

# AN OVERVIEW OF MINING IN THE TE AROHA MINING DISTRICT IN THE EIGHTIES

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**Te Aroha Mining District Working Papers**

**No. 83**

**2016**

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ISSN: 2463-6266

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THE UNIVERSITY OF  
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*Te Whare Wānanga o Waikato*

## AN OVERVIEW OF MINING IN THE TE AROHA MINING DISTRICT IN THE EIGHTIES

**Abstract:** *At the time of the first crushing, at the end of 1883, hopes for a prosperous goldfield were high because of its well-constructed tramway, water races, and battery and because of the many apparently payable mines. Within a few months, the field's reputation had plummeted, as formerly promising ground had proved to be unpayable. It had become clear that the costs of carriage and treatment were too high and that a better method of treatment was required. Despite the many reports of good discoveries keeping hopes alive, fears spread that the field might not be permanent. Despite more prospecting and a second battery being erected, eventually, Waiorongomai's fortunes failed to improve.*

*Two new mining areas were discovered, at Stoney Creek and, more significantly, at Tui, the latter being a consequence of a new interest in finding silver. As a lack of capital was recognized as being a significant handicap, overseas capital was sought, successfully, but without permanently reversing the decline in the district's fortunes. Too much ground was held for speculation, and too little profitable mining took place.*

*Throughout the decade, both the county council and central government were beseeched to assist, and did so, especially by paying part of the cost of tracks into new areas. But by the end of the decade the prospects looked bleak.*

### HIGH HOPES

In December 1883, most of those attending the banquet to celebrate the first crushing inspected the battery, tramway, and mines, and, according to one reporter, were most impressed:

After a comfortable breakfast, a cavalcade of horsemen, followed by a loose array of vehicles and a procession of pedestrians, set out for Waiorongomai, leisurely surveying the country through which they passed, and blessing the County Council roads. Surprise was expressed at the extent and business air of both townships, and the numerous buildings in progress were remarked. The battery was in full work on Premier, New Find, Colonist, and Werahiko stone. Mr [Henry Hopper] Adams,<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See paper on his life.

manager, courteously exhibited the various processes. Mr [James] Stewart, engineer,<sup>2</sup> was specially struck with the improvement effected by the self-feeding apparatus. He considered the battery one of the best he had ever seen. An adjournment was then made to the wire tramway [Fern Spur], where the simplicity of arrangement for the conveyance of stuff excited much interest and admiration. The view from the top of the first incline embraces a magnificent panorama of the Thames Valley, Matamata, Grant and Foster's settlement [at Shaftesbury], Waitoa, and in the dim distance can be seen the peak of Ruapehu and the serrated ridge of the Mangatete Range, near Lake Taupo. At this point a separation took place, the more staid and elderly members of the party whose muscles were flaccid, and whose staying powers were uncertain, warned by the ardours of the first ascent of further trials of strength in the ascent to the mines, judged that their course lay in a different direction. These were taken under the wing of Mr John Lamb, and went to explore the source of the battery water race, which lies in a picturesque, timber-clad gorge above Waiorongomai. A few more adventurous went up the tramway grade mounting in their course two steep inclines, by which the quartz-filled trucks are lowered by wire some hundreds of feet. They were astonished at the difficult engineering feat that has been successfully overcome in taking the quartz from an elevation of two thousand feet through forests, over mountain ridges and watercourses to the battery. The work is one of the most remarkable in New Zealand. The third and largest party, mostly mounted on sure-footed nags, pursued the uneven tenor of their way over a road winding tortuously, for the most part by the side of deep declivities, and covered to the depth of several feet by thick slush, and in some parts made passable by a corduroy thoroughfare that afforded very treacherous footing to the horses. Eighty-two riders threaded their way very gingerly over these obstacles, while several of them deemed it prudent to dismount, with the exception of [Auckland City] Councillor Garratt, whose horse took a sudden fancy in its head to lie down in a narrow causeway, without, however, injuring its rider. Nothing further occurred to mark the ascent. On reaching Wells and Soutter's store [at Quartzville], which, by consulting his aneroid, Mr Stewart found to be 1,870 feet above the sea level, all dismounted and assuaged their thirst preparatory to exploring the mines, which lie along difficult bush pathways around this spot.

### **Visit to the Mines.**

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<sup>2</sup> See paper on the tramway.

The bulk of the party, chaperoned by Messrs Firth and Clark [of the Battery Company]<sup>3</sup> and Mr [Hugh] McLiver,<sup>4</sup> struck out for the Premier mine, and, furnished with candles entered and examined various workings. The visitors, from Thames experience, expressed astonishment at the immense and well-defined body of stone exposed in the drives, and which, in its various outcrops, has been dubbed by the euphonious appellation of “the buck reef.” Some of the visitors were satisfied with this glimpse of the mysteries of goldmining, but others more enthusiastic extended their explorations to the Colonist and New Find - the visible richness of the quartz in the gigantic reef of the latter fully bearing out the pre-eminence which has been given it in the crushing. A directors’ meeting was held here on the ground, and certain works in the direction of the Diamond Gully boundary [were approved]. A capital luncheon had been conveyed to the store [at Quartzville],<sup>5</sup> as a reward to those who had gallantly stormed the heights, and the attack made upon it indicated the stimulating influence of the Te Aroha air on city-bred appetites.... The descent commenced soon after two o’clock, and though much easier and speedier than the journey up, was found to have its peculiar trials. However, all reached the flat in peace and safety, in time to witness the final stages of the retorting, about the result of which there was much jubilation. On re-entering the township, a general rush was made for towels and hot baths where stiffened muscles and weary limbs were relaxed and braced again by the refreshing stream from the fresh water shower. A leisurely toilet prepared the way for the banquet, which had been spread in the large dining-room of [John Watson] Walker’s Hotel<sup>6</sup> by Host [James] Warren<sup>7</sup> in a style that would do credit to any city caterer.<sup>8</sup>

(John Lamb owned the Waitemata Mills in Auckland, which were later combined with Josiah Clifton Firth’s Eight Hours Roller Mill to become the Northern Roller Milling Company.<sup>9</sup> Despite his enthusiasm for the field, he did not acquire interests in any claims, although he may have been a shareholder in Firth’s Battery Company.)

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<sup>3</sup> See paper on the Battery Company.

<sup>4</sup> See paper on the New Find mine.

<sup>5</sup> See paper on this settlement.

<sup>6</sup> See paper on his life.

<sup>7</sup> See paper on the drink problem.

<sup>8</sup> Own Reporter, *Auckland Star*, 7 December 1883, p. 2.

<sup>9</sup> See *City of Auckland, East, Electoral Roll, 1880*, p. 9; *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 2, p. 409.

