

HARRY AND CHARLES: HENRY ERNEST WHITAKER AND
CHARLES STANISLAUS STAFFORD AT TE AROHA

Philip Hart

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Historical Research Unit
Faculty of Arts & Social Sciences
The University of Waikato
Private Bag 3105
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Contact: prhart1940@gmail.com



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Abstract: *Harry Whitaker was a member of a prominent political family, and Charles Stanislaus Stafford came from an Anglo-Irish landowning family. They both invested in mines in the Te Aroha district, Whitaker being particularly active in promoting the interests of the mining industry. But he was also seen as manipulating the share market to benefit himself and as assisting Josiah Clifton Firth's 'clique' to control the field, meaning that for many residents some of his actions were deeply unpopular.*

Both men acquired and traded in land both within and outside the settlements, and developed their Wairakau estate, all profitably. Whitaker also established the Te Aroha News, and in a variety of ways was a leading member of the community. As a member of the county council he tried to help the district, but once again was seen as working too closely with Firth for their mutual benefit. Stafford also tried to assist local development.

Both men were prominent socially, notably in horse races and various sports. Whitaker in particular was renowned for his lively personality, personal charm, and elegant attire, but unusually did not marry nor, apparently, flirt with the opposite sex, which may or may not be significant.

Whitaker left Te Aroha for Auckland and, later, Africa before returning to Auckland in 1918 for one last involvement with mining. After farming at Whakatane, Stafford became prominent in Kalgoorlie during the mining boom of the 1890s before retiring to London and making a late marriage. Unlike Whitaker, he ended his life a prosperous man,.

HENRY ERNEST WHITAKER AND HIS FAMILY

Henry Ernest Whitaker¹ was born in Auckland in 1854 to Frederick, later Sir Frederick, and Jane Augusta, née Griffiths.² His father was a prominent lawyer, investor, and politician. In 1880 a flattering 'pen and ink portrait' described Sir Frederick as being

ever active in every legitimate enterprise, and invested heavily in the Thames goldfield, to the development of which he contributed

¹ For photograph, see *New Zealand Graphic*, 10 August 1901, p. 267.

² Birth Certificate of Henry Ernest Whitaker, 1854/1145; Death Certificate of Henry Ernest Whitaker, 8 March 1924, 1924/7306, BDM.

in a large measure. He was also interested in extensive agricultural and pastoral operations, and in the timber trade, in fact he has always been active in every enterprise calculated to develop the resources of the province of Auckland, and to promote the welfare of the people.

Although ‘as a speculator he has been accused by strong political opponents of being a land-monopolist’, this journalist defended him.³ He was the partner of Thomas Russell in many ventures and part of the ‘limited circle’ dominating the Auckland business community from the late 1860s to the end of the 1880s, when he was ‘brought to the brink of poverty’ by his investments in land.⁴ In a political career lasting from 1845 to 1891, he was Attorney General in eight ministries and Premier twice. When gold was found at Te Aroha, he was Attorney General, and from April 1882 to September 1883 was Premier,⁵ enabling him to support his sons’ investments by assisting the district.

Sir Frederick had four daughters and four sons, Frederick Alexander, Alfred Edgar, Henry Ernest, commonly called Harry,⁶ and Herbert.⁷ An obituary suggested that, because of his father, Harry Whitaker had ‘advantages of education and environment beyond those of most colonial young men of his day, coupled with personal ability that would have carried him far in any department of life’.⁸ According to the journalist who praised Sir Frederick in 1880, all the sons had ‘promising and useful careers’ in their chosen professions.⁹ Only one of Whitaker’s brothers, Frederick Alexander, invested in Te Aroha mining.¹⁰ A prominent Hamilton solicitor

³ *Observer*, 16 October 1880, p. 36.

⁴ R.C.J. Stone, *Makers of Fortune: A colonial business community and its fall* (Auckland, 1973), pp. 172-174, 178, 184-185, 187-189; Stone, ‘Frederick Whitaker’, *Dictionary of New Zealand Biography: vol. 1: 1769-1869* (Wellington, 1990), pp. 586-587.

⁵ Stone, ‘Frederick Whitaker’, pp. 586-587; *New Zealand Parliamentary Record 1849-1949* (Wellington, 1950), pp. 38, 66, 87, 147.

⁶ For example, *Thames Star*, 25 November 1880, p. 2; *Auckland Star*, 4 September 1884, p. 2.

⁷ *Auckland Star*, 4 September 1884, p. 2; Probate of Frederick Whitaker, Probates, BBAE 1569/1062, ANZ-A; Stone, ‘Frederick Whitaker’, p. 586.

⁸ *New Zealand Herald*, 11 March 1924, p. 8.

⁹ *Observer*, 16 October 1880, p. 36.

¹⁰ *New Zealand Gazette*, 30 December 1880, p. 1796, 28 April 1881, p. 476, 23 March 1882, p. 490, 27 April 1882, p. 647, 17 August 1882, p. 1131, 27 September 1883, p. 1369.

and politician, his speculations in mining and land were so unsuccessful that he shot himself in 1887.¹¹

Having ‘received a splendid education’ at Auckland College’, after leaving school Whitaker joined ‘the firm of Messrs Owen and Graham, merchants, Auckland’, one of the main shipping agents.¹² Even before the opening of the Te Aroha goldfield, he acted as an agent for Hone Werahiko,¹³ the discoverer of gold at Te Aroha.¹⁴ In the 1880s his various occupations were recorded as clerk, agent, settler, and gentleman.¹⁵

As Whitaker supported his father’s political views, he opposed Sir George Grey. In April 1881, he said he did not like an Auckland parliamentarian, William James Speight,¹⁶ ‘because Speight likes Grey, and Grey’s a fool’.¹⁷ The following year, after his father became Premier, ‘Red Shanks’ asked a Thames newspaper asking whether he was ‘related to the much-loved Premier’, and described him as ‘the king of Te Aroha, who, on a recent election in this locality, commanded and brought down an army of sheep, and under whose leadership they stormed the booths and carried the election, and thus earned the distinction of “Conqueror of the Thames” ’.¹⁸ In September 1883 it was ‘generally understood’ that Whitaker ‘and his partner’, Charles Stanislaus Stafford, had ‘prepared an address to Sir George Grey’ for the Premier to present ‘when the great Pro-Consul returns’.¹⁹ Probably it was designed to obtain broad political support for the needs of the Te Aroha district.

¹¹ *Thames Advertiser*, 10 June 1887, p. 2, 11 June 1887, p. 2.

¹² Advertisement, *New Zealand Herald*, 19 January 1872, p. 4; *City of Auckland, East, Electoral Roll 1880*, p. 15; *Auckland Star*, 8 April 1872, p. 2, 11 March 1924, p. 8; *Observer*, 3 August 1901, p. 6, 22 March 1924, p. 4.

¹³ *Thames Advertiser*, 10 November 1881, p. 3.

¹⁴ See paper on his life.

¹⁵ For example, Te Aroha Warden’s Court, Transfers and Assignments 1882, nos. 2, 218, 284, 285, BBAV 11581/1a; Transfers and Assignments 1883, nos. 219, 357, BBAV 1158/4a, ANZ-A; *New Zealand Gazette*, 24 October 1878, p. 1459, 24 February 1881, p. 258, 23 March 1882, p. 490, 27 April 1882, p. 646, 22 June 1882, p. 895, 17 August 1882, p. 1181, 14 September 1882, p. 1264.

¹⁶ See *Observer*, 3 May 1919, p. 4.

¹⁷ ‘Thames Tittle Tattle’, *Observer*, 16 April 1881, p. 330.

¹⁸ Letter from ‘Red Shanks’, *Thames Advertiser*, 22 July 1882, p. 2.

¹⁹ *Observer*, 8 September 1883, p. 14.

It was assumed that Whitaker assisted his father's land speculations. In April 1883, the *Observer* Man at Te Aroha wrote that 'the son of the Premier has left for the Thames to look after his father's township at Kopu, now that the railway contract is let'.²⁰ Two months later, this journal asked, 'Do the Whitaker family wish to control the whole of the Thames Valley, as well as Waikato?'²¹

CHARLES STANISLAUS STAFFORD

Charles Stanislaus Stafford arrived in the colony in May 1880.²² Described later that year as 'a young gentleman recently from England',²³ he had been born in Melbourne in February 1855,²⁴ making him slightly younger than Whitaker. He was the eldest son of John, of Portabello, County Roscommon, Ireland, and Eleanor Anastasia, née Gilbert; his father had arrived in Melbourne from Canada in October 1852 and married his mother, also from Canada, in February 1854.²⁵ His landowning family was part of the English ascendancy,²⁶ illustrated by the fact that the only brother to marry, Sir Thomas Joseph Stafford, was the father of Sir Cecil William Francis Stafford-King-Harman, Baronet.²⁷ In October 1879 Stafford was promoted from Second Lieutenant to Lieutenant in the Roscommon Infantry.²⁸

²⁰ 'Te Aroha', *Observer*, 21 April 1883, p. 76.

²¹ *Observer*, 9 June 1883, p. 188.

²² C.S. Stafford to Minister of Lands, 6 September 1880, Maori Affairs Department, MA 1, 13/86, ANZ-W.

²³ *Thames Advertiser*, 27 October 1880, p. 2; see also *Observer*, 4 December 1880, p. 99.

²⁴ Death Certificate of Charles Stanislaus Stafford, 8 May 1938, bmd.online; genealogical research by John Robson, University of Waikato Library.

²⁵ Marriage Notice, *The Times*, 13 June 1906, p. 1; ancestry.co.uk.

²⁶ Marriage Certificate of Charles Stanislaus Stafford, 11 June 1906, St George Hanover Square, vol. 1a, p. 941, British BDM; Landed Estates Database: Estate: Stafford, NUI Galway, www.landedestates.com; *House of Commons Debates*, 21 June 1904: hansard.millbankssystems.com/commons/1904/jun21/Evicted Tenant on Mr Charles Stafford's Estate.

²⁷ Union of South Africa, Death Notice, no. 62224, registered 13 December 1938, provided by John Robson, University of Waikato Library.

²⁸ *London Gazette*, 17 October 1879, p. 5980; *The Times*, 18 May 1881, p. 9.

WHITAKER'S INVESTMENTS IN TE AROHA MINING

Whitaker's only mining investment before the opening of the Te Aroha field was at Waitekauri in 1878.²⁹ On 24 November 1880,³⁰ as he later recalled, when, with Thomas Gavin,³¹ he pegged out the Golden Gate and Te Aroha No. 1 South claims, George Lipsey³² 'came up whilst they were so engaged and proposed to precipitate him down the hill, as he appeared to consider he had no right there'.³³ (Lipsey did not fulfil his threat.) He obtained a miner's right on opening day, and nine days later applied for the Golden Gate.³⁴ The claim he pegged out, along with an Auckland journalist, on opening day 'did not prove a bonanza', as an obituary noted;³⁵ but then none of his claims did. For one week he was one of four owners of the Omahu, at Tui before it was forfeited.³⁶ Two days before this forfeiture, he was registered as one of 15 owners of the Auckland, which would be certified as abandoned in the following May.³⁷ Also in May, with nine others he registered an unnamed claim at Tui.³⁸

Whitaker was prominent in three companies. Honorary secretary of Te Aroha No. 1 South, he acquired 171 scrip shares in the subsequent company and was its chairman of directors.³⁹ He was legal manager of the Waitoa

²⁹ *New Zealand Gazette*, 24 October 1878, p. 1459.

³⁰ Printed as 24 May.

³¹ See paper on his life.

³² See paper on his life.

³³ *Te Aroha News*, 22 May 1886, p. 2.

³⁴ Te Aroha Warden's Court, Miner's Right no. 449, issued 25 November 1880, Miners' Rights Butt Book 1880, BBAV 11533/1c; Te Aroha Warden's Court, Register of Applications 1880-1882, folio 101, BBAV 11505/3a, ANZ-A.

³⁵ *Auckland Star*, 11 March 1924, p. 8.

³⁶ Te Aroha Warden's Court, Register of Te Aroha Claims 1880-1888, folio 181, BBAV 11567/1a, ANZ-A.

³⁷ Te Aroha Warden's Court, Register of Te Aroha Claims 1880-1888, folio 192, BBAV 11567/1a, ANZ-A.

³⁸ Te Aroha Warden's Court, Licensed Holdings Grant Book 1880-1882, entry for 2 May 1881, BBAV 11549/1a, ANZ-A.

³⁹ Te Aroha Warden's Court, Register of Applications 1880-1882, folio 101, BBAV 11505/3a, ANZ-A; *Thames Star*, 6 December 1880, p. 3; *New Zealand Gazette*, 24 February 1881, p. 258; *Waikato Times*, 24 February 1881, p. 2.

and the Te Aroha Quartz Crushing companies.⁴⁰ One journalist commented that ‘his acceptance of office’ in the former proved it was ‘bona fide’.⁴¹ In January 1881, he was elected a provisional director of the latter, and, along with Adam Porter, a prominent miner,⁴² was delegated ‘by acclamation’ to ask the council to make roads at Te Aroha.⁴³ After being ‘very successful in inducing the Waitoans to take up shares in the Battery Company’, he visited Cambridge and Hamilton to entice people to invest in it.⁴⁴ In February, he stated that ‘he took a great interest in the company. If it was successful, he would take a small bonus for office rent and expenses; if not successful, the question of salary would be allowed to lapse’.⁴⁵ When a banquet was held to celebrate the opening of this battery, his health was toasted. The vice-chairman, Thomas Leitch Murray, manager for the Bank of New Zealand at Thames,⁴⁶ described the Whitaker name as ‘second to none in the colony, and he was sure it had become a household word in Te Aroha. A great deal of their success was due to the indefatigable exertions of their secretary, who would not take no for an answer when soliciting subscribers’.⁴⁷ This speech was ‘received with great applause’, and Whitaker responded in his longest recorded speech:

Mr Murray had laid it on rather heavy, but he had heard it was a “great general,” and supposed it was a way he had. It afforded him great pleasure to meet so many friends on such an occasion as the present one. He was very pleased when he succeeded in getting the Major [Murray was a major in the Thames Volunteers] to subscribe for a few shares, for he knew like all Scotchmen, that no matter how adverse they might prove to be to going into anything, once in it was, “Eh, mon, it’s a gude spec.” (Laughter). Many persons deserved more credit than he did, but he would say that from the commencement all had worked with a will. Although a damper had been thrown on the project at first

⁴⁰ *Thames Star*, 4 March 1881, p. 2; *New Zealand Gazette*, 28 April 1881, p. 476, 9 June 1881, p. 744.

⁴¹ *Waikato Times*, 8 March 1881, p. 2.

⁴² See paper on his life.

⁴³ *Thames Star*, 8 January 1881, p. 2.

⁴⁴ *Thames Star*, 27 January 1881, p. 2, 28 January 1881, p. 2.

⁴⁵ *Waikato Times*, 8 February 1881, p. 2.

⁴⁶ See *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 7, pp. 96-97; *Thames Star*, 19 January 1900, p. 2; ‘Mercutio’, ‘Local Gossip’, *Auckland Weekly News*, 2 February 1900, p. 7.

⁴⁷ *Thames Advertiser*, 25 April 1881, p. 3.

by Auckland and Thames people and others that should have been the last to have done so, yet the directors had successfully overcome all the opposition. When they had but very little to encourage them they accepted tenders for the battery, and went on with the work. Too great credit could not be given to Mr [Henry Hopper] Adams.⁴⁸ He was, in fact, a wonderful man, and a great financier; he had financed the great “Watson,” and he had heard a great deal about [John] Watson, [accountant] of Messrs Price Bros.⁴⁹ However, the company had much to be obliged to Messrs Price Bros. for their leniency. They had not come down upon them, but when they asked for money, well Reuben Parr [then farming at Waitoa]⁵⁰ and himself had just to rummage round for the calls. (Cheers).⁵¹

Another newspaper reported he had provided some of the bread, and that George Stewart O’Halloran⁵² had proposed the health of the ‘indefatigable’ Whitaker, ‘who returned thanks with considerable humour, and hoped that Te Aroha was only commencing a career of success’. Its local correspondent considered that, should Te Aroha ‘receive any impetus from the progress of the goldfields’, the community would be most indebted to him.⁵³

When the goldfield faded, in June 1881 Whitaker became honorary secretary to the Te Aroha Prospecting Association.⁵⁴ When he revisited the district in 1886, a banquet was given in his honour. George Wilson, the mining inspector,⁵⁵ recalled that he first met Whitaker

when there were very few white men at Te Aroha, Mr Whitaker having newly arrived from Auckland to make his pile on the goldfield. He saw him putting in his first peg on the field and during the first rush he formed companies and in many ways did his best to push the field ahead. After the first rush, when numbers abandoned the field, he expressed his conviction that the place would yet come out alright, and stuck to it himself, and did all he could to encourage a few others in the place.... There could

⁴⁸ See paper on his life.

⁴⁹ See *Thames Star*, 10 July 1918, p. 2.

⁵⁰ See *Te Aroha News*, 30 December 1925, p. 1.

⁵¹ *Thames Star*, 25 April 1881, p. 2.

⁵² See paper on his life.

⁵³ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 26 April 1881, p. 2.

⁵⁴ *Waikato Times*, 23 June 1881, p. 2.

⁵⁵ See paper on his life.

be no doubt whatever that were it not for him, there would not have been nearly so many on the field, he put his own money into the place and induced others to do the same.

