisements, *Daily Southern Cross*, 2 November 1869, p. 5, 11 March 1871, p. 3.

<sup>10</sup> Birth Certificate of Mary Stewart Wallace, 29 May 1872, 1872/19313, BDM; Birth Notice, *Daily Southern Cross*, 12 June 1872, p. 3.

<sup>11</sup> Police Court, *Daily Southern Cross*, 16 August 1871, p. 3; *Te Aroha News*, 19 October 1927, Supplement, p. 1.

<sup>12</sup> *Waikato Times*, 1 March 1873, p. 2.

<sup>13</sup> Death Certificate of Charles Wallace, 1910/9742, BDM; *Te Aroha News*, 8 October 1910, p. 2; see also *City of Auckland Electoral Roll, 1893*, nos. 13445, 15855.

<sup>14</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 4 March 1873, p. 2; compare with *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 2, p. 830; *Te Aroha News*, 19 October 1927, Supplement, p. 1.

<sup>15</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 19 October 1927, Supplement, p. 1.

a blacksmith at Ngaruawahia with William Butcher<sup>16</sup> ‘for six months, and then decided it was better to go to Auckland to learn’.<sup>17</sup> According to another account, ‘he had two years’ experience as a blacksmith’ before leaving the Waikato.<sup>18</sup> With Archie, otherwise Archibald Anderson Wallace, described as a half-brother,<sup>19</sup> he set off for Auckland to obtain work and learn a trade. ‘They went to Mercer on their Dad’s steamer, and then picked up a horse and rode and walked alternatively into Auckland, disposing of the horse when they reached their journey’s end’.<sup>20</sup> Archie, born in Glasgow in 1861, became a baker at Te Aroha, Waiorongomai and Auckland.<sup>21</sup>

Wallace was first employed by Charles Atkin and William John and James Frederick Cousins, the leading coachbuilders in Auckland, described in 1927 as being ‘still the leading coachbuilders in the land’.<sup>22</sup> After serving his apprenticeship with them learning the trade of a coachsmith, he worked for James McIntyre, who had the Clyde Engineering Works at Onehunga, ‘and put in a period of engine smithing and marine engineering. From there he went to Otahuhu and became foreman for Messrs Wallace and Hotham, the plough and implement makers’.<sup>23</sup>

According to the *Cyclopedia*, after seven years learning these skills, in 1881 ‘he became blacksmith at the Huntly coal mines’.<sup>24</sup> Most of this work was on contract.<sup>25</sup> In November 1881, John Paddy, a horseshoer and

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<sup>16</sup> See *Waikato Electoral Rolls, 1871*, p. 3; *1873*, p. 3, *1874*, p. 3; *Waikato Times*, 31 January 1884, p. 2, 1 March 1884, p. 3, 5 April 1884, p. 3, 29 January 1885, p. 2, 5 March 1885, p. 3, 23 April 1885, p. 3, 20 November 1890, p. 3; A.M. Latta, *Meeting of the Waters: The story of Ngaruawahia* (Ngaruawahia, 1963), p. 35, with photograph of ‘M.’ Butcher.

<sup>17</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 19 October 1927, Supplement, p. 1.

<sup>18</sup> *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 2, p. 830.

<sup>19</sup> Max, p. 8.

<sup>20</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 19 October 1927, Supplement, p. 1.

<sup>21</sup> See Marriage Certificate of Archibald Anderson Wallace, 26 August 1881, 1881/1682; Death Certificate of Archibald Anderson Wallace, 8 September 1920, 1920/2308, BDM; *Te Aroha News*, 22 November 1884, p. 7, 10 October 1885, p. 7, 15 May 1886, p. 2, advertisement, 30 March 1887, p. 7, 26 October 1889, p. 7; *Mercantile and Bankruptcy Gazette of New Zealand*, 26 September 1895, p. 524.

<sup>22</sup> *City of Auckland Electoral Roll, 1893*, nos. 2768, 2770; *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 2, pp. 340-341, 424-425; *Te Aroha News*, 19 October 1927, Supplement, p. 1.

<sup>23</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 19 October 1927, Supplement, p. 1, 9 October 1931, p. 5.

<sup>24</sup> *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 2, p. 830.

<sup>25</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 19 October 1927, Supplement, p. 1.

general blacksmith at Ngaruawahia since mid-1880,<sup>26</sup> advertised that, ‘finding that his business has increased so much lately’, he had entered into partnership with him as Paddy and Wallace. He announced that Wallace ‘had had some years experience with Wallace and Hotham, Implement Makers, Otahuhu’, and that they would carry on their business as agricultural implement makers in enlarged premises.<sup>27</sup> This firm did work for the steam navigation company and for ‘the settlers of the surrounding districts’.<sup>28</sup> After two profitable years, their partnership was dissolved in November 1883, with Paddy continuing the business.<sup>29</sup>

#### AT WAIORONGOMAI

In 1927, the *Te Aroha News* explained why Wallace decided to move to Waiorongomai:

While Mr Wallace was in the Waikato gold rush broke out at Te Aroha and Waiorongomai, and he entered into an agreement with ... a friend at Huntly<sup>30</sup> to come to Waiorongomai on half wages and prospect, Mr Wallace to pay him half wages and the two to share any claim that may be found. He paid the man half wages for some time and, having sold his share in the blacksmithing business to his partner, thought he had better come to Waiorongomai and see what his mate was doing. He liked the look of the district and decided to settle there.<sup>31</sup>

His prospecting partner never found gold, and, despite this initial interest in mining, Wallace was not a shareholder in any claim at this time. During the mining boom of the 1890s he acquired a water race at Stoney Creek, which was almost immediately transferred to the Inland Reefs Company, in which he had 1,000 of its 100,000 shares.<sup>32</sup> His only other

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<sup>26</sup> See *Waikato Times*, 24 June 1880, pp. 2, 3.

<sup>27</sup> Advertisement, *Waikato Times*, 29 November 1881, p. 3.

<sup>28</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 19 October 1927, Supplement, p. 1, 9 October 1931, p. 5.

<sup>29</sup> *Waikato Times*, 28 March 1882, p. 2, 20 May 1882, 13 November 1883, p. 3.

<sup>30</sup> Because of how this article was printed, his name has been lost.

<sup>31</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 19 October 1927, Supplement, p. 1.

<sup>32</sup> Te Aroha Warden’s Court, Register of Applications 1883-1900, 53/1897, BBAV 11505/1a; Rent Ledger 1894-1910, folio 151, BBAV 11570/7a, ANZ-A; *New Zealand Gazette*, 6 May 1897, p. 1036.

mining investment was in one company at Komata, earlier in the boom.<sup>33</sup>  
The 1927 account continued:

He approached one of the blacksmiths with a view of buying him out, but the business was not for sale, and he was advised that if he went to Matamata he could get a job half-time blacksmithing and half-time digging post holes. Not being used to the post holes he didn't take it on. He approached the other blacksmith in the town and leased his shop, which was near the Waiorongomai school and well out of the town.<sup>34</sup>

At the end of January 1885, the *Te Aroha News* announced Wallace's arrival:

Mr David McL. Wallace, implement maker, shoeing and general blacksmith (lately from Waikato), has purchased Mr [James] Munro's business at Waiorongomai.<sup>35</sup> Mr Wallace is prepared to supply agricultural implements of every description on the shortest notice at Auckland prices. Customers may rely upon first-class workmanship and moderate charges.<sup>36</sup>

This report was largely a rephrasing of his advertisement:

DAVID McL. WALLACE  
BEGS TO ADVISE THE INHABITANTS OF  
WAIORONGOMAI, TE AROHA,  
AND THE SURROUNDING DISTRICTS,  
THAT HE HAS TAKEN OVER THE  
BUSINESS OF MR JAMES MUNRO,  
BLACKSMITH, WAIORONGOMAI,  
WHERE HE PURPOSES CARRYING ON THE BUSI-  
NESS OF  
AGRICULTURAL IMPLEMENT  
MAKER,  
SHOEING & GENERAL BLACKSMITH

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<sup>33</sup> *New Zealand Gazette*, 10 October 1895, p. 1604.