On the following day, this newspaper published an editorial on the new goldfield:

The jubilation at Te Aroha over the clearing up for the month's crushing ... is fully justified by the event which provoked it. For three years newspaper readers have been familiar with the name of Te Aroha as a goldfield, but during that long period nothing had been obtained from the mines to prove the presence of the precious metal in payable quantities, and Te Aroha existed as a goldfield only in the faith of those miners and capitalists who had personally examined its reefs. The lack of substantial evidence in the shape of gold returns had produced in the minds of persons unacquainted with the locality an impression that Te Aroha was, after all, a delusion and a snare, and they could not understand that faith which kept a tolerably large population hanging on to their languid business interests on the field, and which had brought into existence two townships furnished with hotels hardly second to any in the province....

It was the privilege of the guests assembled at the invitation of Messrs Firth and Clark to handle the precious lumps upon which so much money and labour had been spent; and in view of which faith passed into sight, and Te Aroha became firmly established as a new and important goldfield.

The future is, of course, surrounded by the uncertainties that belong to goldmining everywhere. If the large reefs which are being worked could be depended upon to maintain the percentages shown by the recent crushings, the new goldfield would afford the best field in New Zealand for solid investments. But the crushing proves that the reef is unequal, both in the quantity and quality of the gold, and it must not be forgotten that the same reef has been cut in various places and been found almost barren. Te Aroha, therefore, will not be exempted from the vicissitudes of all goldfields; but that it will yield henceforth large quantities of the precious metal every month for many years to come, and that its gold production will attract a considerable population to the auriferous areas and to the adjacent agricultural lands, we believe everyone who had visited the field is now firmly convinced.<sup>10</sup>

The *Observer*, writing about the same festivities, commented that, although many people had doubted the value of the field, the 'bold undertaking' of battery and tramway had created a great future for Te Aroha:

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<sup>10</sup> Editorial, *Auckland Star*, 8 December 1883, p. 2.

A bleak mountain has been converted into a hive of industry, and where only the sound of the bell-bird or the rustling of the trees was heard, the echo of pick and gad, the booming of underground blasts, and the tramp of the miner now resounds. A howling wilderness has been converted into a fruitful field for mining enterprise, and offers employment for thousands of sturdy quartz-reefers. To those who saw the almost impenetrable forest eighteen months ago, the metamorphosis is a surprise; whilst the quiet valley lying between the river and the mountain has grown into a thriving township, dotted over with substantial buildings, and showing signs of further rapid extension. To our mind this is the mere silence of the beginning. The white tents or slab huts among the forest trees, the curling smoke from camp fires here and there ascending above the tree-tops, or the scanty patches of newly turned-up soil at the entrance to some shaft or drive; and the fresh breeze that comes over the old, silent, odorous bush, and its pastoral reaches here and there visible through the trees in the immense valley below, will one day, if the same rapid progress prevails, give place to the noisome exhalation from the gutters and sewers and by-ways of a thickly-populated town. The spacious gas-lit street, stretching out in sinuous line, will render obsolete the candle in the broken bottle as a lantern after dark, and tents and whares will give place to comfortable dwellings, or thoroughfares adorned with crowding edifices and glittering with the blaze of a more artificial life, the results of accumulated wealth. The howling waste will one day present an array of aggregated wealth, civil opulence and beauty, the rattle of street strife, and the display of churches, towers, halls, and noisy warehouses. When these things come to pass, some who are now privileged to witness the beginning of a new city of such magnitude and importance will take a retrospect of the past, and then the names of such men as Messrs Firth and Clark will stand forth in bold relief as the pioneers of immense wealth and prosperity.<sup>11</sup>

This vision of an urban, if somewhat smelly, paradise replacing a 'howling waste' was soon shattered by the reality.

1884

On 4 January 1884, a Te Aroha correspondent reported that prospects for the coming year were 'encouraging', for with another battery planned for the foot of Butler's Spur 'and the present one kept in constant operation,

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<sup>11</sup> *Observer*, 15 December 1883, p. 4.

large returns, and in some cases regular dividends, may reasonably be looked for'.<sup>12</sup> This optimism was quickly deflated, for a second battery was several years away,<sup>13</sup> and mining was disrupted by a month-long strike.<sup>14</sup> The mine owners justified the wage cut that provoked this by claiming their costs were too high, and that if they could not retrench, they would be forced to close their mines.<sup>15</sup> The *Thames Star* responded that, in the light of 'the high-flown language used in reference to the field's prospects' at the banquet celebrating the first crushing, these statements were 'not very encouraging, though we have no doubt the field will yet prove a good one'.<sup>16</sup> 'Miner' insisted that the mines were payable, with many men being 'very willing to take them on tribute at from 15 to 20 per cent', but complained that battery charges were far too high,<sup>17</sup> which would be a constant refrain.<sup>18</sup>

To both reduce costs and entice good miners to remain during the strike, contracts were let. One correspondent believed some managers wanted contracts because it was 'impossible to get men from the Thames or elsewhere'.<sup>19</sup> Labour was in short supply because the best miners had left.<sup>20</sup> In May, one local correspondent informed a trade union journal that the owners were discovering the cost of the strike driving 'most of the best men' away:

The greater number of men required, their want of experience – which causes them to exclude much of the best quartz in picking it over for crushing – and a grievance at present existing between miners and mine owners with regard to the Saturday half-holiday, have been for some time past fast ruining a payable field. Last week the climax occurred. Mine owners it appears have decided to pay no more wages, but to carry on the mines by contract work only. Consequently the men in most of the principal mines were discharged at a moment's notice, and a fortnight's pay kept in hand. This will, of course, have the intended effect of

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<sup>12</sup> Te Aroha Correspondent, *New Zealand Herald*, 5 January 1884, p. 5.

<sup>13</sup> See paper on Peter Ferguson and his New Era.

<sup>14</sup> See paper on the strike at Waiorongomai in 1884.

<sup>15</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 12 January 1884, p. 2.

<sup>16</sup> *Thames Star*, 14 January 1884, p. 2.

<sup>17</sup> Letter from 'Miner', *Thames Advertiser*, 14 January 1884, p. 3.

<sup>18</sup> See paper on the Battery Company.

<sup>19</sup> Te Aroha Correspondent, *Thames Star*, 18 January 1884, p. 2.

<sup>20</sup> See, for example, editorial, *Thames Advertiser*, 9 January 1884, p. 2.

keeping the men hanging about until they consent to take contracts at losing rates.