Whitaker responded with another humorous speech:

Mr Wilson was one of the first friends he made on the field, and he had never had occasion to alter the high opinion he formed of him in those early days; his only fault was that of being a Scotchman which prevented him giving that free expression to his thoughts which he otherwise would, being very cautious. He often used to go down to him for advice, and he would tell him to be careful, and to keep an eye here, and keep an eye there, till, by trying to follow out this advice he got quite short-sighted, but were it not for him I should probably have lost all he had. He frankly told them his first object in coming to Te Aroha was to make money for himself, and he would feel inclined to doubt the word of anyone who would tell them he was not desirous of first benefiting himself and the public afterwards.⁵⁶

His only other involvement in mines close to the township was to become one of five owners of the Golden Fleece in October 1882. An unsuccessful claim, it was declared abandoned a month later, taken up again, and declared abandoned for the second and final time in June 1883.⁵⁷

STAFFORD'S INVESTMENTS IN TE AROHA MINING

Stafford took out a miner's right on opening day and bought a small interest in the Prospectors' Claim and the Morning Star.⁵⁸ These interests were converted into scrip shares in the Aroha and Morning Star companies; he was a director of the latter.⁵⁹ He also had shares in the Smile of Fortune,⁶⁰ and invested in the battery company.⁶¹ He provided the beef for

⁵⁶ *Te Aroha News*, 22 May 1886, p. 2.

⁵⁷ Te Aroha Warden's Court, Register of Te Aroha Claims 1880-1888, folios 269, 273, BBAV 11567/1a, ANZ-A.

⁵⁸ Te Aroha Warden's Court, Miner's Right no. 339, issued 25 November 1880, Miners' Rights Butt Book 1880, BBAV 11533/1a; Te Aroha Warden's Court, Register of Te Aroha Claims 1880-1888, folio 153, BBAV 11567/1a, ANZ-A; *Observer*, 4 December 1880, p. 99.

⁵⁹ *New Zealand Gazette*, 30 December 1880, p. 1796, 20 January 1881, p. 111; *Thames Star*, 5 January 1881, p. 2.

⁶⁰ *Waikato Times*, 26 April 1881, p. 2.

the luncheon celebrating the opening of the battery;⁶² and when mining declined he chaired the meeting that formed a prospecting association.⁶³ The only involvement he shared with Whitaker was the battery company and this association.

WHITAKER'S INVESTMENTS IN WAIORONGOMAI MINING

In April 1882, a Thames newspaper commented that Stafford and Whitaker were 'encouraging mining matters in every way, and speculating largely in the mines on the hill',⁶⁴ implying they were investing jointly, not as competitors. They certainly were partners; in 1882, when the Young Colonial was transferred to the Colonist Company, the legal manager told the mining inspector that he had been informed by Whitaker that this transfer was 'lodged by Mr Stafford for registration'.⁶⁵ At the beginning of November 1881, Whitaker applied for the Golden Crown (the future Premier), 'per C.S.', but withdrew his application a week later.⁶⁶ Shortly after his application was lodged, Stafford applied for surplus ground, 'if any', in both Golden Crown Nos. 1 and 2.⁶⁷ This was probably a ruse, Whitaker fearing he had more ground than would be allowed, and this application was to ensure they obtained all of it; Stafford withdrew this case early in December.⁶⁸ In mid-November, Whitaker applied for both claims 'per C Stafford' and in Stafford's handwriting.⁶⁹

In December, Whitaker was registered as sole owner of the Golden Crown No. 1. He sold one share for £20 before transferring all his interest to

⁶¹ Company Files, BBAE 10286/7d, ANZ-A; *New Zealand Gazette*, 28 April 1881, p. 476.

⁶² *Waikato Times*, 26 April 1881, p. 2.

⁶³ *Waikato Times*, 23 June 1881, p. 2.

⁶⁴ *Thames Star*, 3 April 1882, p. 2.

⁶⁵ D.G. MacDonnell to George Wilson, 24 October 1882, Te Aroha Warden's Court, General Correspondence 1882, BBAV 11584/1c, ANZ-A.

⁶⁶ Te Aroha Warden's Court, Applications for Licensed Holdings 1880-1881, 24/1881, BBAV 11582/1a; Register of Applications 1880-1882, folio 108, BBAV 11505/3a, ANZ-A.

⁶⁷ C.S. Stafford to Harry Kenrick, 9 November 1881, Te Aroha Warden's Court, General Correspondence 1881, BBAV 11584/1b, ANZ-A.

⁶⁸ Te Aroha Warden's Court, Plaintiff Book 1880-1898, 58, 59/1881, BBAV 1547/1a, ANZ-A.

⁶⁹ Te Aroha Warden's Court, Applications for Licensed Holdings 1880-1881, 36, 37/1881, BBAV 11582/1a, ANZ-A.

the Premier Company in the following March.⁷⁰ He held one-twentieth of its shares, and was a director.⁷¹ Also in December 1881, he was an owner of the Waterfall, transferring his one-thirtieth interest to the Canadian Company, in which he was allotted 66 shares.⁷² In January 1882, he was one of three owners in the Werahiko Nos. 1-3, allotted three shares in Nos. 1 and 2 and two in No. 3. Within three months, he had sold three shares for £55.⁷³ To encourage investment in this mine, he displayed samples of newly discovered gold in his office.⁷⁴ His remaining interest was transferred to the Werahiko Company, giving him 931 scrip shares; he was elected a director.⁷⁵

In late January 1882, he applied for possession of the Queen of Beauty No. 2 from Hone Werahiko, claiming that it was illegally held, but withdrew his plaint six days later.⁷⁶ The following month, he was registered as an owner of the Queen of Beauty, which, after a period of protection, was granted to Whitaker, John Bullock,⁷⁷ and Gavin at the beginning of April.⁷⁸ Bullock was the sole owner of the Queen of Beauty No. 2.⁷⁹ In August, they were fined 1s for not working their now-combined claims.⁸⁰ By then,

⁷⁰ Te Aroha Warden's Court, Register of Licensed Holdings 1881-1887, folio 23, BBAV 11500/9a; Transfers and Assignments 1882, no. 2, BBAV 11581/1a, ANZ-A.

⁷¹ *New Zealand Gazette*, 23 March 1882, p. 490; Company Files, BBAE 10286/9e, ANZ-A.

⁷² Te Aroha Warden's Court, Register of Licensed Holdings 1881-1887, folio 38, BBAV 11500/9a, ANZ-A; *New Zealand Gazette*, 14 September 1882, p. 1264.

⁷³ Te Aroha Warden's Court, Register of Licensed Holdings 1881-1887, folios 16, 19, 21, BBAV 11500/9a; Transfers and Assignments 1882, nos. 218, 284, 285, BBAV 11581/1a, ANZ-A.

⁷⁴ *Thames Advertiser*, 5 April 1882, p. 3.

⁷⁵ *New Zealand Gazette*, 22 June 1882, p. 895; Company Files, BBAE 10286/10h, ANZ-A.

⁷⁶ Te Aroha Warden's Court, Plaint Book 1880-1898, 9/1882, BBAV 11547/1a, ANZ-A.

⁷⁷ See *Te Aroha News*, 23 April 1887, p. 2.

⁷⁸ Te Aroha Warden's Court, Register of Licensed Holdings 1881-1887, folios 55, 56, BBAV 11500/9a; Te Aroha Warden's Court, Register of Te Aroha Claims 1880-1888, folio 244, BBAV 11567/1a, ANZ-A.

⁷⁹ Te Aroha Warden's Court, Register of Te Aroha Claims 1880-1888, folio 245, BBAV 11567/1a, ANZ-A.

⁸⁰ Te Aroha Warden's Court, Plaint Book 1880-1898, 70/1882, BBAV 11547/1a, ANZ-A.

Whitaker had transferred his one share to the Vulcan Company in return for 635 scrip shares; he was a director.⁸¹

In June 1882, he was one of six owners of the Welcome, with half the interest. The following year, after selling two quarters of a share, for £25 and £20, the rest of his interest was transferred to the New Welcome Company, in which he held 2,500 of its 15,000 shares.⁸² In August 1882, he applied for spare ground in the Black Prince Nos. 1-3, but as he did not appear at the hearing, his application was struck out.⁸³ All his other investments were in companies: the Waitoki, of which he was a director,⁸⁴ and the Navy in 1882,⁸⁵ and the Wellington and the Lady Ferguson in 1883.⁸⁶

In April 1882, when chairing a meeting to discuss erecting a battery, he made a 'neat and appropriate address'. A correspondent noted that 'since the opening of the field' he had 'been indefatigable in his efforts to promote the advancement of mining interests, and so far his endeavours have been crowned with wonderful success'.⁸⁷ In December, at a banquet celebrating the start of his battery, Josiah Clifton Firth⁸⁸ praised him for his efforts to advance the field's interests;⁸⁹ he was, of course, also advancing his own. A Thames columnist, although disliking the 'gush' in the speeches, considered 'the eulogies passed on the local Whitaker were well earned'.⁹⁰ It is not known for how long he retained his interests, but in June 1883 he was 'very

⁸¹ Te Aroha Warden's Court, Register of Licensed Holdings 1881-1887, folio 55, BBAV 11500/9a; Company Files, BBAE 10286/11d, ANZ-A; *New Zealand Gazette*, 17 August 1882, p. 1131.

⁸² Te Aroha Warden's Court, Register of Licensed Holdings 1881-1887, folio 103, BBAV 11500/9a; Transfers and Assignments 1883, nos. 219, 357, BBAV 11581/4a, ANZ-A; *New Zealand Gazette*, 20 September 1883, p. 1345.

⁸³ Te Aroha Warden's Court, Plaintiff Book 1880-1898, 71-73/1882, BBAV 11547/1a, ANZ-A.

⁸⁴ *New Zealand Gazette*, 27 April 1882, p. 646; Company Files, BBAE 10286/10a, ANZ-A.

⁸⁵ *New Zealand Gazette*, 19 October 1882, p. 1522.

⁸⁶ *New Zealand Gazette*, 27 September 1883, p. 1369, 22 November 1883, p. 1675.

⁸⁷ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 18 April 1882, p. 2.

⁸⁸ See paper on the Battery Company.

⁸⁹ *Thames Star*, 7 December 1883, p. 2.

⁹⁰ 'Nemo', 'At the Corner', *Thames Star*, 8 December 1883, p. 2.

largely' financially 'interested in the progress' of the field.⁹¹ An obituary stated these investments 'yielded nothing worth while'.⁹²

In July 1883, he attended the trial of a new gold separator in Wellington,⁹³ and accompanied Adam Porter to inspect the supposed goldfield at Terawhiti, near the capital.⁹⁴ His only other involvement with mining was his election as auditor of the Silverton Company at Waihi in 1887.⁹⁵

STAFFORD'S INVESTMENTS IN WAIORONGOMAI MINING

At the banquet celebrating the first crushing, the warden, Harry Kenrick,⁹⁶ stated that Stafford had 'cut his eye teeth', meaning became 'knowing',⁹⁷ in 'following the golden fleece' at Waiorongomai,⁹⁸ implying this was the first time he had invested in mining. He invested in some of the same claims and companies as Whitaker, his partner in trying to get the Golden Crown claims, plus others. Late in December 1881, with Samuel Cochrane Macky, a clerk and legal manager,⁹⁹ he owned the Golden Crown No. 2; he sold one share for an unrecorded sum and made £60 selling six others.¹⁰⁰ With Macky, in the following January he became an owner of Golden Crown No. 3; he sold eight shares for £80.¹⁰¹ When these claims

⁹¹ *Thames Advertiser*, 14 June 1883, p. 2.

⁹² *Observer*, 22 March 1924, p. 4.

⁹³ *Waikato Times*, 24 July 1883, p. 2.

⁹⁴ *New Zealand Herald*, 1 August 1883, p. 5.

⁹⁵ *Te Aroha News*, 31 December 1887, p. 2.

⁹⁶ See paper on his life.

⁹⁷ Eric Partridge, *A Dictionary of Slang and Unconventional English*, 8 ed., ed. Paul Beale (London, 1984), p. 282.

⁹⁸ *Te Aroha News*, 8 December 1883, p. 3.

⁹⁹ See *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 2, p. 465; *New Zealand Herald*, 3 November 1914, p. 7.

¹⁰⁰ Te Aroha Warden's Court, Register of Licensed Holdings 1881-1887, folio 1, BBAV 11500/9a; Transfers and Assignments 1882, nos. 105, 128, 179, 181, BBAV 11581/1a; no. 705, BBAV 11581/2a, ANZ-A.

¹⁰¹ Te Aroha Warden's Court, Register of Licensed Holdings 1881-1887, folio 46, BBAV 11500/9a; Transfers and Assignments 1882, nos. 106, 126, 257, BBAV 11581/1a; no. 706, BBAV 11581/2a, ANZ-A.

were absorbed into the Premier Company, he was allotted 1,000 of its 20,000 £1 shares, the same interest as Whitaker.¹⁰²

The sole owner of Diamond Gully No. 2 in December, it was granted to him as a licensed holding on the last day of January 1882. His interest was divided into eight shares, six of which he sold for £30 later that year, the remainder being forfeited in 1885.¹⁰³ He did not acquire any shares in the Diamond Gully Company, formed in November 1882.¹⁰⁴ Also in mid-December 1881, he was one of three owners of the Waitoa, Te Aroha, and Waihou.¹⁰⁵ When these, with other claims, were merged into the Army Company the following February, Stafford had 437 of the 20,000 shares and was a director.¹⁰⁶

In February 1882 he acquired five shares in both Canadian No. 1 and No. 2. After selling half his interest in both to Macky for £20, the rest went to the Canadian Company in August and he was allotted 625 of its 20,000 shares.¹⁰⁷ In March, he bought six shares in Werahiko Nos. 1 and 2 and one in No. 3 for a total of £62. Within two weeks he had sold two for £25.¹⁰⁸ His remaining interest was converted into 931 of the 27,900 shares in the Werahiko Company.¹⁰⁹

In April, Stafford chaired the meeting that formed the Waitoki Company.¹¹⁰ In June, he became sole owner of two claims, Waitoki and

¹⁰² *Waikato Times*, 16 March 1882, p. 3; *New Zealand Gazette*, 23 March 1882, p. 490.

¹⁰³ Te Aroha Warden's Court, Register of Applications 1880-1882, folio 116, no. 60, BBAV 11505/3a; Register of Licensed Holdings 1881-1887, folio 107, BBAV 11500/9a; Transfers and Assignments 1882, nos. 456, 780, BBAV 11581/2a, ANZ-A.

¹⁰⁴ *New Zealand Gazette*, 14 December 1882, p. 1885.

¹⁰⁵ Te Aroha Warden's Court, Register of Applications 1880-1882, folio 116, BBAV 11505/3a, ANZ-A.

¹⁰⁶ Te Aroha Warden's Court, Register of Licensed Holdings 1881-1887, folios 37, 42, 43, 58, BBAV 11500/9a, ANZ-A; *Thames Advertiser*, 23 February 1882, p. 2; *New Zealand Gazette*, 23 March 1882, p. 490; Company Files, BBAE 10286/9f, ANZ-A.

¹⁰⁷ Te Aroha Warden's Court, Register of Licensed Holdings 1881-1887, folios 53, 54, BBAV 11500/9a; Transfers and Assignments 1882, no. 303, BBAV 11581/1a, ANZ-A; *New Zealand Gazette*, 14 September 1882, p. 1132.

¹⁰⁸ Te Aroha Warden's Court, Register of Licensed Holdings 1881-1887, folios 16, 19-21, BBAV 11500/9a; Transfers and Assignments 1882, nos. 170, 200, 210, 213, 283, BBAV 11581/1a, ANZ-A.

¹⁰⁹ *New Zealand Gazette*, 22 June 1882, p. 895.

¹¹⁰ Company Files, BBAE 10286/10a, ANZ-A.

Butterfly, and two months later transferred them to it for a nominal sum.¹¹¹ He held the same interest in the company as Whitaker, 1,200 shares.¹¹² Also in April, he was the sole owner of Moa No. 2.¹¹³ He was a director of the Eureka Company, holding 500 of its 20,000 shares.¹¹⁴

On 6 June, he became one of six owners of the Welcome, with one of its 30 shares.¹¹⁵ When this was turned into a company in September 1883, he held 2,500 of its 25,000 shares and a director.¹¹⁶ The following May, the company was doing so badly that it sought tributers to work it; Stafford provided the details for applicants.¹¹⁷

In August, he had 625 of the 20,000 shares in the Vulcan Company.¹¹⁸ Two months later, he had 661 of the 30,000 shares in the Navy Company and was a director.¹¹⁹ In December, he became the sole owner of Little Wonder, which did not live up to its name, being forfeited for non-working two years later.¹²⁰ He bought one and a half shares in the Smile of Fortune in September 1883 for £6, selling these two months later for £20.¹²¹

In August 1883, he purchased four shares in the Wellington for £12.¹²² Two weeks later, these were transferred to the Wellington Company, in

¹¹¹ Te Aroha Warden's Court, Register of Licensed Holdings 1881-1887, folios 87, 105, BBAV 11500/9a, ANZ-A.

¹¹² *New Zealand Gazette*, 27 April 1882, p. 646.

¹¹³ Te Aroha Warden's Court, Register of Applications 1880-1882, folio 124, BBAV 11505/3a, ANZ-A.

¹¹⁴ Company Files, BBAE 10286/10b, ANZ-A; *New Zealand Gazette*, 18 May 1882, p. 728.

¹¹⁵ Te Aroha Warden's Court, Register of Licensed Holdings 1881-1887, folio 103, BBAV 11500/9a, ANZ-A.

¹¹⁶ *New Zealand Gazette*, 20 September 1883, p. 1345; *Te Aroha News*, 8 September 1883, p. 2.

¹¹⁷ *Te Aroha News*, 17 May 1884, p. 7.

¹¹⁸ *New Zealand Gazette*, 17 August 1882, p. 1132.

¹¹⁹ *New Zealand Gazette*, 19 October 1882, p. 1522; *Auckland Weekly News*, 30 September 1882, p. 20.

¹²⁰ Te Aroha Warden's Court, Register of Licensed Holdings 1881-1887, folio 131, BBAV 11500/9a, ANZ-A.