<sup>34</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 19 October 1927, Supplement, p. 1.

<sup>35</sup> See *Waikato Times*, 13 January 1880, p. 2; *Thames Advertiser*, 12 November 1883, p. 3; *Te Aroha News*, 18 April 1885, p. 2, 20 June 1885, p. 2, 21 August 1886, p. 2, 5 March 1887, p. 3, 19 March 1887, p. 2, 14 January 1888, p. 2, 26 December 1888, p. 2, 24 July 1889, p. 2; for his involvement in Tui mining, see paper on John Squirrell.

<sup>36</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 31 January 1885, p. 2.

And hopes by strict attention to  
business, Good Workmanship and Mode-  
rate Charges, to merit  
A SHARE OF PUBLIC SUPPORT.  
AGRICULTURAL IMPLEMENTS  
At Auckland Prices.  
ESTIMATES GIVEN  
FOR ALL KINDS OF IRON WORK.  
GIVE WALLACE A  
TRIAL.<sup>37</sup>

The following year, Munro claimed Wallace had taken some of his tools, and sued him for £2 7s 6d. Munro explained that he had let his shop for 12 months, at the end of which time Wallace ‘was to return tools in same condition’. After Wallace acquired another shop he ‘came to me at night’ and ‘asked for a receipt I gave one for rent not tools as I had not seen them’. Once Munro ‘saw tools not right’ he ‘offered to let matter go to arbitration’, but as Wallace did not attend he had sued. Under cross-examination, Munro explained that he had ‘got part of bellows frame don’t know where uprights are’. The tools had been returned three months before the suit, after Wallace had failed to return and repair them when asked. Wallace responded that he had returned the tools ‘in fair order & condition’. When asked to go to another blacksmith, Daniel George Taylor,<sup>38</sup> who would arbitrate, ‘I agreed – but did not go as I did not know the day – I went afterwards with Munro & agreed to repair the tools but said I was busy & could not do them – Bellows frame in good order & condition’. Cross-examined by Munro, he agreed the latter had ‘wanted me to repair’ the bellows frame. Taylor described how, in December, ‘I was spoken to by Mr Munro I told Wallace that I was going down that night he sd all right he would come – I went down with Munro Wallace not there – I went down to shop & asked Munro to fetch Wallace he did not go’. After Taylor estimated the cost of tool and repairs, judgment was given for 11s 9d ‘in addition to amount paid into Court’, making a total of £1 6s 9d, plus costs.<sup>39</sup>

According to the 1927 account, ‘by his skill and enterprise as a tradesman’ Wallace ‘soon captured the work of the mines and the district, and within six months the other blacksmith offered him the business which

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<sup>37</sup> Advertisement, *Te Aroha News*, 7 February 1885, p. 7.

<sup>38</sup> See section on Maria Taylor in paper on women’s lives in the Te Aroha district.

<sup>39</sup> Te Aroha Warden’s Court, Register of Applications 1888-1892, folios 29-31, BBAV 11505/7c, ANZ-A.

he first wished to buy'; he 'accepted and moved up near the battery'.<sup>40</sup> It was in fact within four months of arriving that he bought William Jackson Ellis' business 'and removed to what was previously Mr Ellis' smithy, situated near the battery'.<sup>41</sup> William Jackson Ellis, who had been the first blacksmith there, had 'conducted a successful trade till shortly before' selling out to Wallace, and later would have a profitable business at Ohinemuri.<sup>42</sup> Ellis sold his business site to Wallace in early March for £20.<sup>43</sup> In 1886, Wallace purchased another business site for £12, and two years later another, with its improvements, was bought in his wife's name for £38.<sup>44</sup> Within months of this second purchase he enlarged his blacksmith's shop.<sup>45</sup>

Few details of his blacksmithing were recorded. In 1888 he tendered to acquire the tramway donkey engine.<sup>46</sup> In September 1891 he successfully tendered to repair tramway trucks for £4 10s, and the following month his tender of £48 was accepted for repairs to the tramline and its bridges.<sup>47</sup> At the end of the year, Thomas Gavin, then in charge of the tramway,<sup>48</sup> accused him of taking illegal possession of the old but valuable turntable at the battery terminus, 'a piece of sharp practice' according to him. As Wallace had been doing all the blacksmith work for the tramway over the last two years he 'ought to be the last to take advantage of the Council'. Upon being asked to return the turntable by the county clerk, Wallace had

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<sup>40</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 19 October 1927, Supplement, p. 1.

<sup>41</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 11 April 1885, p. 2.

<sup>42</sup> *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 2, p. 847; *Ohinemuri Gazette*, 17 February 1897, p. 2; *Hauraki Plains Gazette*, 13 April 1932, p. 4.

<sup>43</sup> Te Aroha Warden's Court, W.J. Ellis to D.McL. Wallace, 12 March 1885, Certified Instruments 1885, BBAV 11581/6a; Rent Ledger 1881-1900, folio 178, BBAV 11501/1a, ANZ-A.

<sup>44</sup> Te Aroha Warden's Court, John Thompson to D.McL. Wallace, 15 September 1886, Certified Instruments 1886, BBAV 11581/7a; William Samson to A.McL. Wallace, 23 July 1888, Certified Instruments 1888, BBAV 11581/9a; Rent Ledger 1881-1900, folios 161, 383, BBAV 11501/1a, ANZ-A; Warden's Court, *Te Aroha News*, 25 April 1888, p. 2.

<sup>45</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 25 August 1888, p. 2.

<sup>46</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 17 March 1888, p. 2.

<sup>47</sup> Piako County Council, Minutes of Meetings of 1 September 1891, 6 October 1891, Matamata-Piako District Council Archives, Te Aroha; Piako County Council, *Waikato Times*, 3 September 1891, p. 2, 8 October 1891, p. 2.

<sup>48</sup> See paper on his life.

done so.<sup>49</sup> In response, Wallace wrote to the council, which was published ‘in extenso’ by the *Waikato Times* because it believed he had ‘good grounds for complaint’:

I have to apologize to you for intruding on your valuable time, but I cannot allow Mr Gavin’s report ... to pass without giving my side of the story. Anyone reading the report would be under the impression that I had refused to give up the old turntable when asked to do so, and that Mr Gavin considered it necessary to take action against me, after making me take the said turntable back to the tramway. Now, gentlemen, the facts of the case are as follows: When I finished putting in the new turntable I was compelled to rear the old one against the handrail on the trestle work, so as to allow the trucks to run on the line; it was left there for five days after I had completed my job, and then I removed it down to my shop. Mr [Francis] Pavitt,<sup>50</sup> your engineer, came along to look at the work that had been going on, and I explained that I had taken the old turntable, and showed it to him. He asked me what weight I thought was in it. I told him about 4cwt. I thought Mr Pavitt then said: “It ought to be worth a little.” I replied, if you thought so I would give old iron price for it. This was all that passed about the matter just then; and Mr Pavitt being my boss on the contract, I thought it was entirely in his hands. Mr Gavin, two days after this, asked me where the old turn-table was, when I replied: “Here it is! Do you want it?” Gavin said: “Oh, no! I don’t want it, but if they ask me where it is, I would like to be able to tell them.” Next day he must have written his report accusing me of sharp practice and trying to take advantage of your Council, also stating that the old turntable is a complete turn-table, as good as the day it was put down. This gentlemen, is a wilful untruth, as anyone with any practical knowledge can testify who sees the old plate. If the old turntable is a good one, then Mr Gavin has been guilty of squandering public money, in recommending and allowing the said table to be lifted. Mr [Charles] Tuck (the County clerk), sent me a written notice to me to return the old turn-table, (this was about ten days after Gavin first spoke about the turn-table), it was handed to me by Mr Gavin with the exclamation, “A-ha! you are in for it now.” This was said in the presence of two witnesses. I told Gavin I did not want the table if it did not justly belong to me, and that I would return it immediately. I spoke to the carter and he took it back. This table was on the tramway four days before your last meeting; but it seems to me that Mr Gavin was not very prompt in supplying this information. Now, gentlemen, this report is

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<sup>49</sup> Piako County Council, *Waikato Times*, 24 December 1891, p. 2.