For contracts to be payable, reefs had to be from 10 to 50 feet thick with gold scattered throughout, the battery owned by the mining company, and no tramway charges, but none of these conditions existed. The reefs averaged three or four feet in thickness and were 'full of barren quartz, which must not be taken or the yield per ton will be materially reduced'.<sup>21</sup>

In January, the leading mines were believed to be the New Find, Premier, and Colonist; tailings from their first crushings were expected to bring a good return.<sup>22</sup> Weaker mines were already in difficulties, and early in February the mining inspector, George Wilson,<sup>23</sup> warned that 20 mines were liable to forfeiture for non-working.<sup>24</sup> Some men with initiative remained, a Thames newspaper being impressed by miners forming a prospecting association to test the hillside closer to Te Aroha.<sup>25</sup>

By the beginning of February, with the strike over most mines were 'working on a moderate scale', with crushing expected to be resumed within a week.<sup>26</sup> More access tracks were badly needed, and there was a demand for 'good miners. Many claims under-manned cannot get the hands'.<sup>27</sup> Even before the strike, the warden, Harry Kenrick,<sup>28</sup> estimated that about 2,000 miners were required to man the claimed registered, but instead only about 250 were employed.<sup>29</sup> In mid-February, 'an old West Coaster' spoke 'very favorably' of the claims. 'He went through most of them, and says he could see gold in all the stone, and anticipates that the mining investments there will be fairly profitable in about 12 months' time'.<sup>30</sup> But the uncertainties of

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<sup>21</sup> Te Aroha Correspondent [13 May], *Labour*, 22 May 1884, p. 6.

<sup>22</sup> *Thames Advertiser*, 28 January 1884, p. 2.

<sup>23</sup> See paper on his life.

<sup>24</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 9 February 1884, p. 2.

<sup>25</sup> *Thames Advertiser*, 23 January 1884, p. 2; see also *Auckland Weekly News*, 2 February 1884, p. 13.

<sup>26</sup> *Thames Advertiser*, 1 February 1884, p. 2.

<sup>27</sup> *Thames Advertiser*, 6 February 1884, p. 2; Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 5 February 1884, p. 2.

<sup>28</sup> See paper on his life.

<sup>29</sup> *Thames Star*, 24 December 1883, p. 2.

<sup>30</sup> *Grey River Argus*, 19 February 1884, p. 2.

mining and the inability to predict what would be uncovered had just been illustrated by the Inverness:

There is no appearance of the reef yet in the low level crosscut. The drive is in now 200 feet, whereas it was expected to cut the lode with some 140 or 150 feet of driving. The probability is that the leader cut through some 30 feet back from the present face was really the reef looked for, and although no gold was seen in the stone at the time, there is no telling what a few feet of driving either way may reveal. Driving ahead is to be discontinued to-morrow, and the manager then intends to put some men on to open out on this lode, and see what it is like.<sup>31</sup>

Within two weeks, a survey having proved that this leader was not the reef being sought, miners were 'again pushing ahead with the drive, with the hope of reaching it before long'.<sup>32</sup> Likewise in the Premier, finding the valuable portion of the reef was proving difficult. Driving both ways on No. 1 reef had begun from the winze below the smithy level to 'pick up again the run of gold which was lost in sinking this winze'.<sup>33</sup> Two weeks later, miners were driving this level 'in a north-east direction, that is towards the main reef. A little gold' was seen 'occasionally'.<sup>34</sup>

Not till late February was mining 'assuming a very healthy appearance, and confidence in the stability and permanence of the field' was being 'restored. Every week some fresh development takes place, which helps to encourage others to persevere. The recent discoveries made in the Colonist low level have had a wonderful effect', and the field had 'a much more healthy appearance' than for some time.<sup>35</sup> Five days later, the same correspondent considered that 'the usual period of stagnation' after the holidays, which had been worsened by the strike, was over. In the principal claims mining was 'beginning to assume a healthier aspect, and faith in the permanence of the field' was 'every day becoming stronger', mainly because drives in the lower levels of the New Find and Colonist proved the reefs were payable at that depth.<sup>36</sup> However, a month later an ironmonger commented on 'the very quiet state of business at Te Aroha since

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<sup>31</sup> *Auckland Weekly News*, 9 February 1884, p. 13.

<sup>32</sup> *Auckland Weekly News*, 23 February 1884, p. 19.

<sup>33</sup> *Auckland Weekly News*, 9 February 1884, p. 13.

<sup>34</sup> *Auckland Weekly News*, 23 February 1884, p. 19.

<sup>35</sup> Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 23 February 1884, p. 2.

<sup>36</sup> Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 28 February 1884, p. 3.

Christmas'.<sup>37</sup> Already it was apparent that, no matter how good the ore, its treatment was proving difficult. Before the battery started, this had not been anticipated, the local newspaper calming fears that much of the gold would not be saved by quoting 'experienced miners' who had 'always declared that there would be no difficulty', because the gold, though fine, was dense. An assayer testing tailings from the Welcome lost 'little more than one and a half per cent of gold', and the newspaper insisted that 'no gold could have been saved more easily'.<sup>38</sup> When difficulties became apparent, new machinery was sought that could save more of the very fine gold.<sup>39</sup> And having only one plant meant that several claims found it 'hard' to have their quartz treated.<sup>40</sup>

In March, Waiorongomai continued to be 'the chief attraction' for investors in Hauraki mines. Although not a 'great deal' of share trading had occurred, 'chiefly owing to the fact of so few companies being able to crush, the returns just to hand from the cleaning up for the month prove the excellence of the reefs'.<sup>41</sup> At the end of that month, one correspondent considered it was 'not on the larger reefs alone that the future of the field will have to depend', pointing to a recent good return from the F claim. When more attention was given to the smaller veins containing the richest ore, the yield would be 'largely increased'. The tailings plant, to start shortly, would also greatly increase the yield.<sup>42</sup>

In early April, George Wilson recorded details of the work done in the Colonist:

Surface Drive on Main Reef from Canadian Bou[ndary] North 227  
feet  
302 feet driven on low level on main reef  
113 1/2 fathoms stoped above Surface level  
32 fathoms stoped above low level  
68 feet sunk in winzes on main reef

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<sup>37</sup> James Renshaw to George Wilson, 26 March 1884, Te Aroha Warden's Court, Applications 1884, BBAV 11591/1a, ANZ-A.

<sup>38</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 14 July 1883, p. 2.

<sup>39</sup> For example, *Thames Star*, 12 July 1884, p. 2.

<sup>40</sup> *New Zealand Industrial Gazette and Pastoral and Agricultural News*, 15 March 1884, p. 27.

<sup>41</sup> Thames Correspondent, *New Zealand Industrial Gazette and Pastoral and Agricultural News*, 15 March 1884, p. 25.

<sup>42</sup> Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 29 March 1884, p. 3.

255 fathoms of reef broken

1398 tons of quart crushed for 1058oz 8dwt 3g  
= £3,003/18/4<sup>43</sup>

At about the same time, in the Premier 350 feet had been driven on reefs, 100 feet had been sunk and 90 feet risen on reefs, another 200 feet had been driven, 40 fathoms stoped above the level, 98 fathoms of reef were broken, and 780 tons were crushed for 601oz 7dwt worth £1,699 16s 2d.<sup>44</sup>

In May, the inspecting engineer for the Mines Department, Henry Andrew Gordon, considered the field was 'only opening' because of the long delay in crushing. He considered some returns were 'very encouraging', especially in the New Find and Colonist, which had 'averaged about 1 1/4oz of gold per ton'. Because the lodes were from four to six feet thick, and sometimes eight feet, 'it must be extremely gratifying to those who have invested capital in them'. An equal percentage was being obtained from their tailings.