¹²¹ Te Aroha Warden's Court, Register of Licensed Holdings 1881-1887, folio 13, BBAV 11500/9a; Transfers and Assignments 1883, nos. 490, 491, 609, BBAV 11581/4a, ANZ-A.

¹²² Te Aroha Warden's Court, Transfers and Assignments 1883, no. 379, BBAV 11581/4a, ANZ-A.

which he had 875 of the 25,000 shares and was a director.¹²³ Also in August, he purchased the forfeited Fraser Nos. 1 and 2 for £1 1s,¹²⁴ and at the beginning of September bought eight shares in the Argyle for £20.¹²⁵ These were merged in the Lady Ferguson Company in mid-September, in which he had 500 of the 30,000 shares.¹²⁶

Stafford applied for a machine site alongside the site selected by Firth for his battery in March 1882, but withdrew his application the following month.¹²⁷

Most of these investments were unprofitable, unless he was able to sell his scrip shares quickly. His only other mining investments were in two Thames companies in late 1882.¹²⁸ He accompanied a prominent investor on a visit to the West Coast goldfields early in 1884,¹²⁹ but did not invest there.

ACCUSATIONS OF SHARE MANIPULATIONS AND DISHONESTY

In June 1883, the *Observer* wondered whether he was publishing the *Te Aroha News* ‘to manufacture the sharemarket in Te Aroha stock’.¹³⁰ It detected ulterior motives in his influence, and fancied that the district ‘will not always suffer itself to be led captive by “the ruling family” ’.¹³¹ In its next issue, after quoting the reference in its first editorial that ‘Plutus and Ceres will walk lovingly together’, it commented that ‘Ceres among the Romans meant “mother-earth.” By Plutus the *News* means the land-sharks. Pluto will, of course, be on hand too. The editor says, “we feel earnestly on

¹²³ Te Aroha Warden’s Court, Register of Licensed Holdings 1881-1887, folio 65, BBAV 11500/9a; *New Zealand Gazette*, 27 September 1883, p. 1369 [*note*: incorrectly recorded as the New Welcome Company: see p. 1345]; *Te Aroha News*, 8 September 1883, p. 2.

¹²⁴ Te Aroha Warden’s Court, Plaint Book 1880-1898, 23/1883, BBAV 11547/1a, ANZ-A.

¹²⁵ Te Aroha Warden’s Court, Register of Licensed Holdings 1881-1887, folio 98, BBAV 11500/9a; Transfers and Assignments 1883, no. 400, BBAV 11581/4a, ANZ-A.

¹²⁶ *Thames Advertiser*, 15 September 1883, p. 3; *New Zealand Gazette*, 22 November 1883, p. 1675.

¹²⁷ Te Aroha Warden’s Court, Applications for Machine Sites 1882, BBAV 11591/1a, ANZ-A; ‘Plan of Machine Site, Waiorongomai, Applied for by C.S. Stafford’, 13 March 1882, Te Aroha Museum.

¹²⁸ *New Zealand Gazette*, 28 September 1882, p. 1363, 2 November 1882, p. 1617.

¹²⁹ *Te Aroha News*, 2 February 1884, p. 2.

¹³⁰ *Observer*, 9 June 1883, p. 188.

¹³¹ *Observer*, 9 June 1883, p. 188.

this subject” ’; the *Observer* noted that Whitaker was ‘proprietor of the “Noose” ’.¹³² In July, the *Observer* Man at Te Aroha wrote, ‘Things won’t gee yet, altho’ the ruling powers have everything in training for giving their fancy stock a spark when the time arrives’.¹³³ The ‘ruling powers’ were Firth’s clique of investors that, it was claimed, controlled the goldfield.¹³⁴ The Waitoa *Observer* Man, when in Te Aroha in November, ‘noticed the Sleuth Hound had returned from the Metropolis, quite gay in his new suit perambulating between Walker’s and the buster corner, picking up the news and quotations for his big patron’.¹³⁵ Which, being translated, reported that Whitaker, having returned from Auckland, was walking between a hotel and the *Te Aroha News* corner catching up on the news and share prices on behalf of Firth.

In what may be a reference to Whitaker, in early October its Waiorongomai correspondent wrote that ‘the master of science has returned, and will make the scrip biz warm’.¹³⁶ Another comment in the same issue referred explicitly to Whitaker and Stafford. ‘*Star* has been dishing up Te Aroha to order. Now’s the time to sell, or be sold.... Te Aroha looking up. The Stafford-Whitaker crew jubilant at the success of their management of the mines’, the Mines Department, ‘and the market. Premiers, of course, rising’.¹³⁷ The latter comment referred to the rise in value of shares in the Premier Company because of regular reports of its splendid prospects.¹³⁸ This ‘puffing’, coupled with cold water treatment in the first crushing,¹³⁹ created much suspicion in Te Aroha, as its *Observer* correspondent noted during this crushing. ‘It certainly did not look well to see so much secrecy over the squeezing of amalgam, unless it was that someone intended to squeeze the market if profitable. That seems the general impression here, and it is just as well they had no opportunity’ (he

¹³² *Observer*, 16 June 1883, p. 204.

¹³³ ‘Te Aroha’, *Observer*, 7 July 1883, p. 248.

¹³⁴ See paper on the Battery Company.

¹³⁵ ‘Waitoa’, *Observer*, 17 November 1883, p. 12.

¹³⁶ ‘Waiorongomai’, *Observer*, 6 October 1883, p. 12.

¹³⁷ *Observer*, 6 October 1883, p. 14.

¹³⁸ For example, *Auckland Weekly News*, 10 February 1883, p. 20, 17 November 1883, p. 9; Own Correspondent, ‘From Christchurch to Te Aroha’, *Lyttleton Times*, 24 October 1883, p. 5; *New Zealand Herald*, 27 November 1883, p. 6; *Waikato Times*, 4 October 1883, p. 2, 23 October 1883, p. 2; *Te Aroha News*, 22 September 1883, p. 2, 3 November 1883, p. 2.

¹³⁹ See paper on the first crushing at Waiorongomai.

quickly decided they did have one). ‘The Premier ring were sold over the result, and the New Find shareholders benefited quietly, without so much puffing being necessary’.¹⁴⁰

Possibly because of such accusations, in mid-October one man took direct action:

As one of our most respected citizens, Mr W., was returning from Waitoa at 12 p.m. on last Friday night, he was waylaid and set upon by a Scandinavian, who hurled loaves of bread at his head. Were it not for the presence of mind displayed by Mr W., in putting spurs to his noble steed, serious results might have ensued. As it is, nothing more terrible has occurred than a good fright.¹⁴¹

That this Scandinavian was not taken to court implied that Whitaker did not wish to draw attention to his unpopularity or its cause.

As a director of the Premier, Waitoki, and Werahiko companies,¹⁴² all of which participated in the first crushing, Whitaker did have a vested interest in the outcome. When they were formed, he held 1,000 scrip shares in the Premier, 1,200 in the Waitoki, and 931 in the Werahiko.¹⁴³ In the absence of their records, it is not known how many he held when crushing started or how much trading he did in late 1883. After the intermediate retorting, a newspaper report headlined ‘The Te Aroha Crushings: The Late Rumours and Imputations’, gave details of an Auckland meeting of six directors of the companies whose ore was being treated. ‘The discussion turned upon the question of retorting, etc, which has lately been agitating the public mind’. After Whitaker denied an Auckland rumour that he had been practically in charge of the crushing, Firth’s resolution was carried unanimously:

“That at a meeting of the directors of the Colonist, Premier, New Find, Waitoki, and Werahiko Companies, it was resolved, after careful consideration of all the circumstances relative to the intermediate retorting recently made, that the directors of the above companies are perfectly satisfied that Mr H.E. Whitaker

¹⁴⁰ ‘Te Aroha’, *Observer*, 24 November 1883, p. 3.

¹⁴¹ ‘Te Aroha’, *Observer*, 20 October 1883, p. 8.

¹⁴² Company Files, BBAE 10286/9e, 10286/10a, 10286/10h, ANZ-A.

¹⁴³ *New Zealand Gazette*, 23 March 1882, p. 490, 27 April 1882, p. 647, 22 June 1882, p. 895.

acted disinterestedly and to the best of his judgment in the interests of the various companies.”¹⁴⁴

A journal published under the auspices of the Dunedin and Auckland Trades and Labour Councils was unimpressed:

After crushing had commenced misleading reports were issued as to the probable yield of the mines, and advantage was taken of the delusion in the public mind to sell Te Aroha mining stock at a fictitious value. The procedure was considered scandalous, and the old plan was adopted of empanelling a jury of foxes to determine whether the family of foxes every carried away geese. The conclusion was fore-known.¹⁴⁵

Firth, in his speech to the banquet celebrating the first cleaning up, commenced by saying that ‘of all the names of gentlemen who lent a willing hand and brave heart to the work of developing this goldfield none stand higher than Harry Whitaker’, but immediately added ‘that even the best of us occasionally make errors of judgment’.¹⁴⁶ The *Observer* went further. Devoting a leading article to the crushings, it noted that the result was ‘not, of course, up to the expectations of those who held large interests, or who were led by interested persons to believe the yield would be much greater.... There was, no doubt, method in the madness, or irregularity’, of those in charge. Referring to Whitaker’s denial that he was in charge, it ‘would have been more satisfactory to the public if he had gone further, and enlightened us as to who had charge’. The wording of the directors’ resolution was ‘ambiguous, and would lead to the conclusion’ that they also blamed him. His name was ‘doubtless above suspicion; but we would have chosen less ambiguous terms for exonerating him than the words “disinterestedly” and “to the best of his judgment,” because it is at least a reflection upon his judgment, which was seriously at fault’.¹⁴⁷

Miners had no doubts that Whitaker was involved in sharp practice, as illustrated by the Waiorongomai *Observer* Man:

The residents here are very wroth with the amalgam manipulators, and would like to know how much money they

¹⁴⁴ *New Zealand Herald*, 2 December 1883, p. 5.

¹⁴⁵ *Labour*, 31 January 1884, p. 5.

¹⁴⁶ *New Zealand Herald*, 7 December 1883, p. 5.

¹⁴⁷ *Observer*, 8 December 1883, pp. 2-3.

made at the expense of the whole mining community. It was intended to burn someone in effigy last week, but for the efforts of Messrs Firth and Clark to smooth matters over, and out of respect for them it was not done.¹⁴⁸

At the beginning of November, he sold the *Te Aroha News*.¹⁴⁹ The *Te Aroha Observer* Man was direct: ‘The Brothers W. have had enough of newspapers, now that their turn is served. It came right in the washing – i.e., the first washing’ [at the battery].¹⁵⁰ Waiorongomai’s *Observer* Man noted that its sale ‘concurrently with scrip manipulations are regarded as singular coincidences’.¹⁵¹ (The implication being that Whitaker knew his newspaper would fetch a lower price once the mining bubble burst.) In the same issue, the *Te Aroha Observer* Man wrote that this journal’s remarks about the affair were ‘much appreciated by all here who have any real interest in the place and its prospects. At the dinner, to be held on Tuesday next, we shall probably find out a little as to who is to blame for those – well, errors of judgment on somebody’s part’.¹⁵² If he was expecting someone to announce that Whitaker had instructed Adams to use cold water and keep quiet about its use, he was to be disappointed. Therefore the same correspondent, one week later, hinted at the names involved in a brief final comment. ‘It will be some time before the district recovers from the cold water shock. The two W’s have had the best of the market. As a speculator told them, they have pocketed the money, and the public are left with the stock’.¹⁵³ One of the W’s was Whitaker and the other his brother Frederick, an original shareholder in the Premier and Waitoki companies;¹⁵⁴ they may well have sold shares at the time of the crushing. A Cambridge correspondent for the *Observer* who directly accused Frederick of being involved forecast that his career as a Member of Parliament would be damaged: ‘It is reported that W. made much money out of Premier stock, before the cold-water trick was blown. Well, he will be independent of

¹⁴⁸ ‘Waiorongomai’, *Observer*, 15 December 1883, p. 16.

¹⁴⁹ *Thames Star*, 9 November 1883, p. 2.

¹⁵⁰ ‘Te Aroha’, *Observer*, 24 November 1883, p. 8.

¹⁵¹ ‘Waiorongomai’, *Observer*, 15 December 1883, p. 16.

¹⁵² ‘Te Aroha’, *Observer*, 15 December 1883, p. 16.

¹⁵³ ‘Te Aroha’, *Observer*, 22 December 1883, p. 16.

¹⁵⁴ *New Zealand Gazette*, 23 March 1882, p. 490, 27 April 1882, p. 647.

Waipa electors at the next nomination. Good job too, for his chance of return would be very small indeed'.¹⁵⁵

In January 1884, a Thames satirist, Robert Wiseman, sang his 'Te Aroha Touches' at the Oddfellows' Anniversary celebration. He included references to how investors were swindled through the first Waiorongomai crushing:

First cheaply buy, and largely hold; next edit locals gushing;
Crack up the mine, the scrip will rise; sell out before the
crushing....

If you hold any scrip yourself, suspicious you'll be under;
A "pal" must help to work the game, and you can share the
plunder.
Then sell the paper, and clear out; the ill-feeling soon will
dwindle,
When 'tis blown o'er, go back and work another swindle....¹⁵⁶

The allusions were to editorials in Whitaker's *Te Aroha News* lauding the prospects, his selling some shares before the crushing but retaining others through a dummy so that he could trade anonymously, selling the newspaper, and leaving the district during the fuss over cold water treatment before returning to 'work another swindle'. In March, Wiseman sang his 'Te Aroha Idyll' attacking class distinction and privilege at a Presbyterian concert.¹⁵⁷ It included a coded message about the Whitaker family's dire influence:

No *premier* influence of a ring –real merit will prove stronger,
And worth, not favour, honour bring: wait a little longer.¹⁵⁸

INVESTING IN LAND

¹⁵⁵ 'Cambridge', *Observer*. 15 December 1883, p. 16.

¹⁵⁶ Robert Wiseman, 'Te Aroha Touches', Grey New Zealand Letters, vol. 36, p. 65, Auckland Public Library; printed in *Thames Star*, 30 July 1927, p. 6.

¹⁵⁷ *Te Aroha News*, 22 March 1884, p. 2; Robert Wiseman to Sir George Grey, 24 May 1884, Grey New Zealand Papers, vol. 36, p. 64, Auckland Public Library.

¹⁵⁸ Robert Wiseman, 'Te Aroha Idyll', Grey New Zealand Papers, vol. 36, p. 69, Auckland Public Library.

On the day the goldfield opened, Whitaker applied for a business site, but his application was refused,¹⁵⁹ presumably because someone else had pegged it first. After another area was surveyed for residence and business sites in early December, Whitaker reportedly ‘pegged no less than 20 allotments’ for ‘Auckland and Waikato men’, unidentified¹⁶⁰ He applied under his own name on 13 December for three business sites on Lipsey’s Block and two allotments elsewhere, but all these applications lapsed.¹⁶¹ A week later, he applied for another business site and four allotments, but these applications lapsed also.¹⁶² At the beginning of January, a local correspondent was told that on Kenrick’s advice he had pegged off 26 allotments, Kenrick being ‘desirous of putting one person in for a good thing’. He commented that it was ‘not at all certain’ that the proposed bridge would be built where Kenrick intended ‘to oblige his friends. There is great complaining here that one person should be allowed to take up so large a number of allotments, for purely speculative purposes’, and there would be complaints to the government.¹⁶³ The rival Thames newspaper denied this story, which was concocted in Thames by Kenrick’s opponents.¹⁶⁴ Whitaker remained silent; if he did apply for 26 allotments, it was under others’ names. In April 1882, he was granted a business site, which he occupied.¹⁶⁵ In May 1883, he bought a residence site in Lipsey’s Block, transferring it to the new editor of the *Te Aroha News* in December.¹⁶⁶ In September, he bought another site and transferred it to the editor on the same date.¹⁶⁷ On his business site was erected the office and printery of the *Te Aroha News*.¹⁶⁸ In 1889, he forfeited a residence site in

¹⁵⁹ Te Aroha Warden’s Court, Register of Applications 1880-1882, folio 5, BBAV 11505/3a, ANZ-A.

¹⁶⁰ *Thames Advertiser*, 16 December 1880, p. 3.

¹⁶¹ Te Aroha Warden’s Court, Register of Applications 1880-1882, folios 33-36, 39-40, BBAV 11505/3a, ANZ-A.

¹⁶² Te Aroha Warden’s Court, Register of Applications 1880-1882, folios 47-49, BBAV 11505/3a, ANZ-A.

¹⁶³ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Thames Advertiser*, 7 January 1881, p. 3.

¹⁶⁴ *Thames Star*, 7 January 1881, p. 2.

¹⁶⁵ Te Aroha Warden’s Court, Register of Applications 1880-1882, folio 157, BBAV 11505/3a, ANZ-A.

¹⁶⁶ Te Aroha Warden’s Court, Rent Ledger 1881-1900, folio 66, BBAV 11492/1a, ANZ-A.

¹⁶⁷ Te Aroha Warden’s Court, Rent Ledger 1881-1900, folio 113, BBAV 11492/1a, ANZ-A.

¹⁶⁸ Te Aroha Warden’s Court, Rent Register 1881-1900, folio 408, BBAV 11492/1a, ANZ-A.