<sup>50</sup> See *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 2, p. 825.

written to damage me in the eyes of your Council, and may tend to damage me with my customers in my business; and I would very much like to thrash the matter out before your honourable Council, with Mr Gavin, myself, and witnesses present. Then you will be able to get at the root of the whole affair, and find out who is telling the truth. As a ratepayer in the Te Aroha Riding, I leave the matter in your hands, knowing that as a fair and impartial body you will look into the case, and not allow your manager, Mr Gavin, to call any man a thief unless he has substantial grounds for doing so.<sup>51</sup>

The chairman considered that the council could not hold an inquiry and that if it 'expressed itself satisfied with the explanation given Mr Wallace would doubtless be satisfied, for he had scored heavily against Mr Gavin'. It was unanimously resolved to accept Wallace's explanation 'as satisfactory'.<sup>52</sup>

#### AT TE AROHA

'When the goldfields having petered out and many of the prominent farmers from the Te Aroha district being in the habit of sending their work out to him he decided to move into Te Aroha', according to the 1927 account of Wallace's career.<sup>53</sup> In May 1892 he bought Robert Kelly Cannell's Te Aroha blacksmith's shop for £45 and moved his business there.<sup>54</sup> (Cannell went on to become the leading blacksmith and coachbuilder at Waihi.)<sup>55</sup> He immediately set about 'building a large shop opposite the Palace Hotel', on the corner of Whitaker and Bridge Streets.<sup>56</sup> In 1927, it was recalled that

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<sup>51</sup> D.McL. Wallace to Piako County Council, 9 January 1892, printed in *Waikato Times*, 6 February 1892, p. 2.

<sup>52</sup> Piako County Council, Minutes of Meeting of 2 February 1892, Matamata-Piako District Council Archives, Te Aroha; Piako County Council, *Waikato Times*, 6 February 1892, p. 2.

<sup>53</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 19 October 1927, Supplement, p. 1.

<sup>54</sup> R.K. Cannell to D.McL. Wallace, 14 May 1892, Te Aroha Warden's Court, Certified Instruments 1892, BBAV 11581/13a; Rent Ledger 1881-1900, folio 417, BBAV 11501/1a, ANZ-A; *Auckland Weekly News*, 21 May 1892, p. 22.

<sup>55</sup> See *Te Aroha News*, 5 May 1888, p. 2, 22 December 1888, p. 2, 16 January 1889, p. 2; Te Aroha Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 21 May 1892, p. 22; *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 2, p. 508.

<sup>56</sup> 'Te Aroha', *Observer*, 28 May 1892, p. 19; *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 2, p. 830.

when he 'came in from Waiorongomai he was doing a good deal of contract work for the railway which was being built between Te Aroha and Paeroa at that time. Later he did a lot of contract work for the Thames line, and among other jobs he did all the bridge ironwork for the railway between Paeroa and Hikutaia'.<sup>57</sup> In December 1896 he successfully tendered for the ironwork for the 14 railway bridges between Paeroa and Thames.<sup>58</sup> For many years afterwards he 'did considerable railway work for other parts of the North Island'.<sup>59</sup>

In March 1897 his bank manager described him as 'of small means but doing well'.<sup>60</sup> In 1902 he was a 'Coach-builder and General Blacksmith' with an 'Agricultural Implement and Coachbuilding Works', having 'extensive' buildings 'adapted for a business with such separate departments as general blacksmithing, engineering, coachbuilding, painting, and horse-shoeing'. He had six employees.<sup>61</sup> In 1908 he was praised for his mail coach, built for Waitomo, and a baker's cart, made for Te Aroha.<sup>62</sup> His motive power was recalled in 1927:

He was always a believer in machinery, and while in Waiorongomai put in a punch and shearing machine, power hammer and other machines, which he drove with a horse-power hurdy-gurdy. This was used in Te Aroha for some years until replaced by a steam engine; then a Pelton wheel and [then] electric power. It will be remembered by some of the old residents here how Mr Wallace's sons used to sit on the hurdy-gurdy and drive the horses. They were too young to balance themselves on the saddle and a box had to be nailed on into which the young boy was put with his legs protruding through the front of the box. As long as he could crack the whip and keep the horse travelling around and around the job was done.<sup>63</sup>

In 1912 the business was turned into a private company, D.Mc.L. Wallace Ltd., with his sons, 'all of whom had learnt their trades with their

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<sup>57</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 19 October 1927, Supplement, p. 4.

<sup>58</sup> *Ohinemuri Gazette*, 16 December 1896, p. 2.

<sup>59</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 19 October 1927, Supplement, p. 4.

<sup>60</sup> Bank of New Zealand, Paeroa Branch, Half-Yearly Balance Books, Balances as at 31 March 1897, Report on Advances, Bank of New Zealand Archives, Wellington.

<sup>61</sup> *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 2, p. 830.

<sup>62</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 31 October 1908, p. 2.

<sup>63</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 19 October 1927, Supplement, p. 1; Max, p. 16.

father'.<sup>64</sup> It commenced with a paid-up capital of £800.<sup>65</sup> In 1919 Wallace had the largest shareholding, 875, his other sons having 575, two of 425, and 100; when the capital was increased in subsequent years, only Wallace and his sons could acquire the extra shares, Wallace always having the largest holding.<sup>66</sup> His eldest son, Arthur David, was its secretary, and the other sons were directors and, in time, branch managers.<sup>67</sup>

In the twentieth century the firm repaired motor vehicles, constructed commercial trucks and vans, and became agents for selling American cars.<sup>68</sup> The *Te Aroha News* gave a detailed account of this 'progressive firm' in 1919:

One of the largest industrial concerns in Te Aroha district is that of D,McL. Wallace, Ltd, ironmongers, coachworkers, smiths, and motor mechanics. The head of the firm, Mr David McL. Wallace, commenced in business in this district well over 30 years ago at Waiorongomai in the palmy days of that district, and he has continued in business ever since. Finding Waiorongomai did not give enough scope for the enterprise, Mr Wallace removed his business to Te Aroha, gradually increasing the plant and equipment as opportunity offered, until now there is no better equipped business of its kind outside of Auckland. In the smithy there is every facility for turning out work promptly and finished in the style that cannot be excelled. The coachbuilding has not been entirely converted to motor car repairs, for there is ample space in the huge building, and competent workmen, to continue to turn out the vehicles that have made the name "Wallace" so widely known for honest workmanship. Gigs, buggies, farm wagons, etc, are still being made – in fact, in increasing quantities from year to year, despite the great vogue with the motor car. Of the paint shop the same may be said. But it is the motor repairing department that is destined to be the true flier at Wallace's, and the firm has adequately provided for its extension. Motorists who visited Te Aroha during the past fortnight – and

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<sup>64</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 19 October 1927, Supplement, p. 4; for photograph of three of the sons working with their father in about 1898, see Max, p. 11; for a 1908 photo of the same, see Max, pp. 16-17.

<sup>65</sup> Max, p. 34.

<sup>66</sup> Company Files, BADZ 5586, 1913/10, ANZ-A.

<sup>67</sup> Company Files, BADZ 5586, 1913/10, ANZ-A; *Te Aroha News*, 7 April 1919, p. 2, 19 October 1927, Supplement, p. 1, 29 September 1933, p. 5; *Observer*, 25 November 1937, p. 25.

<sup>68</sup> Max, pp. 29-34.

there were hundreds – were particularly complementary concerning the firm's equipment and service to meet the demands of the times. All the motorist has to do is to run his car into Wallace's when in need of repair or overhaul, and Wallace's will turn it out in quick order fit to run thousands of miles without trouble other than the unavoidable puncture. There is a motor hood making department, where a highly skilled specialist is busily engaged making hoods and curtains for every make of car on the market. As an indication of the good service of this department especially, we learn that orders come from as far afield as Auckland, Opotiki, and Taumarunui. The upholstery department is also an important one, and the man in charge has a full knowledge of the art of making cars and other vehicles most comfortable to ride in.