Mines like the New-Find and Colonist, which have a large body of stone, will pay with a much smaller percentage of gold than they are averaging at present. There were other mines, which had not then had an opportunity of being tested, that showed gold pretty freely. There are thirty registered companies on this field, besides private-claim holdings. The registered capital of these companies represents in the aggregate £637,000, of which about £20,317 have been called up; and, from the present appearance of these companies' mines, there will only be a small percentage of them compared with those on other quartz fields that will not pay for working. Some of the lodes are very small, but the quartz is rich. The character of the gold is extremely fine, and averages about £2 16s per ounce: it is diffused in bands through the stone, the same as though the gold had been ground to the finest flour, and peppered into the quartz when they were in a plastic state.

The tramway and battery had 'given this field such a start as no other field in the colony ever had'. It was 'gratifying to find' that it appeared to be 'a good field for mining ventures; but it will yet have to be further developed, and the reefs tested to a much greater depth, before its

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<sup>43</sup> [George Wilson], penciled notes of Colonist workings, 7 April 1884, Te Aroha Warden's Court, General Correspondence 1884, BBAV 11584/2b, ANZ-A.

<sup>44</sup> [George Wilson], penciled notes of Premier working, n.d. [April 1884], Te Aroha Warden's Court, General Correspondence 1884, BBAV 11584/2b, ANZ-A.

permanence can be established'. The total amount crushed from all the mines for the year to 31 March was 4,316 tons, yielding 4,546oz 11dwt 12gr of gold. Companies and private claim holders held 585 acres, paying an annual rental of £1,847, and employed 160 miners.<sup>45</sup>

As the battery did not save all the gold, even after the tailings were treated, Kenrick stressed that more crushing power was needed to cope with the amount of ore that would be produced as the field developed.

The claims most highly thought of before crushing, viz, Premier, Waitoki, and Werahiko, have not proved payable as yet. On the other hand the New-Find and Colonist have proved to be most valuable properties. The result of the crushing from these claims proves beyond doubt the main line of reef from which the stone was taken to be more than payable. The New-Find have already divided £2,000 and the Colonist £500 amongst the shareholders, as the result of the first three months' crushing, after paying some very large sums away for work and plant in opening the mines. The stone crushed from the Premier and other mines that did not prove payable was taken from cross-lodes; but, as the large expenditure in this district was incurred in the belief that the immense body of stone contained in the main line of reef, traced through so many claims, would prove to be both payable and permanent, it is more than satisfactory to find that, whilst the crushings have proved the payable nature of the reef, the permanence of the lode itself is daily more assured as the workings on the lower levels of the New-Find and Colonist progress, and so far gold has been carried to the lowest level as yet touched, with gold showing freely in the stone underfoot. A recent find (in March) of some very rich stone in the Waiorongomai and Wellington Claims, coupled with the yield from the crushing of some small parcels of stone from claims in the same locality - viz, Inverness, 5 tons, 21oz 15dwt; Welcome, 2 tons, 113oz - leads to the hope and belief that rich leaders leading into or from the main reef will yet be discovered as the ground gets more systematically worked and the lower levels opened up. So far specimen stone has only been found on or close to the surface throughout the district.

He cautioned that the district's progress depended upon 'cheap carriage and cheap crushing'. Progress would 'certainly be steady, though possibly slow, both from the nature of the reefs and the consequent large expenditure required in the erection of machinery' to treat them, but 'so far'

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<sup>45</sup> H.A. Gordon to Under-Secretary, Mines Department, 20 May 1884, *AJHR*, 1884, H-9, pp. 1-2.

developments had confirmed his opinion that 'a payable and permanent gold field has been opened valuable in itself, still more valuable from its position in the centre of a large agricultural district, to which in the future it must be the market - a district that will furnish, I believe, remunerative employment for a large amount of both capital and labour.'<sup>46</sup>

Wilson commented that, of about 40 claims taken up by the end of 1883, 'the greater number' were 'occupied for speculative purposes, very little prospecting has been done, and there is no fresh find to report outside of the claims previously proved'. Yet prospects 'generally' looked 'healthy', and public confidence was reflected in there being from 1,800 to 2,000 people living at Te Aroha, Waiorongomai, 'and at the camps on the hill'. Returns proved 'that no doubt need be entertained that the reefs here will pay for working, and take years to work them out'.<sup>47</sup>

Wilson forfeited under-manned claims,<sup>48</sup> despite being asked by one Auckland investor to give protection until there was 'greater crushing power, and the present monetary crisis becomes less severe? I fear, if not, sad times for many are at hand'.<sup>49</sup> Confidence was increased in April by the discovery of the richest quartz so far struck, in the Waiorongomai Company's ground near the New Find:

A stimulus has now been given to prospecting which will doubtless result in bringing other claims into prominence. The find has happened at a most opportune moment, for mining and other matters are becoming a trifle dull, and the prospect for the ensuing winter was not very enlivening. Even the proposed new battery was looked upon by many as a doubtful undertaking, and there were misgivings as to its going on at all, but everyone is now hopeful, and confidence in the future of the field is now very generally restored.<sup>50</sup>

This burst of excitement, like so many, quickly subsided when the find did not prove 'to be so rich as was at first expected, and the non-fulfilment

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<sup>46</sup> Harry Kenrick to Under-Secretary, Gold Fields, 19 April 1884, *AJHR*, 1884, H-9, pp. 19-20.

<sup>47</sup> George Wilson to Harry Kenrick, 8 April 1884, *AJHR*, 1884, H-9, pp. 20-21.

<sup>48</sup> Memoranda by George Wilson, 2 April 1884, 12 May 1884, Te Aroha Warden's Court, Notices of Forfeiture 1884, BBAV 11583/1a, ANZ-A.

<sup>49</sup> William Reynolds Vines to George Wilson, 3 April 1884, Te Aroha Warden's Court, Notices of Forfeiture 1884, 64/1884, BBAV 11583/1a, ANZ-A.