Lipsey's Block.¹⁶⁹ Any dwelling erected on it must have been an improvement on his initial accommodation, a tent strengthened by weatherboards at each end.¹⁷⁰

On opening day, Stafford successfully applied for a business site outside the southern boundary of the township.¹⁷¹ On 13 December, he applied for one business site and two residence sites, but abandoned the first and let the others lapse.¹⁷² Two days later, he applied again for the same business site, allotment 3 of block 12, but again let this lapse.¹⁷³ Not till the beginning of January 1882 did he apply for another business site, allotment 8 of block 5, which was granted.¹⁷⁴ In 1888 he sold this site, with its shop, outbuildings, and four-roomed house, for £235.¹⁷⁵

In July 1880, Stafford applied to the Waste Lands Board to buy two unspecified portions of the Aroha Block. He was willing to pay £3 an acre for 300 acres on the deferred payment system, and to pay £2 in cash for the second block, of 233 acres. As the board declined to sell until drains had been dug, these sales did not proceed.¹⁷⁶

One of Whitaker's obituaries stated that 'one notable transaction' was 'the purchase and sale of a large block of land a few miles from Te Aroha', at Wairakau, which yielded 'a large profit'.¹⁷⁷ Early in September 1880, Stafford informed the Minister of Lands that he had 'taken for twelve months' the Ngati Rahiri reserve there, 'containing about 3000 acres. The natives don't live on the land and are anxious to lease it as they have land

¹⁶⁹ Te Aroha Warden's Court, Letterbook 1883-1900, p. 288, BBAV 11534/1a, ANZ-A.

¹⁷⁰ *Observer*, 6 August 1904, p. 4.

¹⁷¹ Te Aroha Warden's Court, Register of Applications, folios 73-74, BBAV 11505/3a, ANZ-A.

¹⁷² Te Aroha Warden's Court, Register of Applications 1880-1882, folios 33-34, 39-40, BBAV 11505/3a, ANZ-A.

¹⁷³ Te Aroha Warden's Court, Register of Applications 1880-1882, folios 41-42, BBAV 11505/3a, ANZ-A.

¹⁷⁴ Te Aroha Warden's Court, Register of Applications 1880-1882, folios 93-94, BBAV 11505/3a, ANZ-A; Te Aroha Town Board, Rate Book 1888, no pagination, Section 8 Block 5, Matamata-Piako District Council Archives, Te Aroha.

¹⁷⁵ Te Aroha Warden's Court, Rent Ledger 1881-1900, folio 402, BBAV 11492/1a; Agreement between C.S. Stafford and A.W. Edwards, 15 July 1888, Transfers and Assignments 1888, BBAV 11581/9a, ANZ-A.

¹⁷⁶ *Thames Advertiser*, 12 July 1880, p. 3.

¹⁷⁷ *Observer*, 22 March 1924, p. 4.

elsewhere'. As it required considerable capital for development, his request to lease it for 21 years was approved.¹⁷⁸ The following July, when Whitaker visited George Thomas Wilkinson, native agent at Thames,¹⁷⁹ to discuss Stafford's proposed lease, Wilkinson provided 'particulars as to alienation'.¹⁸⁰ In November, Whitaker had a long talk with Wilkinson about leasing, and in late December Wilkinson recorded that they both 'called in to see me about hearing that I was opposing their leasing' the reserve.¹⁸¹ Wilkinson was probably concerned that the owners received an adequate return, which they did not. Although details were not made public, in July 1882 a reporter understood that their lease of the 3,250 acres had 'a rental of considerably under one shilling per acre'. Nobody would be surprised if the land should 'fall into their hands'.¹⁸² While no doubt they would have been glad to acquire the freehold, it was those who acquired the land later who obtained this.¹⁸³ In May 1884, they leased another 400 acres, which they sold four months later.¹⁸⁴

In mid-August 1883, for an annual rent of £20 8s they leased 100 acres of the Hori More Block, on the south-eastern edge of Te Aroha and adjoining both sides of the road between it and the Thames High School Endowment.¹⁸⁵ In November 1883, they decided to sell portions as one-acre suburban sections and quarter acre business sections.¹⁸⁶ These were

¹⁷⁸ C.S. Stafford to Minister of Lands, 6 September 1880; Under-Secretary, Native Office, to Minister of Lands, 10 September 1880; Under-Secretary, Crown Lands Office, to C.S. Stafford, 21 September 1880, Maori Affairs Department, MA 1, 13/86, ANZ-W.

¹⁷⁹ See paper on Mereia Wikiriwhi and George Thomas Wilkinson.

¹⁸⁰ G.T. Wilkinson, diaries, entry for 25 July 1881, University of Waikato Library.

¹⁸¹ G.T. Wilkinson, diaries, entries for 17 November 1881, 23 December 1881, University of Waikato Library.

¹⁸² *Thames Advertiser*, 25 July 1882, p. 2.

¹⁸³ See paper on Thomas Gavin.

¹⁸⁴ Aroha Block XII Section 48, lease registered on 6 May 1884, Block Files, H1093, Maori Land Court, Hamilton; *Waikato Times*, 16 September 1884, p. 2; *Te Aroha News*, 27 September 1884, p. 2.

¹⁸⁵ Aroha Block IX Section 14, lease dated 14 August 1883, Land Block Files, H979, Maori Land Court, Hamilton. For a map of this block, see G.H.A. Purchas, 'Plan of Messrs Whitaker and Stafford's Lease from Hori More & Others', November 1883, Mines Department, MD 1, 83/1411, ANZ-W; Thames Warden's Court, Native Agent's Letterbook 1883-1893, p. 14, BA CL 14458/1a, ANZ-A.

¹⁸⁶ *Te Aroha News*, 17 November 1883, p. 2.

advertised as ‘eligible villa and business sites, and grazing paddocks’, with ‘a nominal ground rent’.¹⁸⁷ As the land was inside the goldfield, they sought its exclusion. Kenrick was told this would not deprive miners of land for housing, as they preferred to live closer to the mines; only seven or eight had taken up residence sites because of the distance to travel.¹⁸⁸ In mid-November, in forwarding their request to the Mines Department, Kenrick pointed out the implications:

The application is based on a clause in the agreement made with the native owners – wherein they were promised that any land required by them for cultivation but not required for mining purposes – should at their request be withdrawn from the gold field....

The Natives are Leasing portion of the flat land not used at present for mining – to Europeans – if – as in the case of Messrs Stafford & Whitaker these leases are brought under the Land Transfer Act – the supposed rights granted to the Crown by the agreement referred to – would apparently be superseded....

The piece of ground leased to Messrs Stafford & Whitaker though not used nor likely to be used for mining includes certain Residence sites granted by me as Warden – I have pointed out to Messrs Stafford & Whitaker that I cannot recommend the withdrawal of that portion of the ground upon which these rights are located – they express their willingness to endorse the titles already granted – but intimate that they are advised these rights have no legal validity – and that as a matter of fact or rather of Law the Warden has no right to grant titles at all under the native agreement over the land leased by them – This contention is based upon the following grounds

1st That all the Native Owners have not signed the agreement

2 - That some have signed as Trustee for minors without the consent of the Governor previously obtained.

3 – That the agreement not having been validated by Parliament (or brought under the operation of the Land Transfer Act) – would be subject or secondary to any Lease duly brought under the said Act.

Although Stafford and Whitaker were ‘apparently anxious not in any way to obstruct or interfere with the working of the goldfield’, their request raised ‘the very serious question’ of whether he had ‘any legal right to grant

¹⁸⁷ *Waikato Times*, 22 November 1883, p. 2.

¹⁸⁸ George Wilson to Harry Kenrick, 12 November 1883, Mines Department, MD 1, 83/1411, ANZ-W.

mining titles over any portion of their Lease even if retained in the goldfield'.¹⁸⁹ As officials considered 'a dangerous precedent' might be set, the land remained within the field.¹⁹⁰

Whilst officials debated, the sale of from 50 to 60 acres proceeded. Because the sections were 'just outside Te Aroha', a local correspondent expected 'high prices'.¹⁹¹ The sale of 'Stafford's township', as a Thames newspaper called it, was postponed until early December, when visitors attended the banquet celebrating the starting of the battery. 'The delay was in vain as the sale was a failure, only very few of the sections being sold, and no bidders for the others, so they had to be withdrawn'.¹⁹² Three of the one-acre sections sold for between £10 and £14, and £7 10s to £12 was paid for 'several' business sites. Although it was intended to sell the remainder later, this did not occur during the 1880s.¹⁹³ Late in December 1883, 75 acres were mortgaged.¹⁹⁴ In 1885, 1886, and 1888, four sections were leased for farms.¹⁹⁵ As leasing produced only a modest income, in 1889 they sold their interest.¹⁹⁶

During the disputes about the construction of the Waiorongomai tramway, one man charged that it had been built 'from selfish motives on the part of some of the councillors who had land in the neighbourhood, they knowing that it would increase the value of their property'.¹⁹⁷ As a councillor, Whitaker encouraged the transfer of land in and around the township from Maori to Pakeha at a price favourable to the latter. In 1883,

¹⁸⁹ Harry Kenrick to Under-Secretary, Mines Department, 17 November 1883, Mines Department, MD 1, 83/1411, ANZ-W.

¹⁹⁰ Under-Secretary, Mines Department, to Under-Secretary, Native Land Purchase Department, 6 December 1883; Under-Secretary, Mines Department, to Harry Kenrick, 17 January 1884, Mines Department, MD 1, 83/1411, ANZ-W.

¹⁹¹ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 8 December 1883, p. 20.

¹⁹² *Thames Advertiser*, 7 December 1883, p. 3.

¹⁹³ *Te Aroha News*, 8 December 1883, p. 2.

¹⁹⁴ Aroha Block IX Section 14, mortgage dated 21 December 1883, Land Block Files, H979, Maori Land Court, Hamilton.

¹⁹⁵ Aroha Block IX Section 14, leases dated 13 February 1885, 13 November 1886, 18 October 1888, Maori Land Court, Hamilton.

¹⁹⁶ Te Aroha Gold Field, Native Land Blocks 1880-1895, folio 63, BAFV 13781/1a, ANZ-A; *Te Aroha News*, 28 August 1889, p. 2; Aroha Block IX Section 14, transfer dated 1 November 1889, Maori Land Court, Hamilton.

¹⁹⁷ *Te Aroha News*, 21 July 1888, p. 2.

in supporting Mokena Hou¹⁹⁸ being granted land on the western side of the river, he urged this should be done 'before the land becomes too valuable so as to prevent discontent amongst the few remaining natives in our district'.¹⁹⁹

Stafford's attitude to those whose land he leased was referred to in May 1883:

Poor doctor; he has quite lost caste with the *elite* of Te Aroha, Staf and his pals, since he refused to visit, without fee or reward, the Maori slaves of the former. Of course they got consideration for their attention, but the doctor says he must live, and cannot afford to be at the beck and call of even the ruling firm.²⁰⁰

(In what sense were they slaves?) Stafford also supported the acquisition of Maori land by Pakeha. In August 1884, in one of his last acts before leaving the district, at a public meeting he proposed a motion 'That the prosperity of the district is very seriously retarded by the land being locked up in native and other reserves'.

Mr Stafford spoke at length on the great importance of this matter, and said that the future prosperity of the district did not depend upon the goldfield alone but to a large extent upon its lands. Gold was certainly the principal factor in its present advancement, but looking to the future the land was almost of equal importance. Although he had large personal interests involved he disclaimed any selfish motive in the part he had taken in bringing this question before the meeting. He pointed out very clearly that if he was a gainer the district would profit still more largely if restrictions were removed, and facilities given for the permanent settlement of a European population upon and large native and other reserves now lying to a large extent wasted and unproductive. From Wairakau to the Rotokohu Gorge there were many thousands of acres of excellent land which would be rapidly taken up and settled upon, if it were cut up into moderate sized blocks and the freehold obtainable. But until such a title could be procured this land would be useless and unprofitable alike to Maoris and Europeans, for no person would care to expend large sums in improving property held on such a tenure as that which alone the law at present permits of. What he would

¹⁹⁸ See paper on his life.

¹⁹⁹ H.E. Whitaker to Under-Secretary, Native Department, 7 August 1883, Maori Affairs Department, MA 1, 13/86, ANZ-W.

²⁰⁰ 'Te Aroha', *Observer*, 12 May 1883, p. 122.

suggest was that the Government should be asked to facilitate *bona fide* settlement upon these reserves, after setting apart such portions as absolutely required for the use of the native owners.²⁰¹

With views like these, it was natural that he should be a director of the New Zealand Native Lands Settlement Company.²⁰² When they sold their Wairakau estate, they made 'a good profit'.²⁰³

FARMERS

Early in September 1880, Stafford told the Minister of Lands that he had ordered 170 cattle, but Wairakau, being 'mixed fern land and flax swamp', would require 'a good deal of money spent' before it could feed many animals.²⁰⁴ By the end of October, with his 'several hundred head of young animals' he had 'started to raise cattle on a large scale', and intending to purchase more. His financial position meant he could 'wait for returns', having 'no doubt that the venture will prove a very profitable one'.²⁰⁵ Shortly afterwards, 'about 120 splendid steers' arrived, described by a correspondent as 'the best mob I have seen for many a long day, all being well-bred and well framed'.²⁰⁶ The following February, he was granted a slaughterhouse license at Te Aroha.²⁰⁷ In August, he took 'a large mob of fat cattle' to Thames and sold them 'at remunerative prices'. He had 'a large number of cattle coming forward fit for the market'.²⁰⁸ ,

There is no record of Whitaker doing any farm work, being solely a sleeping partner. Whilst Stafford supervised the work, others did much of the work; in August 1884, for instance, Stephen Spalding ran both farm and

²⁰¹ *Te Aroha News*, 16 August 1884, p. 2.

²⁰² *Auckland Weekly News*, 13 November 1886, p. 22.

²⁰³ *Auckland Star*, 11 March 1924, p. 8.

²⁰⁴ C.S. Stafford to Minister of Lands, 6 September 1880, Maori Affairs Department, MA 1, 13/86, ANZ-W.

²⁰⁵ *Thames Advertiser*, 27 October 1880, p. 2.

²⁰⁶ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 4 November 1880, p. 2.

²⁰⁷ Piako County Council, Minutes of Meeting of 5 February 1881, Matamata-Piako District Council Archives, Te Aroha; *Observer*, 19 February 1881, p. 236.

²⁰⁸ *Thames Star*, 26 August 1881, p. 2.

dairy.²⁰⁹ Spalding was a 28-year-old stockman.²¹⁰ His appointment was brief, as in November he was employed by the Auckland Dairy Company; after burning down the company's cattle sheds in 1886, he was sent first to the asylum and then to gaol.²¹¹ In 1882, Stafford erected 'some 90 feet of farm sheds' for an estimated price of about £350.²¹² To add to his costs, in the following year Thomas William Carr went bankrupt,²¹³ owing him £380.²¹⁴ In June 1884, cheese made at this 'concrete dairy farm' was sold at Thames for a good price. 'The quality being very superior it found a ready sale. Further supplies will be to hand shortly'.²¹⁵ Their dairy, the first concrete one constructed in the Waihou Valley, was of such a good standard that in 1927 it was used as a house.²¹⁶ In September 1884, they sold their Wairakau estate to Arthur Downes,²¹⁷ then managing a Waitoa farm.²¹⁸ They obtained good prices for their 300 cattle, which included 50 dairy cows, 80 'empty cows', two Hereford bulls, and some horses.²¹⁹

WHITAKER AS AN AGENT

In the first issue of his *Te Aroha News*, 9 June 1883, Whitaker advertised as 'Whitaker and Co., Mining, Land, and Commission Agents';²²⁰ was Stafford his partner? That he was a successful agent was implied by

²⁰⁹ *Te Aroha News*, 14 August 1886, p. 2.

²¹⁰ Avondale Asylum, Register of Admissions 1885-1896, no. 1355, YCAA 1021/2, ANZ-A.

²¹¹ Supreme Court, *New Zealand Herald*, 6 October 1886, p. 3; Avondale Asylum, Register of Admissions 1885-1896, no. 1355, YCAA 1021/2; Case Book 1885-1887, folio 207, YCAA 1048/4, ANZ-A.

²¹² *Thames Advertiser*, 19 April 1882, p. 3.

²¹³ See paper on his life.

²¹⁴ *Waikato Times*, 17 March 1883, p. 2.

²¹⁵ *Thames Advertiser*, 7 June 1884, p. 2.

²¹⁶ *Te Aroha News*, 12 October 1927, Supplement, p. 1.

²¹⁷ See *Te Aroha News*, 10 April 1886, p. 2, 17 April 1886, p. 2, 29 May 1886, p. 2, 11 December 1886, p. 2; *Thames Advertiser*, 24 April 1888, p. 2; *Ohinemuri Gazette*, 17 July 1892, p. 7.

²¹⁸ *Te Aroha News*, 19 January 1884, p. 2, 20 September 1884, p. 2, 27 September 1884, p. 2.

²¹⁹ *Te Aroha News*, 27 September 1884, p. 2, 11 October 1884, p. 2.

²²⁰ Advertisement, *Te Aroha News*, 9 June 1883, p. 1.

having to enlarge his office.²²¹ He was the local agent of the New Zealand Insurance Company; after a cabinetmaker's shop burnt down in December 1883,²²² its owner publicly thanked him for speedily obtaining payment,²²³ which must have increased his custom. Whitaker resigned this agency in July 1884.²²⁴

THE *TE AROHA NEWS*

At a banquet in his honour in 1886, George Wilson stated that Whitaker 'saw that press representation was much needed, and quickly started a paper, which he conducted ably and well, and through it did much to bring the place prominently before the public'.²²⁵ His *Te Aroha News*, first published on 9 June 1883, was the first newspaper to be printed locally.²²⁶ Its first editorial, either written by, or approved by, him, looked forward to 'a vast change' in the district after the completed tramway brought down ore from the 'rich reefs'.