The whole business is run systematically, the firm having accepted and adopted the American principle, a series of dockets and checks being used on each job, thus reducing the chance of mistakes to a minimum. Motorists have at their service a number of lockers in which every article loose in the car may be deposited until required again when the job is completed. These lockers are locked by the car-owner and he takes the key with him, returning it to the firm when he again takes possession of his car. There is a special dark room for keeping motor tyres, it having been found that tyres retain their durability longer if kept in a dark place. Scores of sets of tyres, principally for Ford cars, are kept in this room. Then there is the spare-parts room, where every possible requirement for motor car equipment is kept in good supply. The whole premises are certainly up-to-date, well equipped, and efficient to a degree. Mr [Donald] McKecknie<sup>69</sup> is the manager responsible for the extensive works, and Mr A.D. Wallace is devoting his time more particularly to the outdoor part of the business. The firm has made rapid strides in recent years, but judging from the preparations now in hand, each succeeding year will mark fresh records in the firm's books.<sup>70</sup>

Arthur David Wallace was general manager at the time of his father's death in 1933, after which he became managing director.<sup>71</sup> By then all the other sons managed branches: Charles Stanley at Thames, Gordon McLean at Hamilton (the main farm machinery branch), and Norman Dawson at Matamata.<sup>72</sup> When Arthur died, two years after his father, Charles became

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<sup>69</sup> See *Tauranga Electoral Roll, 1919*, p. 99.

<sup>70</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 21 March 1919, p. 3.

<sup>71</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 29 September 1933, p. 5.

<sup>72</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 9 October 1931, p. 5; *Observer*, 25 November 1937, p. 25.

chairman, a position he held until 1962, and Gordon became managing director.<sup>73</sup> In the 1920s and 1930s, the firm was ‘a frequent winner of Ford-sponsored national sales contests’; for instance, in 1926 it again won first place in the Colonial Motor Company’s ‘Dealer Salesman’ contest.<sup>74</sup> By the 1930s, it was ‘one of the biggest firms of its kind’ in New Zealand.<sup>75</sup>

In 1927, Wallace described his success, in his own way:

When he came to Waiorongomai he had a wife, £150, and four horses. He sold the horses, kept the wife and put the money into his business, and all have turned out well. He started with one boy and a small shop, and the firm has now four flourishing branches employing 87 hands, and did business all over the North Island.<sup>76</sup>

In that year, he went to Africa to supervise the installation of the Wallace milking machines, the firm’s first export venture.<sup>77</sup> Although he spent ‘several happy months in Africa’, he found that the ‘local non-bovine fauna were not quite so tractable’ as cows. ‘This caused the normally intrepid Scot some anxious hours as they patrolled the isolated farmhouses, emitting roars that paralyzed David Wallace in the bedroom he had fortified by entrapping in it the mastiff dogs that were the only defence against the lions’.<sup>78</sup>

By the year of his death, eight branches had been established throughout the North Island.<sup>79</sup> His obituary stated that ‘no name’ was ‘better known in the business life of the town’, and that he was ‘noted for his probity in business and private life’. From ‘small beginnings’ the business had become ‘one of the most important in the Auckland province’.<sup>80</sup> The following year, the firm re-located its Te Aroha operation to Auckland.<sup>81</sup>

The firm’s historian records that

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<sup>73</sup> Max, pp. 17, 42, 68.

<sup>74</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 13 December 1926, p. 4; Max, p. 30.

<sup>75</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 29 September 1933, p. 5.

<sup>76</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 19 October 1927, Supplement, p. 4.

<sup>77</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 9 November 1927, p. 5; Max, p. 24.

<sup>78</sup> Max, p. 24.

<sup>79</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 29 September 1933, p. 5.

<sup>80</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 9 October 1933, p. 5.

<sup>81</sup> Max, pp. 38, 42.

Te Aroha provided an environment where the proprieties were certainly observed, but where democracy was firmly entrenched. Wallace employers and employees met on the bowling green, at the Masonic Lodge, in the church choir, on the golf course and on the factory floor.

The four sons and their sons often had hands as calloused as any worker's, as they worked where directed, whether as milking machine fitter, car painter, or shop manager.

Nick-names flew – Chum [Charles Wallace] and Nob [Norman Wallace, who worked for the firm from 1926 onwards]<sup>82</sup> and Dick – but there were boundaries that were not crossed.

If a job wasn't finished by knocking-off time, you stayed and finished it. The term "over-time" did not apply. Colin Lynch<sup>83</sup> remembers Christmas Eve in the hardware shop. It wasn't exactly Christmas Night in the Work-house, but there was unvoiced resentment of being required to stay behind the counter until customers stopped coming in, no matter if that were midnight, while outside, his contemporaries were whooping it up in the street.

If you were stuck in the wilds of the King Country on a difficult installation, you simply stayed till it was finished. There were no punitive rates.

Yet a Wallace morale existed, created by an involved, if demanding management, which resulted in sales achievements that made the firm notable throughout the country.<sup>84</sup>

Some employees boarded with his family.<sup>85</sup> Once, in 1907, he was before the arbitration court for paying his coachsmiths 10s a week less than their award. Upon pleading ignorance of the award, and explaining that when he discovered its terms he had paid the full amount, the judge responded that ignorance was no excuse and fined him £2 and costs.<sup>86</sup> That his relations with his workers were good was implied by his being voted to the chair of a 1911 meeting held by Pat Hickey, the Labour candidate.<sup>87</sup>

## INVENTOR

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<sup>82</sup> Max, p. 56.

<sup>83</sup> Max, p. 23.

<sup>84</sup> Max, p. 26.

<sup>85</sup> Max, p. 38.

<sup>86</sup> *Observer*, 27 April 1907, p. 3.

<sup>87</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 14 September 1911, p. 3.

In 1882, a new plough invented by Paddy and Wallace was praised, but which of them had devised it was not reported;<sup>88</sup> it was not patented. In October 1886, with John Mace, Wallace applied for a patent for 'Wallace and Mace's Patent Pick'.<sup>89</sup> (Despite being described as a Waiorongomai blacksmith in the early 1880s, Mace was a carpenter who became a farmer as well as, for a time, a boarding house keeper.)<sup>90</sup> As contemporary accounts made clear that the pick was solely Wallace's invention, Mace presumably contributed capital, not ideas. The *Te Aroha News* applauded it:

Should it be found in practical work to come up to the expectations of the inventors, there is not the slightest doubt but the patent will prove a good thing for the owners thereof, and the picks have an immense sale. Mr Wallace informs us the idea of having a pick with duplicate points first occurred to him when he was living at Huntly (Waikato), working in the coal mines. There, he states, the coal miners have each four picks for the day's work, which every night are carried some distance to the forge to be sharpened, and then carried back by the men going into work next morning. The ordinary pick used is composed of part steel and part iron, and every time the pick has to be laid and steeled, it is considerably weakened from scaling. The ordinary picks are also liable to burst at the eye when the handle is being wedged up, but this cannot occur in the case of the steel pick. The cost of laying and steeling is about 1s 6d, and this has to be done some five or six times a year, whilst the first cost of the ordinary miner's pick is stated to be 5s, or with handle 6s, so that the first cost to the miner of even three picks with handles would be 18s. Mr Wallace, however, is prepared to supply the new style of pick referred to, made of solid steel throughout, and with three solid steel points, for 10s the set, or with handle, 11s. So in that first cost there is a very large saving. But in addition to that, the solid steel points will do away with the necessity of laying and steeling, and wear far longer without requiring to be sharpened.... A sample case of these picks has just been received from Sheffield,

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<sup>88</sup> *Waikato Times*, 20 May 1882, p. 2.

<sup>89</sup> *New Zealand Gazette*, 7 October 1886, p. 1289.