<sup>50</sup> Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 5 April 1884, p. 3.

of the hopes that were raised, perhaps unduly, by the exhibition of the specimen stuff has created a feeling of disappointment'. Some people, indeed, were stating that gold would never be found at any depth, 'and the utterances of those who share this belief have tended to create a feeling of doubt and uncertainty regarding the permanency of the field'. The correspondent who reported this mood pointed out that work in the lower portion of the New Find was disproving this theory and that there was 'now strong reason to believe that the gloomy forebodings of the croakers will eventually prove to be altogether groundless'.<sup>51</sup> He did admit, however, that 'on the whole mining on the hill may be said to be at present in rather a quiescent state'.<sup>52</sup> Another correspondent wrote that the 'flutter' over the Waiorongomai Company's find 'only lasted for a day. A great many talk of leaving the district before the winter sets in, seeing that the returns from 40 stampers cannot support the population'.<sup>53</sup>

The *Te Aroha News* was pleased to report both the find in the Waiorongomai and a profitable crushing from the F claim because mining had 'for sometime past been in a languishing condition' and some people 'had almost begun to despair of a bright future'. It hoped all the reefs would be prospected, not just the large ones as in the past. Experienced prospectors were needed, who should be paid more. After noting that, in the South Island, good dividends had been obtained from mines producing from 8 to 10dwt to the ton, it argued that 'had the same spirit of enterprise been displayed' locally by erecting batteries 'and other auxiliaries needed for the systematic development of a goldfield', many mines 'instead of being almost valueless, would to-day be paying handsome dividends'.<sup>54</sup> However, as Joshua Cuff, a Te Aroha solicitor,<sup>55</sup> who had invested in five claims and two companies,<sup>56</sup> told a meeting, the South Island's lower grade ore was only profitable because transport charges and crushing charges were low,<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 12 April 1884, p. 2.

<sup>52</sup> Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 19 April 1884, p. 2.

<sup>53</sup> Te Aroha Correspondent, *Thames Advertiser*, 17 April 1884, p. 2.

<sup>54</sup> Editorial, *Te Aroha News*, 5 April 1884, p. 2.

<sup>55</sup> See *Thames Advertiser*, 7 May 1883, p. 2; *Te Aroha News*, 27 September 1884, p. 2, 8 November 1884, p. 2, 22 January 1886, p. 7.

<sup>56</sup> Te Aroha Warden's Court, Register of Te Aroha Claims 1880-1888, folio 267, BBAV 11567/1a; Register of Licensed Holdings 1881-1887, folios 18, 20, 21, 48, BBAV 11500/9a, ANZ-A; *New Zealand Gazette*, 23 March 1882, p. 490, 27 April 1882, p. 646.

<sup>57</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 5 April 1884, p. 2.

unlike at Waiorongomai. 'Nil Desperandum' claimed these charges made most mines unpayable, for 'I do not think it will be disputed that half ounce dirt ought to pay dividends'. As outside capitalists could not be enticed to invest money,

let claims that are on payable stone with well-defined lodes of sufficient size to warrant the expense, struggle to raise £400 or £500 by calls, sales of reserved shares, or otherwise, and erect plants of, say, 5 heads of stampers and berdans to match.... Economize by erecting such buildings only as are absolutely necessary, and crushing away until sufficient money is made to increase the crushing power.... I am sure batteries of five heads of stampers close to the drive of some of our so-called "outside" claims are not to be sneered at. Of course, if able to erect ten or more heads all the better.<sup>58</sup>

Similar suggestions would be repeated, but, as in this case, not carried out. In mid-May, a *Te Aroha News* editorial admitted that the field since the start of the year would not 'make a favourable impression on the minds of strangers as to the richness of our auriferous resources', for developments were

the reverse of satisfactory. Claim after claim has been put to the crucial battery test, and found wanting. Calls have been made where dividends were expected, and stocks have declined to such an extent, that even in mines which elsewhere would be held in high regard, shares can hardly be given away. It is useless to try to conceal from ourselves the disagreeable fact that the reputation of the field has fallen almost to zero; and yet in the face of all the disappointments that have been experienced during the last few months we are told by men of knowledge and long experience in mining that, with proper facilities for crushing, a number of the poorer reefs would pay well for working, and that even those mines whose battery returns have been pronounced unremunerative could, under more favourable circumstances, be profitably worked.

One cause of the field's 'languishing' was 'over-speculation', which had done 'a large amount of harm'. It also blamed 'the apathy of directors, the majority of whom have taken no pains to make themselves acquainted with the requirements of their properties, and who have allowed their functions to be usurped' by the battery owners whose interests were antagonistic to

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<sup>58</sup> Letter from 'Nil Desperandum', *Te Aroha News*, 3 May 1884, p. 2.

‘the ordinary shareholder’. As Josiah Clifton Firth was controlling mining for his own benefit,<sup>59</sup> until directors freed themselves from his control it was ‘a mere waste of words to talk of prosperity for the goldfield’. The newspaper particularly opposed his policy of keeping the battery running by taking out truckloads of ore under contract.<sup>60</sup>

One correspondent, noting that Firth and the managers of some of the main mines had devised contracts as one way to cut costs, considered it had ‘yet to be proved that they will be of any real benefit. Past experience leads to the conclusion that they will not’.<sup>61</sup> Another battery was needed because the Battery Company’s charges, the main reason the field was languishing, ‘would soon extinguish all the poorer claims’.<sup>62</sup>

This languishing meant that, in place of four Te Aroha sharebrokers in April, only two were operating two months later.<sup>63</sup> The ‘confidence of the investing public’ had been lost during the strike,<sup>64</sup> and in mid-February the Te Aroha sharemarket was ‘dull for everything except Colonists’.<sup>65</sup> A story in the local newspaper reflected that dullness. Two days previously ‘a resident was rushing frantically round the township looking for a broker to transact some business for him. But not one was to be found, all the fraternity being away on pleasure bent’. The following day, the brokers were ‘disconsolate’ to realize they had missed out on a sale.<sup>66</sup> By May the local sharemarket was ‘at a standstill’, and on the Auckland market ‘Te Aroha scrip’ was not quoted;<sup>67</sup> however, the demand for any Hauraki shares was then almost non-existent.<sup>68</sup> There was only a small amount of trading in the leading mines during the remainder of the year.

When crushing started, the manager of the Prince Imperial at Thames (who held no interests in Waiorongomai mines) bet that his mine would turn out more gold during the next six months than all the Waiorongomai

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<sup>59</sup> See paper on the Battery Company.

<sup>60</sup> Editorial, *Te Aroha News*, 17 May 1884, p. 2.

<sup>61</sup> Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 17 May 1884, p. 2.

<sup>62</sup> Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 6 June 1884, p. 2.

<sup>63</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 5 April 1884, p. 1, 28 June 1884, p. 1.

<sup>64</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 16 February 1884, p. 2.

<sup>65</sup> Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 19 February 1884, p. 2.

<sup>66</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 9 February 1884, p. 2.

<sup>67</sup> *Waikato Times*, 3 May 1884, pp. 2, 3; *Te Aroha News*, 3 May 1884, p. 2.