Already people here are beginning to feel that the ebb has run its course, and there is a buoyancy and confident expectancy very discernable both in mining and general matters – an anxiety to be prepared to take the flood on its turn and float on to fortune. Something of this feeling we confess has stimulated us to the enterprise of making this journal what the present proprietary has some time felt the district required. Something more is wanted than that the local journal – the special advocate and pleader for the district in all that concerns its interests and prosperity – should be content to be the mere chronicler of the small beer of passing events. The Aroha is on the point of passing from a stage of comparative inaction into the rush and whirl of a busy and thriving goldfield, such a one as never before has been seen in New Zealand, where the work of goldmining and the plough of the farmer will go hand-in-hand in making, not a mere township of mines and batteries, all life to-day and deserted to-morrow, but the important centre of a large and growing and settled population. Large questions will crop up; important interests will have to be considered and discussed, our position

²²¹ *Thames Advertiser*, 19 April 1882, p. 3.

²²² *Thames Star*, 3 December 1883, p. 2; *Te Aroha News*, 8 December 1883, p. 3.

²²³ Advertisement, *Te Aroha News*, 22 December 1883, p. 7.

²²⁴ *Te Aroha News*, 12 July 1884, p. 2.

²²⁵ *Te Aroha News*, 22 May 1886, p. 2.

²²⁶ *Thames Star*, 5 June 1883, p. 2; advertisement, *Te Aroha News*, 9 June 1883, p. 4.

politically and socially in the colony advanced and asserted. The press, therefore, equally with the settler and the miner must gird up its loins to do the work before it. This we are prepared to do, and we feel that we have little need to make special appeal to those whose cause we propose to advocate, that they should render us every assistance in their power in the performance of this duty.

Te Aroha was ‘not simply a mining district’, for Plutus, meaning mining, and Ceres, agriculture, would ‘walk lovingly together. Our future is as much bound up in the success of our country population as in the development of our mines, while at the same time the farmer looks to the mines as affording him a market for his produce at his very door’. It looked forward to the development of the ‘magnificent agricultural country about us’, and concluded that the newspaper’s success depended on the success of the district. ‘The measure of the prosperity of the one is that of the other, and we are content to cast our die upon the issue’.²²⁷

Both Whitaker and Stafford were on the ‘literary staff’,²²⁸ and Whitaker took an active part in determining its content.²²⁹ After five months, he sold both newspaper and printing office to Brett and Company, whose partners were Henry Brett, Whitaker, and his brother Frederick.²³⁰ The future Sir Henry Brett was a prominent journalist who owned the *Auckland Star*.²³¹ They would sell their printery in 1890.²³² Brett took an active interest in his new acquisition: an employee recalled him, on his visits to Te Aroha, helping with the typesetting.²³³ The ‘new proprietary’,

²²⁷ Editorial, *Te Aroha News*, 9 June 1883, p. 2.

²²⁸ *Te Aroha News*, 14 April 1930, p. 5.

²²⁹ See letter from Peter Ferguson, *Thames Advertiser*, 5 October 1883, p. 3.

²³⁰ *Thames Star*, 9 November 1883, p. 2; *Te Aroha News*, 24 November 1883, p. 2; Te Aroha Warden’s Court, Rent Register 1881-1900, folio 408, BBAV 11492/1a; Transfers and Assignments 1883, Agreement dated 20 December 1883, BBAV 11581/4a, ANZ-A.

²³¹ See *Observer*, 21 January 1882, p. 296, 30 March 1907, p. 5, 9 January 1926, p. 4, 29 May 1926, p. 20, 2 February 1927, p. 4; *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 2, pp. 125-126, 128, 240, 828; *New Zealand Herald*, 31 January 1927, p. 10; G.H. Scholefield, *Newspapers in New Zealand* (Wellington, 1958), pp. 13, 87-92, 114, 117, 144.

²³² Te Aroha Warden’s Court, Transfers and Assignments 1890, Agreement dated 25 July 1890, Assignments 1890, BBAV 11581/11a, ANZ-A.

²³³ Recollections of T.J. Maisey, *Te Aroha News*, 14 April 1930, p. 5.

meaning Brett and his editor, John Ilott,²³⁴ insisted that their promotion of the district's interests was disinterested because they had 'not one sixpence-worth of interest in any single mine nor in an acre of land'.²³⁵ As both Whitakers had such interests, they must have had no involvement with the paper after its sale. Ilott never invested in mining, but in December 1885 Brett became sole owner of Mark Moon, at Tui, which, after a small amount of prospecting, was sold two years later for £5.²³⁶ In 1886, he owned the May Bell in that district.²³⁷ The following year, with other investors, he attempted to obtain English capital to work four Tui claims, including his Mark Moon.²³⁸ In May 1889, his Monte Christo, also at Tui, was forfeited for non-working.²³⁹

WHITAKER AS A LEADING MEMBER OF THE COMMUNITY

Right from opening day, Whitaker was a prominent member of the community. As an indication of his active involvement, in April 1882 a gossip writer wondered, 'How is it that the energetic Harry is not among the names of the movers?' for a brass band.²⁴⁰ Later that month, a resident wrote 'that Harry Whitaker will probably be big drum in their new brass band!'²⁴¹ a reference to his role in the community rather than to any musical interests, of which none were recorded. The Hamilton newspaper commented, in June 1883, that he had been 'most intimately' connected with Te Aroha and had 'materially helped to assist its development in

²³⁴ See *Te Aroha News*, 23 July 1890, p. 2; Jack Ilott, *The Ilott Story* (Wellington, 1993).

²³⁵ Editorial, *Te Aroha News*, 24 November 1883, p. 2.

²³⁶ Te Aroha Warden's Court, Register of Licensed Holdings 1881-1887, folio 202, BBAV 11500/9a; Licensed Holdings Grant Book 1882-1886, claim 185, BBAV 11549/1b; Register of Applications 1883-1900, 4, 24/1887, BBAV 11505/1a; Transfers and Assignments 1887, Henry Brett to Edward Cameron, 10 December 1887, BBAV 11581/8a, ANZ-A; Thames School of Mines, Assay Book 1887-1887, two entries [no pagination, no dates], School of Mines Archives, Thames.

²³⁷ *Te Aroha News*, 12 June 1886, p. 2.

²³⁸ Warden's Court, *Te Aroha News*, 23 July 1887, p. 3.

²³⁹ Te Aroha Warden's Court, Register of Applications 1883-1900, 130/1888, BBAV 11505/1a; Plaintiff Book 1880-1898, 11/1889, BBAV 11547/1a, ANZ-A.

²⁴⁰ 'Waikato Whisperings', *Observer*, 15 April 1882, p. 68.

²⁴¹ 'Thames Tittle Tattle', *Observer*, 22 April 1882, p. 84.

various capacities'.²⁴² Its local correspondent referred to his 'energetic manner' in promoting 'any matter he has undertaken'.²⁴³

At the end of 1880, as a miner recalled, Whitaker was tenting with 'Manukau' [Hugh Robert] Jones:²⁴⁴

These two men commandeered, from one of the river steamers, a kerosene tin which they converted into a stock pot. An abundance of bones were obtained daily from Jack Wood, the butcher,²⁴⁵ and Reuben Parr, who farmed some land in the neighbourhood, supplied the requisite vegetables. Every evening, soup, both palatable and nutritious, was served out to all hands free of cost, subject to the consumers bringing in to the camp sufficient fuel to keep the pot boiling continuously.²⁴⁶

At a meeting held a few days after the field opened, Whitaker seconded a motion that Kenrick be asked to assist residents obtain a telegraph service and a recreation park.²⁴⁷ Just before Christmas, he helped collect money for a public hall.²⁴⁸ In May 1881, he chaired a meeting at Waihou that asked the government to provide bridges and roads.²⁴⁹ The meeting to elect the first school committee was held in his office.²⁵⁰ He was on the committee that created a public library, and helped establish a pound.²⁵¹ He was appointed a trustee for the maintenance of the cemetery and to the first domain board, which held its meetings in his office.²⁵² Active in developing

²⁴² *Waikato Times*, 5 June 1883, p. 2.

²⁴³ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 9 June 1883, p. 2.

²⁴⁴ See F.W. Weston, 'Thames Reminiscences', *New Zealand Herald*, 27 January 1923, p. 11.

²⁴⁵ See *Te Aroha News*, 7 September 1921, p. 2 [printed as Woods].

²⁴⁶ John McCombie, 'Random Recollections: Te Aroha Goldfield', typescript, n.d. [1920s], p. 2, MS 838, Library of the Auckland Institute and War Memorial Museum.

²⁴⁷ *Thames Advertiser*, 2 December 1880, p. 3.

²⁴⁸ *Thames Star*, 3 January 1881, p. 3.

²⁴⁹ *Waikato Times*, 28 May 1881, p. 2.

²⁵⁰ *Waikato Times*, 28 January 1882, p. 2.

²⁵¹ *Te Aroha News*, 21 July 1883, p. 2, 23 February 1884, p. 2.

²⁵² *New Zealand Gazette*, 20 September 1883, p. 1325; *Te Aroha News*, 29 September 1883, p. 2.

the domain,²⁵³ he did not bother to resign as a cemetery trustee until asked to in November 1886 by a Te Aroha resident visiting Auckland.²⁵⁴

Whitaker's charm and influence were utilized to obtain concessions from visiting politicians. In January 1882, three members of parliament, including his brother, inspected the mines, accompanied by him; his 'intimate knowledge of the wants of the new goldfield will be of material assistance'.²⁵⁵ The following month, when Sir John Hall, Premier of a government that included his father as Attorney General, visited, Whitaker was elected to a deputation to discuss local needs with him.²⁵⁶ He accompanied Hall on his inspection of the mines.²⁵⁷ The following month, he headed a delegation asking the Minister of Mines for goldfield tracks and roads.²⁵⁸ That he was regarded as crucial in arranging funding was indicated late in 1882, when he received a copy of a Mines Department letter about government subsidies for goldfield roads 'with the request that he report upon the works most needed at Te Aroha'.²⁵⁹ In January 1884, when the Minister of Public Works inspected the tramway, Whitaker accompanied him.²⁶⁰

When a banquet was held in his honour in 1886, the *Te Aroha News* described him as 'one who by his energy of character and perseverance, together with the influence he was able to bear, was largely instrumental in the development of the resources of the place'. George Wilson stated that it was through 'the influence he brought to bear' that the government gave the initial £500 to develop the hot springs. 'They had also to thank him in a measure for their railway, as it was through his influence pressure was brought to bear upon government' to extend it to Te Aroha. In reply, Whitaker said that he 'had simply acted as a mouthpiece for the people in applying to his father Sir Frederick' to have the railway bridge constructed, without which 'very probably they would not yet have had a railway'.²⁶¹ As

²⁵³ *Te Aroha News*, 22 May 1886, p. 2.

²⁵⁴ *Te Aroha News*, 20 November 1886, p. 2; *New Zealand Gazette*, 3 March 1887, p. 303.

²⁵⁵ *Waikato Times*, 7 January 1882, p. 2.

²⁵⁶ *Waikato Times*, 23 February 1882, p. 2.

²⁵⁷ *Waikato Times*, 25 February 1882, p. 2.

²⁵⁸ *Thames Advertiser*, 25 March 1882, p. 3.

²⁵⁹ *Waikato Times*, 2 November 1882, p. 2.

²⁶⁰ *Thames Advertiser*, 19 January 1884, p. 3.

²⁶¹ *Te Aroha News*, 22 May 1886, p. 2.

a symbol of their gratitude, residents planted a tree in his honour during Queen Victoria's jubilee celebrations in 1887.²⁶²

WHITAKER ON THE PIAKO COUNTY COUNCIL

In November 1881, the *Thames Star* reported that 'our friend', Whitaker, 'the King of Te Aroha, has been returned unopposed to the Piako County Council'. This 'complement' was 'well deserved', for he had 'done a good deal for Te Aroha, and has stuck to the place manfully'.²⁶³ As councillor, Whitaker worked closely with Firth to benefit the goldfield (and, therefore, themselves). At his first meeting, he moved that a main road be constructed between Te Aroha and Waiorongomai, a track be made from Te Aroha to Hone Werahiko's new discovery, and that the road between the river and this track be repaired.²⁶⁴ In January 1882, he moved, and Firth seconded, that engineers inspect the goldfield tracks and roads 'and report on all matters brought under their notice' by him 'at the earliest possible date', the 'sleight-track to have precedence'.²⁶⁵ The 'indefatigable' Whitaker 'accompanied the engineers in their ramblings' to inspect these.²⁶⁶ At the next meeting, he moved, and Firth seconded, that the Waiorongomai pack track be widened and continued to what became the Premier mine.²⁶⁷ In April, on his motion, the council asked the government for rails and sleepers for the tramway.²⁶⁸ At the end of the month, Whitaker and Firth were appointed to instruct the engineers surveying its route and to determine their payment.²⁶⁹ One month later, on their motion, a committee comprising themselves and the chairman was appointed to take preliminary steps for

²⁶² *Te Aroha News*, 25 June 1887, p. 3.

²⁶³ *Thames Star*, 9 November 1881, p. 2.

²⁶⁴ Piako County Council, Minutes of Annual Meeting of 23 November 1881, Matamata-Piako District Council Archives, Te Aroha.

²⁶⁵ Piako County Council, Minutes of Meeting of 13 January 1882, Matamata-Piako District Council Archives, Te Aroha.

²⁶⁶ *Waikato Times*, 28 January 1882, p. 2.

²⁶⁷ Piako County Council, Minutes of Meeting of 1 February 1882, Matamata-Piako District Council Archives, Te Aroha.

²⁶⁸ Piako County Council, Minutes of Meeting of 31 March 1882, Matamata-Piako District Council Archives, Te Aroha.

²⁶⁹ Piako County Council, Minutes of Meeting of 28 April 1882, Matamata-Piako District Council Archives, Te Aroha; Piako County Council, *Waikato Times*, 4 May 1882, p. 2.

its construction; subsequently they acted as a supervisory committee.²⁷⁰ In July, on Whitaker's motion, the government was asked to construct a railway from Morrinsville to Te Aroha, and on Firth's motion Whitaker was authorized to spend up to £50 improving the track to the mines.²⁷¹ When there was concern about tailings polluting the river, he was appointed to a committee of three to report on ways to prevent this.²⁷²

In September 1883, the council heard a complaint by Peter Ferguson, a pugnacious local miner,²⁷³ against Whitaker. The sub-editor of the *Waikato Times* made his opinion clear about this controversy by headlining it 'A Scene. – Mr Ferguson's Misrepresentations'. Whitaker introduced the subject by explaining that Ferguson was attending the meeting as a delegate seeking a road to the Waiorongomai landing. 'Great credit was due to Mr Ferguson for the ready manner in which he responded to the request of his fellow settlers, and the trouble which he had taken, and the inconvenience he had been put to in coming to Cambridge to represent this important matter'. He then asked Ferguson 'to answer a few questions' about his 'serious reflections' at a public meeting on Whitaker's 'personal honour'. Ferguson had inferred that Whitaker had used his position as a councillor 'to benefit himself by diverting a road through a certain section of land where it could be of no earthly benefit to any body but himself; and also that he had entered into some sort of a compact with some other property holder in the vicinity to give effect to his own personal ends'.²⁷⁴ After identifying this man as Denis Murphy,²⁷⁵ Whitaker insisted there was 'no collusion between Murphy and myself to get this section'.²⁷⁶ The agreement, 'produced for the edification of the council', proved 'these allegations were absolutely incorrect' and that Ferguson 'had made false statements' to the previous council meeting, when Whitaker was absent. Whitaker stated 'there was a great deal of trouble in getting a proper landing to which the nearest and best road had to be made. Here you infer

²⁷⁰ Piako County Council, Minutes of Meetings of 26 May 1882, 28 July 1882, Matamata-Piako District Council Archives, Te Aroha.

²⁷¹ Piako County Council, Minutes of Meetings of 28 July 1882, Matamata-Piako District Council Archives, Te Aroha.

²⁷² *Waikato Times*, 5 January 1884, p. 2.

²⁷³ See paper on Peter Ferguson and his New Era.

²⁷⁴ Piako County Council, *Waikato Times*, 13 September 1883, p. 2.

²⁷⁵ See paper on his life.

²⁷⁶ Piako County Council, *Te Aroha News*, 15 September 1883, p. 2.

that I did not give the question of convenience any consideration – that I did not take the best road'. He accused Ferguson of making 'a statement which is absolutely false and untrue. You have been casting a great reflection on me', and the alleged agreement 'was never contemplated'. The actual agreement proved 'conclusively that this matter which reflects so seriously on me, and which tends to injure my position in the council, has been got together for a purpose', and he had 'no hesitation' in stating Ferguson 'was a leader in it'.

Ferguson then accepted that the agreement confirmed Whitaker's statement and blamed another person for providing the information on which he based his accusation. Whitaker then stated he had engineers' reports denying there was a good landing place where Ferguson claimed, and denied colluding with a landowner to obtain the section. 'I think that whenever any reflections are cast upon a councillor in his official capacity' the council should enquire into the charges, for if these were not refuted, those who elected him 'would say I had been accused of certain improper actions' and that, as councillors had done nothing, it agreed with these actions. He charged Ferguson with distributing copies of the newspaper containing the charges 'among certain people at Waiorongomai, with the object best known to yourself, and only to be surmised by me'. After Ferguson admitted he had arranged their distribution, the chairman said he considered Whitaker had done 'his very utmost to serve the interest of the council, and of the people of Te Aroha' in this matter, and councillors had 'every reason to be thankful to him for his efforts' of behalf of his riding. 'Anything' he had done as a councillor had 'been for the public good'. After all councillors 'fully endorsed' this statement, Whitaker thanked them, but continued to complain about Ferguson's 'malicious act' of distributing reports of his accusation. 'The whole thing had been very damaging to him', and he 'could not see why the council should receive deputations from such men as Mr Ferguson', who had been proved 'was not over truthful in making representations on public matters'.