<sup>90</sup> Te Aroha Warden's Court, John Mace to Hugh McLiver, 12 December 1882, Transfers and Assignments 1882, BBAV 11581/2a, ANZ-A; *Thames Advertiser*, 14 June 1881, p. 3, 8 November 1882, p. 3; *Te Aroha News*, advertisement, 14 June 1884, p. 7, Piako County Council, 15 May 1886, p. 2, 16 June 1888, p. 2, 27 June 1888, p. 2, 1 September 1888, p. 2, 19 April 1918, p. 2; *Waikato Times*, 11 May 1886, p. 2; Death Certificate of John Mace, 12 April 1905, 1905/2536, BDM; G.T. Griffiths, *The Maces of Macetown* (Dunedin, 1969), pp. 5-13.

and they are being distributed in the various mining centres throughout New Zealand; so that we may ere long expect to hear the opinion of practical miners from all parts of the colony with respect to the new invention. To those going prospecting in the bush, etc, far away from any forge, the possession of one of these picks and a couple of extra points will be a great boon. We wish the inventors the success they so well deserve.<sup>91</sup>

Five months later, it reported that the pick had ‘taken well amongst the miners. On the West Coast, especially at Reefton, they are thought a great deal of, and we understand the patentees have been offered a handsome sum for the patent rights’.<sup>92</sup> At the end of 1891 the patent lapsed through non-payment of the renewal fee.<sup>93</sup> Perhaps Wallace paid later, as it was recalled in 1927 that for a time ‘he made practically all the mining picks for the whole of the Ohinemuri goldfields’, with the larger mines ‘buying many a gross of picks made in Te Aroha’.<sup>94</sup>

In November 1888, with George William Graves, a Waiorongomai butcher who had married his wife’s youngest sister four months previously,<sup>95</sup> Wallace applied for a patent for ‘an A-1 wire fastener’.<sup>96</sup> The following month, with Graves and Duncan Edward Clerk, briefly a storekeeper and farmer at Waiorongomai,<sup>97</sup> he applied to patent ‘the Handy Wire-strainer’.<sup>98</sup> These men, like Mace, provided financial assistance, Wallace being the sole inventor.<sup>99</sup> In February 1889, the *Te Aroha News* was ‘very pleased to learn’ that his wire strainer was

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<sup>91</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 17 December 1887, p. 3.

<sup>92</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 12 May 1888, p. 2.

<sup>93</sup> *New Zealand Gazette*, 7 January 1892, p. 20.

<sup>94</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 19 October 1927, Supplement, p. 4.

<sup>95</sup> See *Te Aroha News*, advertisement, 28 June 1884, p. 7, 29 October 1887, p. 3, 1 August 1888, p. 2, 16 January 1889, p. 2, 20 March 1889, p. 2, 13 April 1889, p. 2, 18 December 1889, p. 2.

<sup>96</sup> *New Zealand Gazette*, 29 November 1888, p. 1330.

<sup>97</sup> See *Te Aroha News*, advertisement, 16 May 1888, p. 7, 22 September 1888, p. 2; *New Zealand Gazette*, 13 December 1888, p. 1363; *Auckland Star*, 10 August 1897, p. 2, 2 September 1897, p. 6, 10 December 1907, p. 3.

<sup>98</sup> *New Zealand Gazette*, 13 December 1888, p. 1363.

<sup>99</sup> For example, *Te Aroha News*, 27 February 1889, p. 2.

likely to “take” exceedingly well. In fact, there can be no doubt, if proper steps are taken to make the invention public, it will command an immense sale, as it has all the essential requisites, viz, simplicity, efficiency, and inexpensiveness. All who have put it to the practical test speak most highly in its favour. Mr Wallace has recently disposed of 50 dozen locally, and received orders for 700 dozen from Auckland. We understand the new strainers also are to be used in fencing some ten miles of railway line near Lichfield.<sup>100</sup>

The following year, it reported that his strainer was ‘claimed to excel any other thing of the kind now in use’.<sup>101</sup> One month later, it reported he had ‘recently erected all the necessary machinery for manufacturing’ it

in large quantities. The invention is simplicity itself, small enough to be easily carried in an ordinary coat pocket, and yet with all capable of most efficiently and rapidly straining up any reasonable length of wire when applied. We are not surprised to learn orders are coming in from all parts; and the patent should prove a very lucrative one to the inventor, as these strainers are bound to sell well wherever introduced.<sup>102</sup>

As Wallace and Graves paid the renewal fees for the fastener’s patent in 1892,<sup>103</sup> it had clearly sold well. In 1927 it was recalled that the strainer and fastener ‘was sold extensively by the Auckland merchants for several years. In later years he invented a patent swingletree, also a cow tether, both of which articles are still on the market’.<sup>104</sup> In the mid-1920s his firm developed its own milking machine, the Wallace Milker.<sup>105</sup> Although it was not recorded whether Wallace helped invent it, he supervised the process, as recalled in 1984:

David McLean Wallace II remembers still his grandfather’s insistence upon quality in materials – the finest bronze, copper and rubber, quality in design – a minimum of working parts so that successful operation in remote locations could be assured; quality in workmanship – subjected to the most rigorous

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<sup>100</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 27 February 1889, p. 2.

<sup>101</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 26 April 1890, p. 2.

<sup>102</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 21 May 1890, p. 2.

<sup>103</sup> *New Zealand Gazette*, 3 March 1892, p. 456.

<sup>104</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 19 October 1927, Supplement, p. 1.

<sup>105</sup> *Max*, pp. 21, 23, 24.

supervision; and quality in service. Distance and inconvenience were no barrier to prompt response to service calls. David Wallace II recalls his grandfather's emphatic insistence that a man leave Te Aroha for Palmerston North the very afternoon on which a letter arrived expressing the customer's dissatisfaction. In return for this kind of business attitude, no quibble about price was expected or countenanced.<sup>106</sup>

His obituary described his 'latest invention' as 'a cow-testing outfit'<sup>107</sup> (a misprint for 'cow-tethering outfit?'). In the 1920s and 1930s the 'Wallace Safety Stacker' for making haystacks was 'extremely popular', but was not recorded as being his invention.<sup>108</sup>

### INVOLVEMENT IN THE COMMUNITY

Wallace was a leading Mason at Te Aroha.<sup>109</sup> A foundation member of the bowling club and on its first committee, he was twice its president before becoming a patron and life member.<sup>110</sup> He was regarded as one of the top local bowlers.<sup>111</sup> 'For a number of years' he was a member of the domain board.<sup>112</sup> When a Chamber of Commerce was formed in 1908 he was its first vice-president, being re-elected in later years and becoming its president.<sup>113</sup> One of the first members of the Thames Valley Agricultural, Pastoral, and Horticultural Association, he was elected to the committee of the Te Aroha Agricultural and Horticultural Society in 1903.<sup>114</sup> In lighter vein, in 1888 he was on the committee organizing a fancy dress carnival at Waiorongomai.<sup>115</sup>

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<sup>106</sup> Max, p. 24.

<sup>107</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 9 October 1931, p. 5.

<sup>108</sup> Max, p. 37.

<sup>109</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 22 December 1888, p. 2, 27 November 1895, p. 2.

<sup>110</sup> *Auckland Weekly News*, 27 November 1902, p. 33; *Te Aroha News*, 19 September 1908, p. 2, 19 October 1927, Supplement, p. 4, 9 October 1931, p. 5.

<sup>111</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 6 January 1915, p. 2; cartoon of 'Dad Wallace, of Te Aroha', *Observer*, 29 March 1924, p. 6; *Auckland Star*, 10 October 1931, p. 14.

<sup>112</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 19 October 1927, Supplement, p. 1.

<sup>113</sup> *Auckland Weekly News*, 23 April 1908, p. 36; *Te Aroha News*, 27 October 1910, p. 3, 2 November 1911, p. 3, 19 October 1927, Supplement, p. 4.

<sup>114</sup> *Te Aroha Correspondent*, *Auckland Weekly News*, 28 May 1903, p. 32; *Te Aroha News*, 9 October 1931, p. 5.

<sup>115</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 22 September 1888, p. 2.