<sup>68</sup> For example, *New Zealand Industrial Gazette and Pastoral and Agricultural News*, 15 May 1884, p. 37, 15 June 1884, p. 37.

ones. He won his bet, for in that time his mine produced 10,218oz 2dwt whereas Waiorongomai produced 5,569oz, a total only achieved by adding a notional 900oz for the period of the strike.<sup>69</sup> Yet, despite all the negative publicity, optimists still existed. On 16 June, one of Firth's sons, William Thornton Firth,<sup>70</sup> told one friend the field was 'advancing steadily - no specimens, but plenty of good payable dirt',<sup>71</sup> and told another that the mines were 'steadily developing and offer a good field for investment. If you wish to go into a little speculation in this line' he offered 'to make safe investments'.<sup>72</sup> A man who had mined at Te Aroha from its beginning prophesied 'better times coming. Things here seem brightening up. The Hill is looking better than ever. There will be a great field here yet'.<sup>73</sup>

Visitors commented that even the poorer mines would be profitable in the South Island, 'where 3 or 4dwt per ton covered all expenses'.<sup>74</sup> As the Waihi Company made a profit of about £230 a month from quartz worth an average of 5dwt per truck whereas the Colonist 'barely pays its way' with one ounce per truck, the *Te Aroha News* wanted costs cut. 'For some time past a portion of the battery has been hung up for want of quartz, and is likely to continue so if the charges are not reduced, as managers are now careful to send to the mill only quartz of a payable grade'. It suggested should directors select 'a man of acknowledged experience and ability' to report 'on the management of the mines, tramway, and battery', thereby improved working and restoring confidence.<sup>75</sup> An experienced sharebroker and mining agent, Alexander Saunders,<sup>76</sup> who had interests in three claims and seven companies,<sup>77</sup> considered the district only required 'more battery power and economical management to show a large return of gold'.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> Thames Correspondent, *New Zealand Industrial Gazette and Pastoral and Agricultural News*, 15 May 1884, pp. 41-42.

<sup>70</sup> See paper on the Battery Company.

<sup>71</sup> W.T. Firth to Douglas Woolley, 16 June 1884, William Thornton Firth Letterbook 1883-1900, MSC 19, Hamilton Public Library.

<sup>72</sup> W.T. Firth to Bate Thornton, 16 June 1884, William Thornton Firth Letterbook 1883-1900, MSC 19, Hamilton Public Library.

<sup>73</sup> *Waikato Times*, 19 June 1884, p. 2.

<sup>74</sup> Te Aroha Correspondent, *Thames Advertiser*, 2 April 1884, p. 3.

<sup>75</sup> Editorial, *Te Aroha News*, 7 June 1884, p. 2.

<sup>76</sup> See *Auckland Weekly News*, 11 July 1891, p. 36.

<sup>77</sup> Te Aroha Warden's Court, Register of Licensed Holdings 1881-1887, folios 14, 27, 50, BBAV 11500/9a, ANZ-A; *New Zealand Gazette*, 27 April 1882, p. 646, 22 June 1882, p.

At the beginning of July, the *Waikato Times*' eternally optimistic correspondent wrote that 'the fore-bodings of the pessimists amongst us who have persistently looked forward to the winter months as to our period of exceptional dullness and depression had not been realized to the extent that was anticipated'. The worst seemed to be over, and the increased yield of gold in June had 'revived the hopes of even the most inveterate croakers, who now admit that there may after all be some grounds for the expectations of those who have never from the first lost faith in the ultimate prosperity of the field'. With gold being found in the lower levels of the New Find and Colonist mines, 'the doubts of the most sceptical' were being 'slowly dispelled', and there were expectations that several more mines would become 'steady and payable gold-producers'.<sup>79</sup> On the same day, the local newspaper agreed that never had 'the field generally been in a more sound or healthy state than at present', with prospects of 'steady and lasting prosperity'.<sup>80</sup> A week later, it wrote that, although for months almost no work had been done in claims closest to Waiorongomai, prospecting had 'been steadily going on in two or three places, and with results sufficiently good to justify the belief' that this locality would 'soon become an important part of the field and give employment to a large number'.<sup>81</sup> Prophecies that neglected parts of the field would become profitable would be repeated about different areas in coming years, but almost all were unfulfilled.

By July there was a shortage of good miners.<sup>82</sup> One month later, the Hamilton newspaper reported people describing mining as 'very dull'.<sup>83</sup> A correspondent considered it was 'becoming brisker', but repeated that it needed 'cheap crushing power to send it ahead'.<sup>84</sup> In early September, several companies were sued for arrears of rent, to the annoyance of their

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895, 17 August 1882, p. 1131, 19 October 1882, p. 1522, 14 December 1882, p. 1884, 31 May 1883, p. 721, 22 November 1883, p. 1675.

<sup>78</sup> *New Zealand Industrial Gazette and Pastoral and Agricultural News*, 15 June 1884, p. 37.

<sup>79</sup> Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 5 July 1884, p. 2.

<sup>80</sup> Editorial, *Te Aroha News*, 5 July 1884, p. 2.

<sup>81</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 12 July 1884, p. 2.

<sup>82</sup> *Thames Star*, 12 July 1884, p. 2.

<sup>83</sup> *Waikato Times*, 19 August 1884, p. 2.

<sup>84</sup> Thames Correspondent, *New Zealand Industrial Gazette and Pastoral and Agricultural News*, 20 August 1884, p. 14.

legal managers, who would have preferred the cheaper option of the ground being forfeited. In response, Wilson insisted the rents must be paid, stressing that to assist the field he had already abandoned some suits.<sup>85</sup> That month was notable for a brief rush to a find on the eastern side of the Waiorongomai Creek, but it turned out to be imaginary;<sup>86</sup> no gold was ever to be found on that side.

On 26 September, one leading miner, Adam Porter,<sup>87</sup> informed the Gold Fields and Mines Committee of parliament that Waiorongomai 'between Engineering and bad management has been strangled. Unless you get an ounce to the ton it won't [pay]. In a reef 8 or 10 feet wide half an ounce to the ton ought to be made to pay'.<sup>88</sup> An article published in Auckland shortly before Porter made this statement, after recording 900oz being produced during the past month, reported that miners had realized that 'steady work' was 'the only thing likely to pay'.

All attempts at making "a rise" by getting up bogus companies have long since been abandoned, and the field is now assuming an appearance of steady industry that augers well for the future. Ten months' crushing experience at the battery proves that there are large reefs up on the hill, which, with increased crushing power and cheaper transit, may yet be made to pay very handsomely. From a return made up at the end of August last, it appears that about 9140 tons of quartz have been crushed at the battery since it was started in November last, from which a yield of 8645oz of retorted gold has been obtained, or an average of 860 odd oz per month. During these ten months, from one cause and another, there have been many stoppages of the battery. The actual time of running has not probably been more than eight months, so that the return of gold obtained during that period cannot be looked upon as anything but highly satisfactory. The gold, too, on this field, has been proved, by the nearly equal amounts obtained from month to month, to be very evenly distributed all over the reefs. There are here no very rich deposits, such as are found on the Thames, so that the returns will depend entirely upon the amount of crushing power

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<sup>85</sup> George Wilson to James Stodart, J.P. Stodart, F.A. White, and D.G. MacDonnell, 11 September 1884, Te Aroha Warden's Court, Letterbook 1883-1900, pp. 40-41, BBAV 11534/1a, ANZ-A.