Firth assured him the council would not have permitted imputations to pass without challenge and that he 'had exerted himself in every way to forward the Aroha district, and the business of the council generally'. The chairman added that, had it not been for Whitaker, 'there would not have been any Aroha or Waiorongomai to-day'. Ferguson cited Murphy and another farmer as having given him information, and admitted 'he had been led astray' and 'deceived'. After Whitaker continued to challenge Ferguson's

veracity and offered to produce witnesses to prove he ‘was never told any such thing’, Ferguson laid an apology on the table:

I, Peter Ferguson, having been led astray regarding the steps taken to fix the road to Murphy’s landing, reflecting on Mr Whitaker’s action in the matter, beg to withdraw any statements I have made, and express my regret that I have been so misled, and request the publication of this apology.

With Whitaker’s consent, Firth moved the apology be accepted and councillors hear Ferguson’s request. After considering his recommendations about the proposed road at Waiorongomai, Whitaker moved, and Firth seconded, that he be accorded ‘a cordial vote of thanks’ for ‘the trouble he had taken in coming such a distance to represent the requirements of the district’.²⁷⁷ The council also passed Firth’s motion supporting Whitaker’s arranging for a road to be constructed to Murphy’s Landing and thanking him for his aid to the goldfield generally.²⁷⁸

Ferguson’s letter to the *Te Aroha News* explaining his position in detail was not published. He claimed that Whitaker, then its proprietor, ‘informed me that owing to the large amount of advertisements which had just come to hand he would be obliged to crush out my letter that week, but would certainly insert it in the next issue’. After Ferguson’s letter was published in the Hamilton newspaper and Whitaker considered there was ‘no occasion’ to reprint it, Ferguson sent it to the *Thames Advertiser* because of ‘the inconvenience I have suffered through the caprice of our vacillating newspaper proprietor’.²⁷⁹ His letter to the *Te Aroha News* claimed that its ‘somewhat detailed account’ of the council meeting misrepresented his motives, and explained in detail who had told him what. He denied attempting ‘to hurt the feelings of any sensitive and guileless person’, for ‘to heap abused and detraction upon’ Whitaker ‘would never have been my intention’.²⁸⁰

At a meeting at Waiorongomai in July 1884, a speaker complained that Whitaker had not attended council meetings for some time and wanted the meeting to find out whether he would resign; he was ruled out of

²⁷⁷ Piako County Council, *Waikato Times*, 13 September 1883, p. 2.

²⁷⁸ Piako County Council, *Te Aroha News*, 15 September 1883, p. 2.

²⁷⁹ Letter from Peter Ferguson, 1 October 1883, *Thames Advertiser*, 5 October 1883, p. 3.

²⁸⁰ Letter from Peter Ferguson of 21 September 1883, *Thames Advertiser*, 5 October 1883, p. 3.

order.²⁸¹ One resident believed he had resigned some time ago but the council had not accepted his resignation.²⁸² In August, it did, and later a councillor ‘complained of the way in which the Aroha riding had been unrepresented in the Council for such a time’; Whitaker ‘ought to have resigned long before he did’.²⁸³

That he had been a successful councillor was indicated at the banquet to celebrate the first crushing at Waiorongomai, when Kenrick described him as being one of the greatest friends of Te Aroha, and the toast to the council ‘coupled with’ his name was ‘well received’ and he ‘was voted “a jolly good fellow” ’.²⁸⁴ In 1886, Wilson considered that, had he remained on the council, ‘the streets of Te Aroha would have been put in a proper state of repair long since’.²⁸⁵ Denis Murphy considered ‘great praise was undoubtedly due’ to him because the tramway was constructed through his efforts.²⁸⁶

Whitaker was believed to have ambitions to be more than just a county councillor. In April 1882, the *Observer* Man in Thames reported that he was ‘looked upon as the future Mayor of Te Aroha’.²⁸⁷ He convened a meeting in July 1883 about making Te Aroha and Waiorongomai a borough, but could not attend because of lobbying the government about the tramway.²⁸⁸ Te Aroha’s *Observer* Man reported ‘a nice little quarrel *re* local government. Both ends want priority. Harry Whitaker wants to be first Mayor, and Waiorongomai considers he is only a puppy, or puppet, of the others. They won’t have it, and they are right’.²⁸⁹ The allusion was to Whitaker being the pawn of Firth’s clique. The following year, he was accused of assisting ‘the clique’ to so engineer the school committee election that Henry Hopper Adams²⁹⁰ received most votes.²⁹¹

²⁸¹ *Te Aroha News*, 12 July 1884, p. 2.

²⁸² *Te Aroha News*, 2 August 1884, p. 2.

²⁸³ Piako County Council, *Waikato Times*, 2 August 1884, p. 3, 27 September 1884, p. 3.

²⁸⁴ *Te Aroha News*, 8 December 1883, p. 3.

²⁸⁵ *Te Aroha News*, 22 May 1886, p. 2.

²⁸⁶ *Te Aroha News*, 14 April 1888, p. 2.

²⁸⁷ ‘Thames Tittle Tattle’, *Observer*, 22 April 1882, p. 84.

²⁸⁸ *Te Aroha News*, 30 June 1883, p. 3, 7 July 1883, p. 2.

²⁸⁹ ‘Te Aroha’, *Observer*, 14 July 1883, p. 14.

²⁹⁰ See paper on his life.

²⁹¹ Letter from ‘Observer’, *Te Aroha News*, 2 February 1884, p. 2.

STAFFORD AS A LEADING MEMBER OF THE COMMUNITY

Like Whitaker, Stafford was a leading advocate for the district. In February 1882, he chaired a meeting to discuss the forthcoming visit from the Premier, and along with Whitaker was elected to the committee to interview him about its requirements.²⁹² They both accompanied the Premier to inspect the mines.²⁹³ Shortly before he left the district, in August 1884 he was a member of another committee charged with obtaining government assistance.²⁹⁴

In September 1883, he also became a member of the domain board and a trustee for the maintenance of the cemetery.²⁹⁵ For part of 1884 he acted as chairman of the domain board.²⁹⁶ Like Whitaker, after he left the district he had to be asked to stand down as a cemetery trustee so that he could be replaced.²⁹⁷ In 1882, he was the chairman of the first licensing committee, and was re-elected unopposed the following year, becoming chairman once more.²⁹⁸ In mid-1883 he was made a justice of the peace.²⁹⁹ In this capacity he was acting coroner at least twice.³⁰⁰ He presided at the 'treat' celebrating the opening of the Te Aroha school.³⁰¹ A member of the committee that established the public library, he was later elected a vice-president of the library.³⁰²

For his services to the community, like Whitaker a tree was planted in his honour during the queen's jubilee celebrations.³⁰³

²⁹² *Waikato Times*, 23 February 1882, p. 2.

²⁹³ *Waikato Times*, 25 February 1882, p. 2.

²⁹⁴ *Waikato Times*, 14 August 1884, p. 3.

²⁹⁵ *New Zealand Gazette*, 20 September 1883, p. 1325; *Te Aroha News*, 29 September 1883, p. 2.

²⁹⁶ Te Aroha Warden's Court, Letterbook 1883-1900, p. 35, BBAV 11534/1a, ANZ-A.

²⁹⁷ *Te Aroha News*, 20 November 1886, p. 2; *New Zealand Gazette*, 3 March 1887, p. 303.

²⁹⁸ *Waikato Times*, 29 April 1882, p. 3, 22 February 1883, p. 2; *Te Aroha News*, 9 June 1883, p. 2.

²⁹⁹ *New Zealand Gazette*, 6 June 1883, p. 737; *Thames Advertiser*, 12 June 1883, p. 2.

³⁰⁰ Inquest into Te Katuhi, Justice Department, J 1 COR, 83/1492; inquest into William Onyon, Justice Department, J 1 COR, 84/797, ANZ-W.

³⁰¹ *Te Aroha News*, 7 July 1883, p. 2.

³⁰² *Te Aroha News*, 21 July 1883, p. 2, 2 February 1884, p. 7.

³⁰³ *Te Aroha News*, 25 June 1887, p. 2.

HORSE RACING

In December 1885, in proposing the toast to the chairman at the annual dinner of the Pakuranga Hunt Club, Whitaker stated he ‘had been associated with the club from its first formation, and lent it a helping hand in every possible way. In a highly humorous speech, which fairly convulsed those present’, he ‘described his first experience in hunting’.³⁰⁴ An obituary recorded that he ‘rode to hounds for many years’,³⁰⁵ a sport that did not exist at Te Aroha, where he helped organize the first race meeting in February 1881.³⁰⁶ He was a steward for the next meeting.³⁰⁷ At the end of 1882, he was a steward for the Piako County Turf Club’s Spring Meeting at Morrinsville and in March a steward at the next Te Aroha meeting.³⁰⁸ ‘The moving spirit’ in forming the Te Aroha Jockey Club in 1883, he was elected to its committee.³⁰⁹

Stafford was a steward for the first two Te Aroha race meetings.³¹⁰ In 1882 he judged a meeting at Waitoa, and, with Whitaker, was a steward for the Piako County Turf Club Spring Meeting at Morrinsville.³¹¹ The following year, he was a judge for the Te Aroha Jockey Club.³¹² He attended the Auckland race meeting on New Year’s Day, 1884.³¹³

SPORT

In 1918, Whitaker was recalled as being ‘a leader of the “sports,” and nothing of a daring or sporting nature occurred that Harry did not have a part in’.³¹⁴ An obituary stated that ‘in all forms of sport, from the turf to the

³⁰⁴ *Auckland Weekly News*, 12 December 1885, p. 9.

³⁰⁵ *Observer*, 22 March 1924, p. 4.

³⁰⁶ *Thames Star*, 26 January 1881, p. 3, 7 February 1881, p. 3.

³⁰⁷ *Thames Advertiser*, 3 March 1882, p. 2.

³⁰⁸ *Waikato Times*, 2 December 1882, p. 2, 1 March 1883, p. 3.

³⁰⁹ *Thames Advertiser*, 12 February 1883, p. 2.

³¹⁰ *Thames Star*, 26 January 1881, p. 3; *Thames Advertiser*, 3 March 1882, p. 2.

³¹¹ *Te Aroha Mail*, 3 June 1882, p. 2; *Waikato Times*, 2 December 1882, p. 2.

³¹² *Waikato Times*, 1 March 1883, p. 3, 27 October 1883, p. 3; *Te Aroha News*, 8 September 1883, p. 2.

³¹³ *Te Aroha News*, 5 January 1884, p. 2.

³¹⁴ *Observer*, 13 April 1918, p. 5.

football field, his was one of the most conspicuous figures' in Auckland.³¹⁵ He did indeed participate in a wide variety of sports in the 1870s, notably in foot races.³¹⁶ As a member of the Pakuranga Hunt club he 'followed the hounds for many years'.³¹⁷ A pioneer of rugby football, in 1872 he played in the 'Colonists' rugby team against 'the World'.³¹⁸ The following year, he played for Auckland in the first rugby match to be held at Thames.³¹⁹ In 1875, he played five games for Auckland and was a member of the first Auckland team to tour the colony; it lost every game.³²⁰ The following year, he again played for Auckland against Thames.³²¹

In December 1880, when a rugby match was held in Lipsey's Paddock at Te Aroha, he chose one of the teams.³²² In 1883 he captained the Te Aroha club against Thames.³²³ At the end of that year, he was elected a vice-president of the cricket and tennis clubs, and in 1884 was elected president of the football club.³²⁴

Stafford was one of the best players for the Hamilton cricket team against Cambridge in March 1881.³²⁵ In December 1883, the *Te Aroha News* described him as an excellent cricketer whom the 'selection committees for

³¹⁵ *Observer*, 22 March 1924, p. 4.

³¹⁶ For example, *Auckland Star*, 8 April 1872, p. 2, 29 September 1876, p. 2, 31 October 1876, p. 3; *New Zealand Herald*, 23 January 1877, p. 2, 21 July 1877, p. 2, 24 July 1877, p. 2, 25 September 1877, p. 3, 8 October 1877, p. 3, 8 October 1877, p. 3, 10 November 1877, p. 2, 13 November 1877, p. 2.

³¹⁷ *Auckland Star*, 11 March 1924, p. 8.

³¹⁸ *Auckland Weekly News*, 11 May 1872, p. 12.

³¹⁹ *Thames Borough Centenary Souvenir 5 November 1973*, ed. L.P. O'Neill (Thames, 1973), p. 162; F.J. Young, *Thames 1870-1970: 100 years of rugby: The birth and evolution of rugby in Thames*, (Thames, 1970), p 4.

³²⁰ Auckland Rugby Football Union, *Rugby in Auckland 1883-1867: Official history of the Auckland Rugby Football Union Inc.* (Auckland, 1968), p. 234; for a photograph of him in the 1875 team, see p. 7.

³²¹ *Thames Advertiser*, 19 September 1876, p. 3.

³²² *Thames Star*, 3 December 1880, p. 3.

³²³ *Thames Star*, 29 August 1883, p. 2; *Thames Advertiser*, 3 September 1883, p. 3.

³²⁴ *Te Aroha News*, 3 November 1883, p. 2, 26 April 1884, p. 2.

³²⁵ *Waikato Times*, 19 March 1881, p. 2.

Interprovincial matches should not forget'.³²⁶ He supervised cricket practice every afternoon.³²⁷

RELIGION

At the first Anglican service held at Te Aroha, Whitaker led the choir.³²⁸ When the bishop held a meeting in mid-December 1880, Whitaker nominated the churchwarden and was himself elected to the vestry.³²⁹ Like other Anglicans, he supported the Wesleyans by giving an entertaining speech at the soiree to celebrate the opening of their church.³³⁰ No other details of his involvement with the church have survived, but he died an Anglican.³³¹

In August 1881, the *Observer* was amazed at a report in the *Auckland Star* of

Harry Whitaker having preached an “edifying” discourse ... at a Wesleyan tea-fuddle at Te Aroha. Ye gods! The sons of the briny, whom Harry was able to knock into a cocked hat in the concoction of forcible expletives, refuse to accept the yarn, while all his quandum chums are dumbfounded with astonishment. If the promoters of that muffin and crumpet contest care to announce a repetition of the performance with H.W.’s “edifying” discourse well forward on the programme, they may safely count on a special boat from Auckland crowded with anxious tea-fighters.³³²

Stafford, a Catholic, was an originator of a subscription to build a church and was on the committee to achieve this.³³³ ‘The energetic action taken by our respected fellow townsman’, Stafford, resulted in the obtaining of a ‘most eligible site’.³³⁴

³²⁶ *Te Aroha News*, 15 December 1883, p. 2.

³²⁷ *Te Aroha News*, 22 December 1883, p. 2.

³²⁸ John McCombie, ‘Early Days of Te Aroha’, *Auckland Weekly News*, 8 December 1910, p. 17.

³²⁹ *Thames Advertiser*, 16 December 1880, p. 3.

³³⁰ *Thames Advertiser*, 12 August 1881, p. 3.

³³¹ Death Certificate of Henry Ernest Whitaker, 8 March 1924, 1924/7306, BDM.

³³² *Observer*, 20 August 1881, p. 560.

³³³ *Te Aroha News*, 8 December 1883, p. 3; *Freeman’s Journal*, 21 March 1884, p. 12.

³³⁴ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 29 December 1883, p. 20.

SOCIAL LIFE

In a speech to the 1886 banquet in his honour, Whitaker declared 'he had never met better fellows in his life, than those he had met at Te Aroha'.³³⁵ Three years previously, the *Observer* asked, 'What would become of Te Aroha but for Harry and Charles, who are always to the fore in any matter of business or amusement'.³³⁶ In February 1881, they were both noted amongst the local 'notables' swimming in the river and 'entering with the zest of school boys into a mud fight from opposite banks of the river'.³³⁷ When a band was formed, it was rumoured Stafford would 'be asked to take Drum-Majorship',³³⁸ but this did not happen.

PERSONALITIES AND PRIVATE LIVES

Far more was recorded in the press about Whitaker, suggesting that he was more extraverted. According to an obituary, 'no man was better known or popular in Auckland' before and after his time at Te Aroha. 'In the society of that day, and in all forms of sport, from the turf to the football field, his was one of the most conspicuous figures and his personal brightness of disposition as a young man made his company welcome wherever he went'.³³⁹ He was 'one of the best known figures in Auckland', as well known 'as the town clock', and regarded as 'the prince of good fellows'.³⁴⁰ Another obituary described him as being 'possessed of a bright, genial disposition, and a fund of dry humour'.³⁴¹ As an indication of his sociability, he was a founder member of the Auckland Club, established in 1877.³⁴² One gossip writer called him 'Snoozer';³⁴³ did this reflect his debonair and relaxed manner? Or, less flatteringly, could it have meant 'a

³³⁵ *Te Aroha News*, 22 May 1886, p. 2.

³³⁶ *Observer*, 10 March 1883, p. 406.

³³⁷ 'Our Special on the Spot', 'Te Aroha Arrows', *Observer*, 19 February 1881, p. 236.

³³⁸ 'Waikato Whisperings', *Observer*, 15 April 1882, p. 68.

³³⁹ *Onserver*, 22 March 1924, p. 4.

³⁴⁰ *Observer*, 12 January 1901, p. 6, 3 August 1901, p. 6.

³⁴¹ *Auckland Star*, 11 March 1924, p. 8.

³⁴² *Auckland Star*, 22 January 1924, p. 4.