And in 1903, when a concert to raise funds for the brass band was held in the public hall at Te Aroha, its use 'was given free of charge by the proprietor', Wallace.<sup>116</sup>

Wallace stood for the Waiorongomai school committee in 1887, unsuccessfully, but was elected in the following year.<sup>117</sup> After moving to Te Aroha, he was elected to its school committee.<sup>118</sup> In 1907 he received the highest vote, and was re-elected in the following year; in 1909 he was its chairman.<sup>119</sup> The following year, he declined to be nominated for a further term.<sup>120</sup>

In 1889, at a Waiorongomai meeting to discuss Te Aroha and Waiorongomai becoming a borough, he moved an amendment: 'That the Borough question be shelved till that date twelve months'.<sup>121</sup> One month later, he was elected to a committee of four to draw up a petition opposing Waiorongomai being included in it.<sup>122</sup> When the first borough council was elected in 1898, he received the third highest vote, 111; the highest vote was 115.<sup>123</sup> In 1900, when one of the six candidates competing for three vacancies, he was elected with the highest vote, 167, the next highest being 140.<sup>124</sup> He was re-elected in 1902.<sup>125</sup> The following year, at a public meeting he opposed the mayor's plan to reduce the number of councillors, arguing that fewer councillors 'could be more readily influenced, and might result in "clique" rule'.<sup>126</sup> The following month, when the mayor was absent through illness, Wallace was voted to chair the council meeting.<sup>127</sup> Despite his popularity amongst fellow councillors and voters, he chose not to stand in

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<sup>116</sup> Te Aroha Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 21 May 1903, p. 32.

<sup>117</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 30 April 1887, p. 2, 25 April 1888, p. 2.

<sup>118</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 24 April 1895, p. 2, 17 February 1898, p. 2, 26 April 1898, p. 2; *Auckland Weekly News*, 2 May 1896, p. 10; *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 2, p. 830.

<sup>119</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 23 April 1907, p. 3, 27 April 1909, p. 2; *Auckland Weekly News*, 30 April 1908, p. 32.

<sup>120</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 28 April 1910, p. 2.

<sup>121</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 17 July 1889, p. 2.

<sup>122</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 10 August 1889, p. 2, 23 October 1889, p. 2.

<sup>123</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 12 July 1898, p. 2.

<sup>124</sup> *Auckland Weekly News*, 24 April 1902, p. 32, 8 May 1900, p. 25.

<sup>125</sup> Te Aroha Borough Council, Minutes of Meeting of 7 March 1902, Minutes of Meetings 1898-1911, p. 138, Matamata-Piako District Council Archives, Te Aroha.

<sup>126</sup> *Auckland Weekly News*, 12 February 1903, p. 33.

<sup>127</sup> *Auckland Weekly News*, 26 March 1903, p. 33.

the election that year,<sup>128</sup> or ever again. Although his career on the council has not been traced in depth, it should be noted that six years after leaving it one ratepayer listed him as one of the nine men who would make a good mayor.<sup>129</sup>

A county clerk recalled stormy meetings under the chairmanship of James Mills.<sup>130</sup> 'There was the time when Davy Wallace confronting the chairman vigorously thumped the table and said he didn't care for Jimmy Mills, Mrs Mills, or the whole Mills family. The chairman intervened smartly with – "Tut, tut, tut, tut, Davy don't break the furniture!"<sup>131</sup> An example of his occasional belligerence was at a meeting in January 1900, when Mills' successor wanted the works committee to consist of only one councillor:

Cr Mills: I consider to do that, it would be a risky procedure.

Cr Wallace: It is my opinion that one Councillor was quite sufficient, it was far better than having 2 or 3 as heretofore, as he considered the way the work had been carried out during the past 12 months was a disgrace, and no credit to the Council. (Cr [Samuel Leonard] Bygrave:<sup>132</sup> Thank you.) There had been a great deal of unnecessary messing and bungling, and said he considered Cr Mills was responsible for a lot of it. He considered the water-works –

Cr Mills here interjected a remark, and said he would like Cr Wallace to keep to the matter of electing the works committee, and not wander off talking of things in the past.

Cr [Alexander Watson] Edwards:<sup>133</sup> So far as I see the late committee have done their duty.

Cr [Samuel Luther] Hirst<sup>134</sup> said he objected to one man composing the committee.

Cr Wallace: Object to two or three; because what was everybody's business was nobody's business.

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<sup>128</sup> *Auckland Weekly News*, 23 April 1903, p. 32.

<sup>129</sup> Letter from 'Ratepayer', *Te Aroha News*, 6 March 1909, p. 3.

<sup>130</sup> See paper on his life.

<sup>131</sup> Recollections of F.W. Wild, *Te Aroha News*, 29 November 1933, p. 4.

<sup>132</sup> See Death Certificate of Samuel Leonard Bygrave, 1928/841, BDM; *Thames Star*, 24 May 1897, p. 4; *Ohinemuri Gazette*, 4 December 1897, p. 2; *Auckland Star*, 14 February 1900, p. 6, 12 June 1928, p. 5.

<sup>133</sup> See paper on Ani Lipsey and Alexander Watson Edwards.

<sup>134</sup> See paper on financial struggles and (rare) successes of miners in general and at Te Aroha in particular.

Cr Mills took exception to these remarks, and said other boroughs had two or three on works committees, and he did not see why it should not work here.

Cr Wallace: It was your fault, Cr Mills, that things are mixed up as they are. If you had listened to me, and not snubbed people when they spoke, things would not be as they are now.

Cr Mills: Keep to the works committee.

Cr Wallace: Well, I am still of the same opinion.

Cr Hirst said he thought it rather queer at this juncture for Cr Wallace to step forward and slate the works committee. He considered the works committee had done their duty.

After Wallace was one of only two voting against having a three-member committee, he was proposed as a member.

Cr Wallace said he declined to act.

Cr Hirst: With all due respect to Cr Wallace, I think he is in duty bound to act on the Works Committee.

Cr Mills: If Cr Wallace refuses to go on any of the Committees and do his share of the work he did not see why he should keep his seat on the Council.

Cr Bygrave: Yes: Cr Wallace will talk about the work of others, but refuses to take his shake of the labour; yet he professed to know all about everything.

After further discussion it was eventually decided that Crs Wallace, Bygrave, and [Patrick] O'Meagher<sup>135</sup> be a Works Committee.<sup>136</sup>

When Mills was re-elected in 1902, Wallace 'congratulated the Mayor on his election, and promised, so far as was consistent with necessary independence of action, to accord him loyal support'.<sup>137</sup>

According to the local newspaper, Wallace held 'many other public positions'.<sup>138</sup> In June 1903 he was appointed turncock for the reservoir.<sup>139</sup> In 1910 'Progress' demanded the appointment of another turncock because Wallace had obtained the right to use water power for his factory some 12 or 13 years previously at £25 per annum but now used 'something like three

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<sup>135</sup> See section on publicans in paper on the drink problem in the Te Aroha district.

<sup>136</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 18 January 1900, p. 2.

<sup>137</sup> *Auckland Weekly News*, 22 May 1902, p. 32.

<sup>138</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 19 October 1927, Supplement, p. 4.

<sup>139</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 29 August 1908, p. 2, letter from D.McL. Wallace, 24 February 1910, p.

times that much water', possibly half the town's water supply, at the same rate.<sup>140</sup> Wallace read this letter 'with some dismay, and afterwards with amusement'.

Well, Mr Editor, your humble servant the Turncock must certainly be a remarkable man if, as "Progress" implies, I have been able to control the various Mayors and Gentlemen who have held office for the last six years and nine months in the Council Chambers to say nothing of the Town Clerks as well. With your kind permission I will now dissect the wonderful information which Progress publishes in your valuable paper and sends out as Gospel truth. He says it may not be generally known that Mr McL. Wallace some 12 of 13 years ago got the right to use water for power purposes at his factory at a cost of £25 per annum. In the first place the water works were not in existence 12 years ago, in the second place the price I paid for water at first was £10 per annum. It was then raised to £15 and again to £20, which is the price I now pay, with about £3 10s per annum added for water used in the shop for other purposes, so that I don't pay £25 as stated. Progress goes on to say that he has it on good authority that I use 3 times as much water now as I did a few years ago. My good friend, it is the same old nozzle that has been in use all the time and does not deliver any more water now than it did at the start, so that your good authority has misinformed you.... Progress thinks it is time our Councillors appointed another Turncock. Very good, if the Councillors think so. I am sure I have no objection, but at the same time I am proud to say that I never had any complaints from the people or the Council for any neglect of duty. If my friend, Progress, wishes any further information respecting the Borough water works if he will call personally I shall be pleased to accommodate him to the best of my ability with reliable facts, so that in his next attempt at instructing the ratepayers, through the public press, he will not expose his ignorance.<sup>141</sup>

For 'all his life' Wallace 'was connected with the Presbyterian Church'.<sup>142</sup> At his funeral, its minister stated that he had been

very interested in church matters. He was brought up on the strictest lines of Presbyterianism and was sent to a boarding school where, as part of his education he read the Bible, with which he became so familiar that he could recite many of the

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<sup>140</sup> Letter from 'Progress', *Te Aroha News*, 22 February 1910, p. 3.