<sup>86</sup> *Thames Star*, 13 September 1884, p. 2.

<sup>87</sup> See paper on his life.

<sup>88</sup> Gold Fields and Mines Committee, 1884, Petition 163, Evidence of Adam Porter given on 26 September 1884, Legislative Department, LE 1, 1884/14, ANZ-W.

available, and the quantity of dirt put through. If the present battery with 40 stampers can produce 900oz gold monthly, which is about what it is doing, it only requires the crushing power to be doubled to increase the yield twofold, and so on in proportion.

There was believed to be an unlimited amount of payable quartz in the main reef immediately above Waiorongomai, a belief soon proved to be incorrect. More crushing power was required before claims other than the three currently monopolizing the battery became payable, for it could not 'do more than crush a few tons as trial parcels' for other mines.<sup>89</sup> Throughout the year calls for another battery continued.<sup>90</sup>

For the remainder of the year, the *Waikato Times* correspondent occasionally reported 'a somewhat brighter aspect' and good stone being found in various mines.<sup>91</sup> Another correspondent considered Waiorongomai was proving to be, as prophesied, 'a payable general dirt field', but one handicapped by expensive crushing charges and a battery monopoly.<sup>92</sup> On 28 October, 22 claims were forfeited, and a month later another nine.<sup>93</sup> Also in November, owners of another 25 claims were warned their ground was liable to forfeiture, as were owners of another four in December.<sup>94</sup>

When mining had begun to recover from the strike, a number of Te Aroha residents had subsidized a party of 'old and experienced quartz miners' to prospect near the 1880 discovery.<sup>95</sup> Despite anticipations of good finds in an area that it was claimed had never been adequately explored,<sup>96</sup> this, like all subsequent prospecting there, was wasted effort. In late

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<sup>89</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 20 September 1884, p. 6.

<sup>90</sup> See Te Aroha Correspondent, *Thames Advertiser*, 2 April 1884, p. 3; *Te Aroha News*, 3 May 1884, p. 2; Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 5 June 1884, p. 2, 11 November 1884, p. 2.

<sup>91</sup> Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 7 October 1884, p. 2, 29 November 1884, p. 2.

<sup>92</sup> *New Zealand Industrial Gazette and Pastoral land Agricultural News*, 15 March 1884, p. 27.

<sup>93</sup> Memoranda by Harry Kenrick, 28 October 1884, 23 November 1884, Te Aroha Warden's Court, Notices of Forfeiture 1884, BBAV 11583/1a, ANZ-A.

<sup>94</sup> Memoranda by George Wilson, 8 November 1884, 24 November 1884, 24 November 1884, 4 December 1884, Te Aroha Warden's Court, Letterbook 1883-1900, pp. 45, 57-58, 60, BBAV 11534/1a, ANZ-A.

<sup>95</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 23 February 1884, p. 2.

<sup>96</sup> *Thames Advertiser*, 25 February 1884, p. 2.

November, another prospecting association was formed to explore the western slopes of the mountain. It would have from 40 to 50 members, each subscribing £1 and weekly 5s payments to cover wages and expenses. This money would enable four or five experienced prospectors to test both new ground and old claims ‘abandoned from want of means’. It was hoped that new discoveries would ‘dispel the stagnation at present prevailing’ at the Te Aroha end of the field.<sup>97</sup> This proposal ‘should be supported by every resident of Te Aroha’, the local newspaper considered, for only with ‘united and persistent systematic effort’ would payable ore be found.<sup>98</sup> As it was argued that the government should contribute, the local Member of Parliament was asked to seek assistance; he was informed that ‘Prospecting Parties are not at present and have not been for some time past assisted’ by the Mines Department.<sup>99</sup>

The chief promoter of the Prospecting and Mining Association was John Gibbons,<sup>100</sup> a pioneer of the Thames goldfield.<sup>101</sup> Although an owner of one claim in 1880, he did not acquire any more interests until 1885, when he purchased shares in two claims.<sup>102</sup> The first meeting of subscribers, on 29 November, attended by over 30 people, decided to limit the shares to 50, of which 37 had already been taken up. ‘The project had been received with much favour’, Gibbons stated. A management committee of mostly experienced miners was elected, and James Richard Shaw Wilson,<sup>103</sup> who had managed the Eureka,<sup>104</sup> was appointed to direct the work. Apart from having an interest in the Eureka and the subsequent company, he was an

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<sup>97</sup> Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 29 November 1884, p. 2.

<sup>98</sup> Editorial, *Te Aroha News*, 29 November 1884, p. 2.

<sup>99</sup> J.B. Whyte to Under-Secretary, Mines Department, 20 November 1884 (telegram); Under-Secretary, Mines Department, to J.B. Whyte, 21 November 1884 (telegram), 21 November 1884, Mines Department, MD 1, 84/1100, ANZ-W.

<sup>100</sup> Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 6 December 1884, p. 2.

<sup>101</sup> For example, Thames Warden’s Court, Register of Miners’ Rights 1867-1868, no. 2225, BACL 14358/1a; Register of Deeds 1869, folios 184, 502, 509-510, BACL 14417/3a, ANZ-A; *Auckland Weekly News*, 7 September 1867, p. 6, 7 March 1868, p. 12, 24 April 1869, p. 22; *Thames Star*, 29 January 1900, p. 3.

<sup>102</sup> Te Aroha Warden’s Court, Register of Te Aroha Claims 1880-1888, folios 170, 255, 322, BBAV 11567/1a, ANZ-A.

<sup>103</sup> See *Coromandel County News*, 13 December 1901, p. 3.

<sup>104</sup> See paper on this mine.

owner, for one week, of only one other claim.<sup>105</sup> Plans for prospecting were drawn up, and rules devised whereby subscribers contributed each weekly; should subscriptions not be paid for two weeks, the membership would lapse and the interest sold.<sup>106</sup>

Late in November, the *Te Aroha News* announced that gold was ‘not the only valuable mineral to be found in our district. Silver ore to an extent which may yet prove to be payable’ had been found in ‘various’ places, and trial parcels tested ‘from time to time’ had produced ‘very encouraging results’. ‘Another valuable ore’, unspecified, was to be found in considerable quantities as well, and was being tested by Thomas Hood, a local painter and glazier,<sup>107</sup> ‘with the most satisfactory results, as with it he has produced paints in a large variety of shades, and apparently of excellent quality’. Further experiments led to hopes of more systematic development of this resource.<sup>108</sup> Shortly afterwards, Hood applied to patent ‘Hood’s Oil and Water Colour Paints’, a method of manufacturing pigments,<sup>109</sup> presumably using this mineral.