³⁴³ 'Thames Tittle Tattle', *Observer*, 22 April 1882, p. 84.

person who doesn't really do anything. Generally they look busy but are not really achieving anything, they might as well be asleep'?³⁴⁴

Whitaker was called 'Witty C. Rufus' in one letter to the editor,³⁴⁵ indicating both his complexion and his reputation for wit. Kenrick described him as 'he of the ruddy countenance and laugh – laugh as loud as the shirts it pleased him to wear'.³⁴⁶ At the age of 20 he weighed only nine stones.³⁴⁷ In his late twenties, he retained this slender physique, as indicated by a comment on his election to the committee of the Te Aroha Jockey Club: 'We suppose he will be treated as a light weight'.³⁴⁸ He had sandy hair and until the end of his life 'was one of the few men in Auckland who wore an eyeglass',³⁴⁹ meaning a monocle. In 1901, he was described as wearing 'the inevitable eye-glass' and his face being 'as florid as ever'.³⁵⁰ His attire was mentioned in an 1889 article describing 'Gentlemen's Street Toilettes' seen in Auckland: 'Mr H. Whitaker wears a charming toilette, combining pretty grey trousers, dark blue tailor-made corsage, and bewitching tie'.³⁵¹ Even his voice was distinctive, as the *Observer* noted in 1881: 'Harry Whitaker's voice was deliciously audible last Sunday evening. It is so unlike any one else's that there is no mistaking it'.³⁵² His wit was referred to on several occasions. For example, at the soiree celebrating the opening of the Wesleyan Church at Te Aroha he spoke 'on nothing in particular, and everything in general', causing 'much amusement by his natural family bashfulness'.³⁵³ When he chaired a Waiorongomai banquet in 1888, the *Te Aroha News* wrote that it was 'almost superfluous' to report he 'presided in a manner that gave universal satisfaction – for Mr Whitaker is well-known as making a first-class chairman at social gatherings, and, with a tact peculiarly his own, carries out a programme as it should be done'.³⁵⁴

³⁴⁴ *Urban Dictionary*, online.

³⁴⁵ Letter from 'Red Shanks', *Thames Advertiser*, 22 July 1882, p. 2.

³⁴⁶ *Te Aroha News*, 8 December 1883, p. 3.

³⁴⁷ *Rugby in Auckland*, p. 8.

³⁴⁸ *Thames Advertiser*, 12 February 1883, p. 2.

³⁴⁹ *Observer*, 12 January 1901, p. 6, 3 August 1901, p. 6, 13 April 1918, p. 5; *Auckland Star*, 11 March 1924, p. 8.

³⁵⁰ *Observer*, 12 January 1901, p. 6.

³⁵¹ 'Gentlemen's Street Toilettes', *Observer*, 4 May 1889, p. 4.

³⁵² *Observer*, 8 October 1881, p. 58.

³⁵³ *Thames Advertiser*, 12 August 1881, p. 3.

³⁵⁴ *Te Aroha News*, 14 April 1888, p. 2.

Although people recalled his jokes,³⁵⁵ none were published. Possibly he was referred to by the local *Observer* Man over what may have been intended by the perpetrators as a joke: ‘Can’t Harry and Dick go and have a drink without taking the landlord’s oysters?’.³⁵⁶

He was always portrayed as urbane and relaxed, with one exception. In 1882, when living in a Te Aroha hotel, he returned one midnight to confront a drunk lodger. In the words of a witness, ‘They began to growl at one another. Mr Whitaker stood off as if to shape’, ready to fight, when the publican intervened.³⁵⁷ In the judge’s notes, ‘Whitaker came in front door – appeared to be picking quarrel with him. Appeared W. was preparing to strike him’.³⁵⁸ And in 1883 it seems that not everyone enjoyed his repartee, if the following story was about him, as it seems:

Scene in a country hotel, not a thousand miles from Te Aroha: -
Dramatis personae: W., sitting at a breakfast table with Messrs
B. and K. Enter Mr C. H.W. (loquiter): “Well, my sanguinary (he
used a stronger term) little C.; how are you?” C.: “I am no more ---
little C --- than you are --- little W---.” Collapse of H.W.³⁵⁹

Despite all his charm and elegance, Whitaker never married, and there were no hints of any flirtations with any women, which the *Observer* would have mentioned. The only time he was recorded as having anything to do with women was in 1891, when he ‘was called upon to respond to the toast to “The Ladies” at the smoke concert, and made a very neat speech. The boys spared his blushes’.³⁶⁰ When living outside New Zealand in 1900, he was allegedly interested in ‘the latest charm in Flossies’ in Auckland.³⁶¹ The use of this term is curious, for in New Zealand, as in England and South Africa, flossies were prostitutes or, at best, older and over-dressed and over-affectionate women or girlfriends.³⁶² Only in American was this term used

³⁵⁵ *Observer*, 13 April 1918, p. 5.

³⁵⁶ ‘Te Aroha’, *Observer*, 8 September 1883, p. 12.

³⁵⁷ *Thames Star*, 20 July 1882, p. 2.

³⁵⁸ Auckland Supreme Court, Judge’s Notebooks, Gillies J, Criminal Cases 1882-1885, p. 29, BBAE A304/256, ANZ-A.

³⁵⁹ *Observer*, 17 November 1883, p. 14.

³⁶⁰ *Observer*, 14 February 1891, p. 7.

³⁶¹ *Observer*, 12 January 1901, p. 6.

³⁶² Partridge, p. 410; Jonathon Green, *The Cassell Dictionary of Slang* (London, 1998), p. 433; *Dictionary of New Zealand English*, ed. H.W. Orsman (Auckland, 1997), p. 276.

for a young woman.³⁶³ Could his description as ‘gay and *debonnair*’³⁶⁴ indicate his sexuality to an age that uses the term ‘gay’ differently? Which raises the question of the nature of his relationship with Stafford.

Gossip writers were far less interested in Stafford, and as he never lived in Auckland he was unknown there. In 1882 a report of ‘Miss Ruby Stafford’ of Te Aroha visiting Thames³⁶⁵ prompted an immediate response:

Your compositor must have been slightly elevated [slightly drunk]³⁶⁶ when compiling last week’s budget, or how he could possibly convert a fellow six foot two in his stockings, and big in proportion, into Miss Ruby Stafford is a puzzle to yours’ truly. At any rate you have conferred a handle to that gentleman’s name that will stick to him, and what a glorious ruby he is.³⁶⁷

Like Whitaker, Stafford was fit, for instance accompanying a couple to the top of Te Aroha mountain and back in seven hours, before there was a track.³⁶⁸ In mid-1883 a Thames gossip writer revealed that he was attractive to women: ‘Stalwart Stafford, the idol of Te Aroha, turned the heads of half the young ladies at the conversazione. One is so seriously struck, that she thinks she requires a few weeks’ sojourn at the hot baths’.³⁶⁹ He did not write that Stafford was interested in the ‘young ladies’.

It seems the partners did not share accommodation either on their farm or in Te Aroha, where they both lived for at least part of the time in hotels. Whitaker was living in one hotel in 1882,³⁷⁰ and the following year Stafford was living in the Hot Springs Hotel when it had one of its fires. He ‘had gone down the river on a shooting expedition, leaving all his belongings in his room, amongst which was a gold watch and chain, all being destroyed’.³⁷¹

³⁶³ *Random House Historical Dictionary of American Slang: vol. 1, A-G*, ed. J.E. Lighter (New York, 1994), p. 784.

³⁶⁴ *Observer*, 3 August 1901, p. 6.

³⁶⁵ *Observer*, 2 December 1882, p. 188.

³⁶⁶ Partridge, p. 363.

³⁶⁷ ‘Thames Tittle Tattle’, *Observer*, 9 December 1882, p. 197.

³⁶⁸ *Auckland Weekly News*, 6 November 1880, p. 21.

³⁶⁹ ‘Thames Tittle Tattle’, *Observer*, 14 July 1883, p. 14.

³⁷⁰ *Thames Star*, 20 July 1882, p. 2.

³⁷¹ *Thames Advertiser*, 21 May 1883, p. 2.

WHITAKER'S LIFE AFTER TE AROHA

Whitaker had left Te Aroha for Auckland by July 1884.³⁷² When the Auckland Amateur Athletic Club held a meeting in the following April, he 'occupied the position for which his energy and manner so fit him, that of call steward, at it was greatly owing to him and his bell that the races were kept so well to time'.³⁷³ In March 1886 he was unable to attend a Te Aroha luncheon to celebrate the opening of the railway from Morrinsville,³⁷⁴ but when he did revisit two months later 'some of his friends availed of the opportunity to entertain him' at a banquet. Wilson, who proposed the toast to him, said they wanted 'to manifest the great pleasure they all felt at having him back amongst them, even if only for a short time, and to express their feelings of warm friendship for him'. In outlining his contributions to the community, Wilson said he had 'made many true friends' who regretted his departure.³⁷⁵ The following year, Whitaker revisited with his father, a sister, and some friends, but was not present when a tree was planted in his honour during the queen's jubilee celebrations.³⁷⁶ In April 1888, he chaired a Te Aroha banquet honouring Henry Hopper Adams.³⁷⁷

In Auckland, Whitaker was a commission agent.³⁷⁸ He also lent money,³⁷⁹ and was appointed the auditor for the Silverton Gold Mining Company, of Waihi.³⁸⁰ In 1884 he became secretary of the New Zealand Stud and Pedigree Stock Company, which owned Sylvia Park, but when the company collapsed in May 1890 he was appointed its liquidator.³⁸¹ This task continued until the following May,³⁸² when, in the words of the

³⁷² *Te Aroha News*, 12 July 1884, p. 2.

³⁷³ *Observer*, 18 April 1885, p. 4.

³⁷⁴ *Te Aroha News*, 6 March 1886, p. 7.

³⁷⁵ *Te Aroha News*, 22 May 1886, p. 2.

³⁷⁶ *Te Aroha News*, 6 February 1887, p. 2, 25 June 1887, p. 3.

³⁷⁷ *Te Aroha News*, 14 April 1888, p. 2.

³⁷⁸ *Auckland Central Electoral Roll, 1887*, p. 27; A. & G. Price, Letterbook 1886-1888, p. 150, A. & G. Price Archives, Thames; National Bank, Inspector's Report on Auckland Branch, 13 December 1897, National Bank Archives, Wellington.

³⁷⁹ See *Mercantile and Bankruptcy Gazette*, 20 August 1887, p. 258.

³⁸⁰ *Auckland Star*, 31 December 1886, p. 5.

³⁸¹ *Auckland Weekly News*, 3 January 1885, p. 17; *Te Aroha News*, 17 May 1890, p. 2; *Observer*, 22 March 1924, p. 4.

³⁸² *New Zealand Gazette*, 21 May 1891, p. 570.

Observer, 'the genial Harry Whitaker' left for Australia 'amid the lamentations of his Club chums and others'.³⁸³ 'In the presence of a large assemblage' at the Auckland Club, the mayor presented him with a 'handsome and influentially signed' illuminated address, signed by 118 men, along with a purse of sovereigns. The address expressed 'sincere regret' at his departure and assured him of 'the high estimation' in which he was held. In business, 'your rare tact and ability have enabled you to carry to a successful issue all the undertakings you have engaged in, while socially there has hardly lived a man in this city who has enjoyed a popularity so widespread and so thoroughly merited'. It hoped he would obtain 'a deserved and abundant reward' in his 'new career' and then return to his 'old friends'. The mayor referred to the affection in which he was held, for his 'personal merits' had 'brought about this little event. (Cheers.)' His friends regretted that the colony's poor financial situation had caused his departure. Referring to the suggestion that 'he might return a millionaire', the mayor hoped he would, 'for he was quite certain that if he did, he would be a millionaire of the right kind, and would not cease in his endeavours to benefit the town in which he was born'. The number of sovereigns collected was remarkably large. Whitaker's health was drunk 'with great enthusiasm'.

Mr WHITAKER suitably replied, and said he fully appreciated their kindness in giving such a hearty send-off. He had to take exception to that portion of the address in which they spoke of his successes, but what they had said had been said with the best of intentions – (laughter) – and he accepted it with great pleasure. He had received hospitalities and kindnesses from his friends in Auckland which would never fade from his memory, and he was sure that never again in his life would he have so many true friends around him as he had met in this city. However, he was not going far from them, and if any one of them was going to get married, or anything of that kind, and thought that he would like to have his old friend Whitaker with him, all he had to do was to send across an invitation, with passage money and expenses, and he would come at once. (Laughter.) Whatever part of Australia, or any other part of the world, he was in, a grasp of the hands of Auckland friends would always be looked to, and he trusted that if any old friends came to that part of the world where he would be, he would not miss looking up Harry Whitaker. (Cheers.) He thanked them most heartily for their kind presentation.³⁸⁴

³⁸³ *Observer*, 30 May 1891, p. 6.

³⁸⁴ *New Zealand Herald*, 28 May 1891, p. 6; *Waikato Times*, 28 May 1891, p. 2.

Another version of his speech was printed in the evening newspaper:

Mr Whitaker in replying said it was not necessary for him to say that his present inclination was to fall into tears and weep at losing so many friends, and when he saw in what a hearty manner the address and coin had been presented, he thought it would be bad form on his part to do any such thing. He fully appreciated the thoroughly hearty send-off they had given him, and wherever he might settle there would be vividly before his mind the good feeling now expressed. In referring to his successes he feared they had said rather what they wished than what was actually the case, but it had been done with the best intentions (laughter), and he accepted the compliment in the spirit in which it was intended. There were many occasions on which those present had extended to him hospitality and consideration, which could never be obliterated from his mind, and if he lived twice 35 years in any part of the world, he was satisfied that never again in his life would he have so many true friends around him. He certainly could say, and did say that wherever he might go, he should be only too pleased to see his old friends and to have the grasp of friendly hands. They were not idle words when he said he was leaving some of the warmest friends he had ever had or would ever have again, and he thanked them all heartily for the kind manner in which they had expressed their friendship. (Cheers.)

This newspaper then gave details of the ‘tastefully got up’ address (because it was produced in book form by its printing office):

The book was bound in massive, beveled edged boards, full crimson morocco, and elaborately hand-tulled in gold, the cover being lined with cream satin inside. On both sides of the cover, Mr Whitaker’s crest and monogram were embossed in gold. The address was illuminated and engrossed in 15th Century style, with elaborate initials and an ornamental and floral border. In the border of the address were worked Auckland arms, Mr Whitaker’s crest, and a horseracing emblem. The whole effect was very striking and pretty.³⁸⁵

³⁸⁵ *Auckland Star*, 27 May 1891, p. 8.

It was understood that he had left, ‘for good’, for ‘Tasmania via Sydney’.³⁸⁶ At first he kept in touch with his friends, in November telling them he ‘did very well over the Melbourne Cup’.³⁸⁷ After his father died in the following month, Whitaker returned to Auckland briefly but declined to act as executor of his father’s estate. He did not inherit anything, his father leaving everything to his daughters and a daughter-in-law.³⁸⁸ Early in the following year he ‘bought a seat on the Melbourne Stock Exchange for £1500’.³⁸⁹ Possibly he borrowed this amount, for he had left Auckland without paying off an overdraft of £196 owed to the National Bank. Its inspector noted, in August 1896, that the account was ‘worthless. I understand that his friends will see us paid. He is said to be dead’.³⁹⁰ He was not dead, but 16 months later the inspector recorded that the guarantee for this overdraft was worthless, but ‘I am told that his friends will see us paid – otherwise it will be a loss’.³⁹¹ The amount remained unpaid.³⁹²

Whitaker was a member of the Melbourne stock exchange ‘during a brisk period on the Victorian goldfields’,³⁹³ but his departure in 1893 for Matabeleland, in southern Africa, suggests that he had been financially unsuccessful. Reputedly he went there because of ‘the reversal’ of the financial fortunes of his family; he was still there early in the following year.³⁹⁴ After spending time in Rhodesia, he moved to South Africa at an unknown date.³⁹⁵ Before the Boer War, he fought in a South African corps

³⁸⁶ *New Zealand Herald*, 28 May 1891, p. 6; Edwin Mitchelson to Harry Atkinson, 28 May 1891, Sir Harry Atkinson Papers, folder 31, MS 91, Archibald Turnbull Library.

³⁸⁷ *Observer*, 21 November 1891, p. 7.

³⁸⁸ Probates, BBAE 1569/1062, ANZ-A; *Observer*, 1892 Almanac, 1 January 1892, p. 7.

³⁸⁹ *Thames Advertiser*, 11 April 1892, p. 2.

³⁹⁰ National Bank, Inspector’s Report on Auckland Branch, 31 August 1896, National Bank Archives, Wellington.

³⁹¹ National Bank, Inspector’s Report on Auckland Branch, 31 December 1897, National Bank Archives, Wellington.

³⁹² National Bank, Auckland Branch, Report on Advances, 13 February 1899, National Bank Archives, Wellington.

³⁹³ *New Zealand Herald*, 11 March 1924, p. 8.

³⁹⁴ *Observer*, 5 August 1893, p. 11, 24 March 1894, p. 3, 3 August 1901, p. 6; *Auckland Weekly News*, 24 March 1894, p. 18.

³⁹⁵ *Observer*, 22 March 1924, p. 4.

against Africans, and during the Boer War he fought with the British.³⁹⁶ The *Observer* mentioned him in January 1901:

Harry Whitaker ... who a few years ago was one of the best known figures in Auckland, is in South Africa, doing a roaring trade as a tobacconist. It is not often he meets an Auckland, but when he does the inevitable eye-glass falls from his eye, and his face, as florid as ever, beams with old-time serenity as he plies them with questions about New Zealanders in general and Aucklanders in particular, from the Governor down to the latest charm in Flossies.³⁹⁷

In July 1901, after learning that his legs were fractured in a railway accident in South Africa, some members of the Auckland Club sent 'a cablegram expressive of their sympathy and good wishes', but were informed that it could not be delivered 'owing to the decease of the addressee'.³⁹⁸ A trooper in the Imperial Light Horse, he had been on his way to the front. The *Observer* wrote that, as he was 'a man of adventurous spirit, and undoubted courage, his enlistment for service was a foregone conclusion, more especially as he was an exceptional horseman'.³⁹⁹ Despite his injuries, he 'exhibited great courage and fortitude. Although pinned among the broken wood, and suffering severely, he told the relieving party to give their attention to the other sufferers first, remarking that they were in a worse plight than he was, and that he would yet come out all right'.⁴⁰⁰ His 'great composure and fortitude' was seen as typical of him.⁴⁰¹ Two months later, a brother informed the press that the story of his death was false.⁴⁰² The *Observer* commented that he would 'have the curious experience of reading his own obituary notice, or, indeed, notices. Fortunately, he is still alive and well'.⁴⁰³ The 'circumstantial account' of his

³⁹⁶ *New Zealand Herald*, 11 March 1924, p. 8; *Auckland Star*, 11 March 1924, p. 8.