<sup>141</sup> Letter from D. McL. Wallace, *Te Aroha News*, 24 February 1910, p. 3.

<sup>142</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 9 October 1931, p. 5.

Psalms by heart. In recent years he had not been able to take part in church work but his interest was no less for all that, as was evident from his numerous gifts. In his early years in the town he took an active part in the church and was leader of the Bible Class for 20 years, and he was also a member of the choir. When in 1889 an effort was made to establish the church in the district he was present to do his part and nine years later when it was thought the time had arrived when the Presbyterians should have their own place of worship he waited upon the then Warden so as to secure a suitable site. Only when his infirmity and increasing deafness made it impossible for him to follow discussion at the various meetings did he relinquish his post.<sup>143</sup>

After the church was erected, he was a trustee, helped to raise money to pay the minister, and remained one of its most prominent members.<sup>144</sup> In 1895 he was elected an elder for the Ohinemuri district.<sup>145</sup>

Before the local Presbyterian church was erected, he assisted the Wesleyans, in the mid-1880s selling tickets for the organ fund for the Waiorongomai Band of Hope and sending his eldest son to the Wesleyan Sunday School.<sup>146</sup>

Despite his strong faith,

even his staunch Glaswegian Presbyterianism balked at the accompanying virtue of being teetotal. Perhaps it was genetically unlikely, his birth father having been an innkeeper.

In the days when farmers settled trade accounts only every six months or even once a year, David Wallace saw it as an event to be celebrated by shouting for the valued customers.<sup>147</sup>

## FAMILY LIFE

Amy Dawson, 'one of the first Europeans to be born in the Waikato', was described in his company's history as 'a petite, but hard-working and

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<sup>143</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 12 October 1931, p. 1.

<sup>144</sup> *Te Aroha Warden's Court, Mining Applications 1896, 177/1896, BBAV 11289/14a, ANZ-A; Auckland Weekly News*, 14 October 1893, p. 10; *Te Aroha News*, 24 April 1914, p. 2.

<sup>145</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 23 February 1895, p. 2.

<sup>146</sup> Waiorongomai Band of Hope, Minute Book 1883-1889, 3050/916; Waiorongomai Sunday School, Admission Book 1884-1889, entry for 20 January 1889, 3050/888, Methodist Archives, Auckland.

<sup>147</sup> *Max*, p. 16.

thrifty girl'.<sup>148</sup> She was born at Ngaruawahia in 1861,<sup>149</sup> the second daughter of Laura and Arthur; when she married in May 1881, he owned a farm at Whatawhata.<sup>150</sup>

When she was a girl the Maoris were still hostile to the Pakehas in the Ngaruawahia district and she and her family were, on several occasions, rounded up by the British troops and taken into blockhouses for protection when Maori attacks were imminent. Mrs Wallace's father was captain of a steamboat on the Waikato River and his ship was attacked on occasions.<sup>151</sup>

Her obituary described her as 'a true pioneer' who was 'a great help and encouragement to her husband in his struggle to establish himself'. Being 'a woman of stern qualities and an energetic church worker', she was 'well-known and respected'.<sup>152</sup> Wallace understated his age, giving it as both 22 and 26; his bride was definitely 19.<sup>153</sup>

In 1927, his eldest son, Arthur David, joked that 'about a month' after his parents arrived in the district, 'I, with the assistance of the late Mrs [Ann] Devey,<sup>154</sup> came to light, so that when my people arrived at Te Aroha they had great expectations. (Laughter)'.<sup>155</sup> He was born at Waiorongomai in January 1885.<sup>156</sup> In July 1887 Charles Stanley was born,<sup>157</sup> and in October 1889 Gordon McLean.<sup>158</sup> Norman Dawson was born in 1893.<sup>159</sup> Their last son, Harold, was born in February 1897, but died nine days later

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<sup>148</sup> Max, p. 8.

<sup>149</sup> Birth Certificate of Amy Dawson, Births, 1861/6533, BDM.

<sup>150</sup> *Auckland Weekly News*, 18 June 1881, p. 1; *Te Aroha News*, 24 September 1948, p. 4.

<sup>151</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 24 September 1948, p. 4.

<sup>152</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 24 September 1948, p. 4.

<sup>153</sup> Notices of Intentions to Marry 1881, folio 285, Births Deaths and Marriages, BDM 20/26, ANZ-W; Marriage Certificate of David McLean Wallace, 24 May 1881, 1881/1545, BDM.

<sup>154</sup> See paper on George Devey and his family.

<sup>155</sup> Recollections of A.D. Wallace, *Te Aroha News*, 26 October 1927, p. 5.

<sup>156</sup> Birth Certificate of Arthur David Wallace, 12 January 1885, 1885/1416, BDM.

<sup>157</sup> Birth Certificate of Charles Stanley Wallace, 2 July 1887, 1887/5514, BDM.

<sup>158</sup> Birth Certificate of Gordon McLean Wallace, 19 October 1889, 1889/12170, BDM.

<sup>159</sup> Birth Certificate of Norman Dawson Wallace, 1893/10827, BDM.

after suffering from infantile diarrhoea and convulsions for a day.<sup>160</sup> Their elder daughter, Laura Aroha, later Aroha Laura, was born in 1892,<sup>161</sup> and Grace Alma, their younger daughter and their last child, was born in 1898.<sup>162</sup>

## DEATH

Wallace died in October 1931, aged 78, after having 'been ill for some months and latterly ... confined to his bed'.<sup>163</sup> His death certificate gave the cause as senility combined with, in his last five days, cardiac failure.<sup>164</sup> The local newspaper noted that 'the deep respect' with which he was held was reflected in 'the large number of people who attended his funeral'.

Never before have all classes been so fully represented on such an occasion. So long was the cortege that when the cemetery was reached the last motor cars had not turned from Whitaker street into Kenrick street. The number of people present was a great tribute to one who had lived for nearly half a century in the district and had taken a leading part in its business and other activities. As the solemn procession passed through the streets business premises were closed and large numbers stood respectfully at street corners. The cortege was composed of 150 motor cars.

'About 150 wreaths' from all over the North Island were placed on the grave. At the graveside, the officiating minister 'delivered a most appropriate address':

They were gathered ... from all parts of the Waikato and distant places in New Zealand at the grave of one of God's gentlemen, one who was beloved by many and respected by all. The vast assemblage showed that the late Mr Wallace was held in the highest esteem.... The keynote of his life had been given by him just before his death when in a few minutes of semi-consciousness he had murmured, "Lead an honest life and do good to your

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<sup>160</sup> Birth Certificate of Harold Wallace, 1897/818; Death Certificate of Harold Wallace, 7 March 1897, 1897/567, BDM.

<sup>161</sup> Birth Certificate of Laura Aroha Wallace, 1892/5583, BDM.

<sup>162</sup> Birth Certificate of Grace Alma Wallace, Births, 1898/4356, BDM.

<sup>163</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 9 October 1931, p. 5.

<sup>164</sup> Death Certificate of David McLean Wallace, 8 October 1931, 1931/12636, BDM.

fellowmen.” That was the measure of life to him.... His was a finished life. He had done good honest work. He had a good name because of his high principles and his life ended well. To him it was vouchsafed to work on till he had one clear call that his life was finished. He had finished his course, he had fought the good fight and he had kept the faith. While he seemed to have many years before him he was assured himself that he had reached the end. He was not anxious to continue his life and was ready to go. Like the hunter home from the hill he laid down his life with a will. He was glad to go knowing that while absent in the body he would be present with the Lord.<sup>165</sup>

His will left his ‘personal effects plate and jewellery’ to Amy, along with £200 and an annuity of £2 10s a week. The value of his estate was £29,657 0s 3d.<sup>166</sup>

His widow continued to live at Te Aroha until September 1948, when she died at the age of 87, ‘a well-known and respected resident’.<sup>167</sup>

## PERSONALITY

An obituary recorded him as having had ‘a host of friends. He was noted for his probity in business and private life’.<sup>168</sup> In 1927 he was described as taking ‘an active interest in everything around him’ and having ‘a kind or jovial word for all’.<sup>169</sup> In that year, his eldest son recalled his father as a member of the first borough council:

There were no long arguments like they had today and after each meeting the chairman used to take the members to the hotel for supper. Father would arrive home late and would be called upon to give an account of himself. When asked where he had been his usual reply was: “Oh, just down the street.” If the question was repeated he would say, “That’s all right,” or give some other reply. After a time Mother would get tired of asking and go off to sleep. A friend who had difficulty with his wife because of his late hours, learned of the method that had been so successful in escaping

<sup>165</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 12 October 1931, p. 1.

<sup>166</sup> Probate of David McLean Wallace, Hamilton Probates, BCDG 4420/2987, ANZ-A.

<sup>167</sup> Death Certificate of Amy Wallace, 17 September 1948, 1948/21101, BDM; Probate of Amy Wallace, Hamilton Probates, BCDG 4420/7659, ANZ-A; *Te Aroha News*, 24 September 1948, p. 4.

<sup>168</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 9 October 1931, p. 5.

<sup>169</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 19 October 1927, Supplement, p. 4.

trouble, thought he would try it out on his own wife, but in meeting Mr Wallace later said rather ruefully: "I tried that game of yours but it didn't work." "No," said Mr Wallace, "How did you go about it?" "Well," he said, "when I got home my wife asked where I had been, I just said, 'That's all right'. With that she picked up the ledger from the table which the boy had been using and hit me over the head with it and said, 'So is that all right' twice."<sup>170</sup>

Reputedly Wallace 'enjoyed amiable relations with the local Maoris, enhanced by his calling', blacksmiths being seen by them as useful tradesmen.<sup>171</sup> It was noted at his funeral that 'floral emblems' were 'received from the natives of Tui Pa'.<sup>172</sup> 'His affability was not confined to adults', for his eldest grandson remembered 'magical hours spent sitting on the floor by the fireside at his grandfather's knee, listening to stories told by a natural dramatist, one who would tighten the screws of tension by long pauses to fill and tamp a pipe'.<sup>173</sup> And according to the firm's historian, 'modesty was as much a Wallace characteristic as excellence'.<sup>174</sup>

## CONCLUSION

Wallace rose from very small beginnings to be the founder of an important engineering firm, helped in part by his skills as an inventor. He was one of a minority of residents who were very active in the community in a variety of ways, and although he could be abrupt with those who opposed him, in general he was held in high regard, with good reason.

### *Appendix*

*Figure 1:* Workers standing outside Wallace's blacksmith shop at Waiorongomai, n.d. [1880s], Te Aroha and District Museum; used with permission.

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<sup>170</sup> Recollections of A.D. Wallace, *Te Aroha News*, 26 October 1927, p. 5.

<sup>171</sup> Max, p. 14.

<sup>172</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 12 October 1931, p. 1.

<sup>173</sup> Max, p. 18.

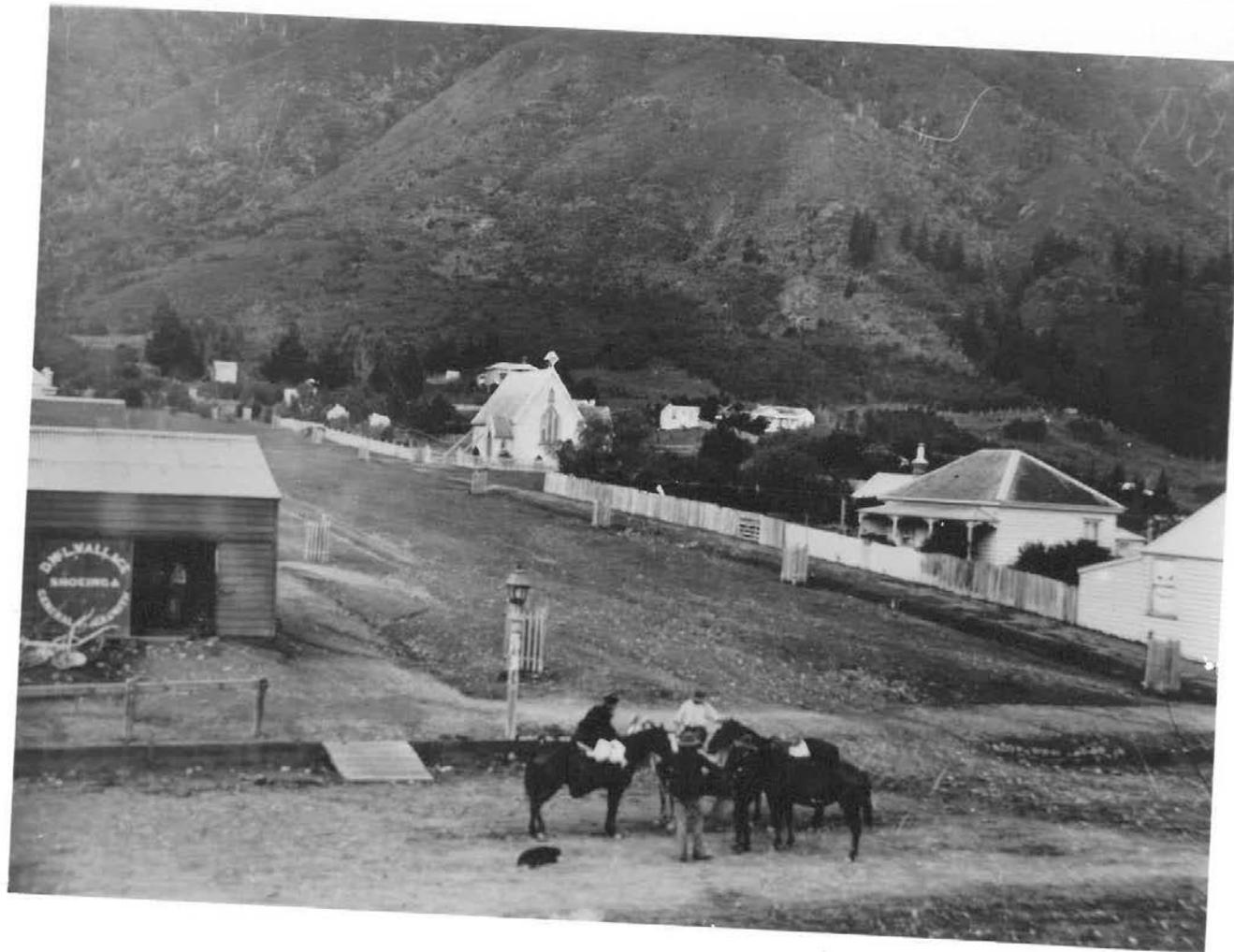
<sup>174</sup> Max, p. 26.

*Figure 2:* Daniel Manders Beere, David McLean Wallace's blacksmith shop, Kenrick Street, Te Aroha, 1895, Te Aroha and District Museum; used with permission.

*Figure 3:* 'Blo' [William Blomfield], 'Dad Wallace, Te Aroha', one of the players in a Te Awamutu bowls tournament, *Observer*, 29 March 1924, p. 6.



*Figure 1:* Workers standing outside Wallace's blacksmith shop at Waiorongomai, n.d. [1880s], Te Aroha and District Museum; used with permission.



*Figure 2:* Daniel Manders Beere, David McLean Wallace's blacksmith shop, Kenrick Street, Te Aroha, 1895, Te Aroha and District Museum; used with permission.



*Figure 3: 'Blo' [William Blomfield], 'Dad Wallace, Te Aroha', one of the players in a Te Awamutu bowls tournament, *Observer*, 29 March 1924, p. 6.*