³⁹⁷ *Observer*, 12 January 1901, p. 6.

³⁹⁸ *New Zealand Herald*, 31 July 1901, p. 5.

³⁹⁹ *Observer*, 3 August 1901, p. 6.

⁴⁰⁰ *New Zealand Herald*, 31 July 1901, p. 5.

⁴⁰¹ *Observer*, 3 August 1901, p. 6.

⁴⁰² *Thames Star*, 21 October 1901, p. 2.

⁴⁰³ *Observer*, 26 October 1901, p. 5.

having died was based on ‘the discovery among the papers of a dead soldier of documents bearing the name of H. Whitaker’.⁴⁰⁴

During the early twentieth century, ‘recollection of him almost faded’ in Auckland, although he was understood to be ‘somewhere in Africa’. In 1918, it was believed that his elder brother Alfred, also unmarried, was the only son of Sir Frederick still alive. That April, the *Observer* reported that, on a recent journey from Sydney,

Captain “Sid” Phillips was approached by a lonely first-class passenger, who plaintively asked him about Auckland. Did the captain know any old Aucklanders? Could the captain rejoice his soul with reminiscences of old times? Who were the Aucklanders of to-day? Was old Tom Henderson of the Union Company still fit and hearty? - and so forth.

The captain informed him that an old resident in the smoke room ‘who knew Auckland better than a guide book’ would be able to answer his queries.

In the smoke room was a little gentleman cosily seated in a corner, engrossed in fiction, a faraway look in his spectacles, and a suggestion of detachment, warning the interloper to beware. “Sir,” said the captain, with Chesterfieldian politeness, “permit me the honour of introducing to you a gentleman anxious to hear news of old Auckland and old Aucklanders.” Alf. Whitaker looked up, slightly annoyed, for he was just in the interesting place where the chauffeur proposes to the duchess and the duke reaches for the dagger. His appearance of annoyed detachment, however, vanished like thistledown before the tempestuous breath of a sixth standard schoolboy. “Harry!”, he yelled, springing towards him; and if those brothers did not embrace with Gallic circumstance - their chins wagged far into the night, and the captain stole away to his stateroom and muttered, “It is well.” For three days these brothers had sat at the same table in the saloon, and had passed the salt to each other without knowing they were brothers. Alf knew nothing of Harry’s whereabouts, and possibly vice versa. Old Auckland cronies will haunt the club to waylay Harry. They will wish to see that eye flash again through the monocle, and to observe if Harry has any of his old dash left.⁴⁰⁵

⁴⁰⁴ *New Zealand Herald*, 11 March 1924, p. 8.

⁴⁰⁵ *Observer*, 13 April 1918, p. 5.

Upon his return to Auckland on 7 April, the *Auckland Star* commented that 'his many friends will be pleased to learn that he is enjoying good health, and may settle permanently in this city'.⁴⁰⁶ He did settle there permanently, but over time he was 'in failing health', becoming 'a confirmed invalid, and seeing only his old friends'.⁴⁰⁷ One obituary stated that the only 'prominent' position he held after returning to Auckland was secretary of the Moanataiari-Caledonian Gold Mining Company.⁴⁰⁸ He was more than that: from 1920, the year of its formation, until late 1923 he was chairman of directors of the Caledonian, Kuranui, Moanataiari Consolidated Company, and in the latter year also its acting secretary. He initially held 1,000 of the 100,000 shares, selling the last 500 four months before his death.⁴⁰⁹ He was also secretary of the Sylvia, also at Thames.⁴¹⁰ At this time he described himself as an accountant.⁴¹¹ He died in March 1924, aged 69, of general debility, lasting three months, and heart failure, lasting three weeks.⁴¹² As he did not leave a will, he cannot have accumulated much of an estate.

STAFFORD'S LIFE AFTER TE AROHA

After selling his interest in Wairakau, Stafford left Te Aroha in late 1884.⁴¹³ He revisited in 1885 before going 'to another part of the colony'. A dinner in his honour attracted 'a select circle of friends', about 25; the speeches, toasts, and songs made it the 'most enjoyable' gathering for a long time. George Lipsey, 'in felicitous language, referred to their departing

⁴⁰⁶ *Auckland Star*, 8 April 1918, p. 2.

⁴⁰⁷ *Observer*, 22 March 1924, p. 4.

⁴⁰⁸ *New Zealand Herald*, 11 March 1924, p. 8.

⁴⁰⁹ Company Files, BADZ 5181, box 374 no. 2086; Thames Warden's Court, Mining Applications 1919-1920, 57/20, BACL 14350/5a, ANZ-A; *Thames Star*, 22 June 1920, p. 2.

⁴¹⁰ Mines Department, MD 1A, 1202-04, 23/3/2, Part 1, ANZ-W.

⁴¹¹ Company Files, BADZ 5181, box 374 no. 2086, ANZ-A; Mines Department, MD 1, 23/3/2, Part 1, ANZ-W; Death Certificate of Henry Ernest Whitaker, 8 March 1924, 1924/7306, BDM.

⁴¹² Death Certificate of Henry Ernest Whitaker, 8 March 1924, 1924/7306, BDM.

⁴¹³ *Waikato Times*, 16 September 1884, p. 2.

friend's long residence in this locality, and to his popularity among all classes'.⁴¹⁴

In 1886, like Whitaker, he was unable to attend the luncheon to celebrate the arrival of the railway.⁴¹⁵ By that time, he was manager of the Whakatane Cattle Company, which bought over 6,000 acres and leased 12,000 acres in the Opouriao Valley behind Whakatane in the 1870s.⁴¹⁶ Stafford arrived in Te Aroha in July 1886 with several stockmen and 500 cattle, which he 'turned out on the Wairakau farm'.⁴¹⁷ These were to be sold 'as opportunity offers', and he had 1,000 still to remove from the station.⁴¹⁸ The following month, he brought another 375 cattle and placed them on the Wairakau run until they could be sold.⁴¹⁹ He also ran thousands of sheep.⁴²⁰ In mid-1890, when the Whakatane property was sold to Gould brothers of Christchurch and the manager became Charles Gould, formerly of the Te Aroha district,⁴²¹ it was reported that Stafford had 'very successfully managed' the company's then 11,000 acres of freehold and 8,000 acres of leasehold, one of the most valuable and fertile blocks in the North Island.⁴²² 'A lot of useful work was completed' under his direction, and after John Logan Campbell and others became owners in 1887 'much money was expended in clearing, draining and fencing the property'.⁴²³ Campbell 'always recorded in gratitude in later years' how 'fortunate' the syndicate

⁴¹⁴ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 9 May 1885, p. 3; *Te Aroha News*, 9 May 1885, p. 2.

⁴¹⁵ *Te Aroha News*, 6 March 1886, p. 7.

⁴¹⁶ *Te Aroha News*, 14 August 1886, p. 3; *Glimpses from Whatakane's Past*, compiled by the staff of the Whakatane Museum (Whakatane, 1988), no pagination, chapter entitled 'Taneatua and Opouriao'; Alison B. Heath, *The Opouriao-Taneatua Settlement of 1896* (Whakatane, 1989), pp. 1-4.

⁴¹⁷ *Waikato Times*, 6 July 1886, p. 2.

⁴¹⁸ *Te Aroha News*, 3 July 1886, p. 2.

⁴¹⁹ *Te Aroha News*, 14 August 1886, p. 2.

⁴²⁰ *Bay of Plenty Times*, 6 June 1887, p. 2; 'Sheep Returns', *AJHR*, 1888, H-13, p. 21.

⁴²¹ See paper on his life.

⁴²² *Waikato Times*, 15 July 1890, p. 2.

⁴²³ H.D. London, 'Opouriao Estate', *Historical Review, Whakatane District and Historical Society*, vol. 13 no. 2 (June 1965), p. 83; for first of many letters between J.L. Campbell and Stafford, see J.L. Campbell to C.S. Stafford, 26 September 1887, John Logan Campbell (Business) Letterbook 1885-1891, p. 97, Brown, Campbell and Company papers, 181, MS 51, Library of the Auckland Institute and War Memorial Museum.

had been in having such ‘a particularly astute manager’.⁴²⁴ In gratitude, his former employers paid Stafford a gratuity of £2,105.⁴²⁵

Stafford did not leave the district immediately, for when Gould accidentally killed himself in late August, he helped search for the body.⁴²⁶ He left New Zealand at an unknown date, to take up an entirely different career. After being involved in mining at Zeehan in Tasmania, he moved to Kalgoorlie during the mining boom of the mid- and late 1890s.⁴²⁷ Having acquired considerable skill as a mining engineer, he was the local representative for several British mining companies and supervised some of their mines.⁴²⁸ In 1895 he was described as being the ‘local manager’ for William Robert Wilson,⁴²⁹ who earlier had established the Te Aroha Silver and Gold Mining Company.⁴³⁰ Stafford was particularly involved with Kalgurli Gold Mines, being its consulting engineer, general manager, and managing director for several years after 1897 and later its chairman of directors until its collapse in the early 1920s.⁴³¹ As well as being a ‘well-known mining man’ and a member of the Kalgoorlie Chamber of Mines,⁴³² he was a director of the Kalgoorlie Saw Milling Company,⁴³³ a member of

⁴²⁴ R.C.J. Stone, ‘Auckland Business and Businessmen in the 1880s’ (PhD thesis, University of Auckland, 1969), p. 503.

⁴²⁵ Stone, p. 506.

⁴²⁶ *Waikato Times*, 26 August 1890, p. 3.

⁴²⁷ *West Australian*, 23 November 1946, p. 14.

⁴²⁸ *Inquirer and Commercial News* (Perth), 12 July 1895, p. 6, 18 September 1896, p. 16, 12 March 1897, p. 13; *British Australasian*, 21 October 1897, p. 1894, 11 November 1897, p. 2046B, 30 December 1897, p. 2428; *Kalgoorlie Western Argus*, 11 November 1897, p. 11; *Advertiser* (Adelaide), 12 March 1898, p. 4.

⁴²⁹ *British Australasian*, 22 August 1895, p. 1282.

⁴³⁰ See paper on this company.

⁴³¹ *South Australian Register*, 11 September 1897, p. 10, 17 December 1897, p. 7; *British Australasian*, 16 December 1897, p. 2340; *Kalgoorlie Western Argus*, 21 October 1897, p. 22, 6 January 1898, p. 9, 22 September 1898, p. 15, 31 January 1905, p. 2, 24 July 1906, p. 20; *West Australian*, 14 February 1917 p. 9, 19 March 1918, p. 6; *Western Argus*, 10 February 1920, p. 6; *Register* (Adelaide), 7 July 1921, p. 4.

⁴³² *Inquirer and Commercial News*, 12 March 1897, p. 13; *Kalgoorlie Western Argus*, 5 January 1899, p. 9.

⁴³³ *Kalgoorlie Western Argus*, 14 December 1899, p. 21.

the committee of the Kalgoorlie Racing Club, and a prominent member of the local golf club.⁴³⁴

After being 'for many years a resident of Kalgoorlie', in 1906, at the age of 51, he married Leila Josephine de Labrosse, the second daughter of the late Vicomte Charles de Labrosse in Knightsbridge, London.⁴³⁵ She had probably been born in 1867.⁴³⁶ In reporting his marriage, a London correspondent described him as being 'well-known all over New Zealand'.⁴³⁷ Curiously, a relative of his bride had a connection with Wairakau. In March 1867 'Mrs and Lionel de Labrosse' arrived in Auckland along with their son Lionel, and one week later 'La Vicomtesse de Labrosse', the former Jane Isabella Hill, had a daughter.⁴³⁸ Born at Varennes, near Nantes, in France, Lionel was 25 when he arrived in the colony. After settling at Pahi, in the Kaipara district, after working at the Wairakau flax mill for a couple of months in 1889, Lionel (who never called himself Vicomte) died there suddenly of 'natural causes'.⁴³⁹

Because of the bride's age, there were no children. They lived in London, where Stafford died in May 1938, aged 83,⁴⁴⁰ leaving his widow an estate valued at £51,027.⁴⁴¹ She died two years later.⁴⁴² At the time of his death his occupation was recorded as company director, holding interests in South African mines.⁴⁴³

⁴³⁴ *Kalgoorlie Western Argus*, 19 August 1897, p. 18, 11 November 1897, p. 14; *Western Mail*, 30 May 1935, p. 22.

⁴³⁵ Marriage Certificate of Charles Stanislaus Stafford, 11 June 1906, St George Hanover Square, vol. 1a, p. 941, British BDM; Marriage Notice, *The Times*, 13 June 1906, p. 1; *Kalgoorlie Western Argus*, 24 July 1906, p. 20.

⁴³⁶ Geological research by John Robson, University of Waikato Library.

⁴³⁷ London Correspondent, *Wairarapa Age*, 4 August 1906, p. 6.

⁴³⁸ *New Zealand Herald*, 21 March 1867, p. 3, Birth Notice, 3 April 1867, p. 3; Birth Certificate of Ada Louisa Valentine de Labrosse, 28 March 1867, 1867/12311, BDM; genealogical research by John Robson, University of Waikato Library.

⁴³⁹ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Auckland Star*, 2 July 1889, p. 5; *New Zealand Herald*, 3 July 1889, p. 4.

⁴⁴⁰ Death Certificate of Charles Stanislaus Stafford, 8 May 1938, bmd.online; additional information about where he lived in England on Ancestry.co.uk.

⁴⁴¹ *The Times*, 8 July 1938, p. 12.

⁴⁴² Genealogical research by John Robson, University of Waikato Library.

⁴⁴³ Union of South Africa, Death Notice, no. 62224, recorded 13 December 1938, provided by John Robson, University of Waikato Library.

CONCLUSION

Both Whitaker and Stafford were prominent members of the early Te Aroha community. Both were at the top of the social ladder, and Whitaker was fondly remembered for his sense of fun. But as he was accused of using his positions and contacts to benefit both himself and the 'clique' around Firth, for much of his time in Te Aroha he was strongly disliked by those opposed to this clique. As Stafford was less sociable and not involved in local politics he escaped this criticism. Both did their best to assist the development of the district and thereby, indirectly, their own fortunes. At the time there was no suggestion that their relationship was anything but friendship, as it seems to have been.

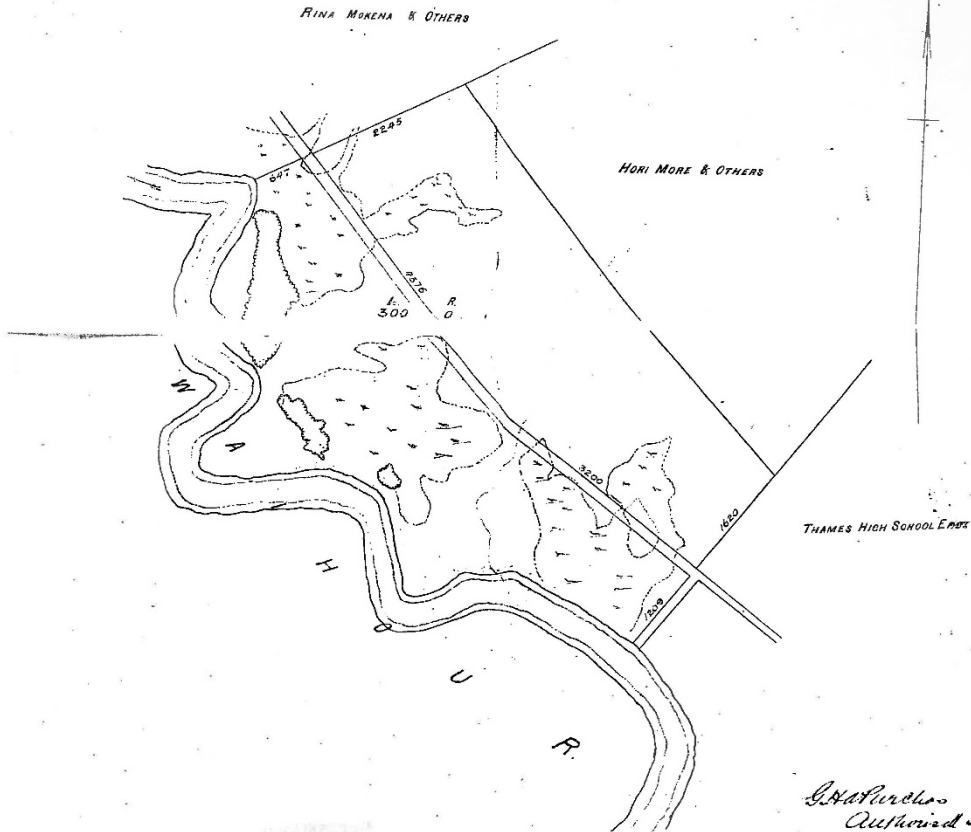
Appendix

Figure 1: G.H.A. Purchas, 'Plan of Messrs Whitaker and Stafford's Lease from Hori More & Others', November 1883, Mines Department, MD 1, 83/1141, ANZ-W [Archives New Zealand The Department of Internal Affairs Te Tari Taiwhenua]; used with permission.

PLAN OF
MESSRS WHITAKER AND STAFFORD'S LEASE

from
Hori More & Others

Scale, 10 Chains to an Inch



G. H. Purdus
Authenticated Surveyor
Nov-1883