Although mining was ‘exceedingly dull’ in early December, much better prospects were soon detected, and the final return for 1884 of 1,349 ounces of retorted gold from 982 trucks treated over five weeks ‘helped to put people in good spirits, and to make them look forward with a hopeful feeling to the coming year’.<sup>110</sup> The *Te Aroha News* considered that although the year had not been ‘so fruitful of good as many persons anticipated’, the field had ‘not retrograded. It is true some of the claims which at one time held out high hopes have now almost dropped out of sight, but their places have been taken by others’, and the number of gold-producing mines was the same. As well, the ‘very general opinion’ of a year ago ‘that the gold was confined to within a short depth from the surface, and that the payable

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<sup>105</sup> Te Aroha Warden’s Court, Register of Te Aroha Claims 1880-1888, folio 281, BBAV 11567/1a; Register of Licensed Holdings 1881-1887, folio 26, BBAV 11500/9a, ANZ-A; *New Zealand Gazette*, 15 May 1882, p. 728.

<sup>106</sup> Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 6 December 1884, p. 2; *Te Aroha News*, 6 December 1884, p. 2.

<sup>107</sup> See *Te Aroha News*, Domain Board, 13 March 1886, p. 2, 20 April 1889, p. 2, School Committee, 5 June 1889, p. 2, School Committee, 6 November 1889, p. 2.

<sup>108</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 22 November 1884, p. 2.

<sup>109</sup> *New Zealand Gazette*, 8 January 1885, p. 31.

<sup>110</sup> Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 13 December 1884, p.2, 25 December 1884, p. 2, 30 December 1884, p. 3.

portion of the reef would be quickly exhausted', had been proven wrong. For the calendar year, 11,619 tons had been crushed for a return of 10,328oz 10dwts, 'within a fraction of 18dwt per ton'. The newspaper doubted this yield could be 'equalled by any other quartz field in the colony'. However, the wealth of the ore

was almost neutralised by conditions which would ruin any field, unless it were of more than average richness. Until the gold can be won at a much lower rate than it now costs, it is useless to expect that the attractions which the mines present to investors and speculators will be appreciated, and without the assistance of outside capital it is just as vain to hope that the field will quickly prosper.

As the great need was cheap crushing power, it expected many payable reefs would be worked once cheaper crushing by Peter Ferguson's battery commenced.<sup>111</sup>

#### A NEW FIND IN A NEW AREA: STONEY CREEK IN THE 1880s

In July 1883, a contractor erecting a bridge over Stoney Creek on the Te Aroha-Waiorongomai road 'found a small piece of quartz among the gravel wash, which on being broken turned out to be a very rich specimen'. This proved that good specimens were to be found 'on the western slope of the mountain, as the gravel must have been washed from the ranges on either side of the creek'.<sup>112</sup> Nothing further was heard about this area until late 1884, when some Te Aroha residents employed a party to prospect the head of the creek. It had 'long been the impression of old residents that from pieces of stone being found in that creek with rich gold in them, that there must be a good reef somewhere in that neighbourhood still undiscovered'.<sup>113</sup> The following January, good surface prospects were reported, but as 'the broken nature of the ground' made it too difficult to put in a drive a shaft

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<sup>111</sup> Editorial, *Te Aroha News*, 3 January 1885, p. 2.

<sup>112</sup> *Waikato Times*, 10 July 1883, p. 2.

<sup>113</sup> Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 27 November 1884, p. 2.

would be sunk.<sup>114</sup> Three claims were registered in that month, two in the name of the Te Aroha Prospecting Association.<sup>115</sup>

In March 1886, there was cheering news. John Saunders<sup>116</sup> and party, who had been prospecting their Grand Junction claim for 18 months, had obtained an average of close to two ounces to the ton from two crushings of one ton each.<sup>117</sup> Residents petitioned the council to provide a prospecting track, for 'at present quartz had to be conveyed on men's backs a distance of more than a mile'.<sup>118</sup> After one councillor, Denis Murphy,<sup>119</sup> stated that 'the locality would prove a good goldfield', £50 was granted.<sup>120</sup> Two months later, a petition requested a sledge track be made 'as far as the big boulder'. Having spent £200 developing the Grand Junction, Saunders' party needed a cheap way to get their quartz to the flat.<sup>121</sup> After Wilson confirmed that small parcels had yielded payable returns,<sup>122</sup> the request was granted. When the approximately mile-long track was finished it was too steep for anything but a pack or sledge track and 'not suitable for a man on horseback'.<sup>123</sup> The Mines Department later decided it was 'so badly laid out and constructed' that it refused to pay the total subsidy.<sup>124</sup>

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<sup>114</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 10 January 1885, p. 2, 31 January 1885, p. 2.

<sup>115</sup> Te Aroha Warden's Court, Register of Te Aroha Claims 1880-1888, folios 318-320, BBAV 11567/1a, ANZ-A.

<sup>116</sup> See *Thames Advertiser*, 8 March 1884, p. 2, letter from Edward Drury, 14 March 1884, p. 3, 15 March 1884, p. 3, 18 August 1888, p. 2; *New Zealand Police Gazette*, 28 May 1884, p. 95.

<sup>117</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 13 March 1886, p. 2.

<sup>118</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 13 March 1886, p. 2.

<sup>119</sup> See paper on his life.

<sup>120</sup> Piako County Council, *Waikato Times*, 13 March 1886, p. 2.

<sup>121</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 15 May 1886, p. 2.

<sup>122</sup> George Wilson to Piako County Council, 27 May 1886, Te Aroha Warden's Court, Letterbook 1883-1900, p. 96, BBAV 11534/1a, ANZ-A.

<sup>123</sup> Clerk, Piako County Council, to Henry Kenrick, 29 May 1886, Te Aroha Warden's Court, General Correspondence 1886, BBAV 11584/3a, ANZ-A; *Waikato Times*, Piako County Council, 1 June 1886, p. 2, 6 July 1886, p. 2, Piako County Council, 30 September 1886, p. 2; George Wilson to Piako County Council, 22 January 1887, Te Aroha Warden's Court, Letterbook 1883-1900, p. 129, BBAV 11534/1a, ANZ-A.

<sup>124</sup> *AJHR*, 1888, C-5, p. 3.

In May, the Grand Junction claimholders were ‘so satisfied’ with the ‘show’ that they decided to erect a crushing plant.<sup>125</sup> Their work was described and praised in the local newspaper:

This claim has been beginning to attract considerable notice of late, owing to the excellent prospects being obtained. Saunders and party, who commenced work on the ground about Christmas 1884, have exhibited an amount of perseverance and faith seldom met with, having stuck to the ground steadily ever since, and that too, in the face of difficulties that would have disheartened many men long since. The claim is situated at the head of Stoney Creek, about one and a half miles from the flat, and is distant about three-quarters of a mile from the “waterfall” in a very difficult country to prospect, being entirely unopened up, and devoid of prospecting or other tracks. Two trial parcels of about one ton each, carried out through the bush on the backs of the local prospectors, have been treated at Firth and Clark’s battery within the last year, and gave the excellent return of 2oz to the ton, which sold at £2 16s 6d per ton. Since Christmas last close on £100 has been expended by the indomitable owners in opening up the ground.

A water race and machine site had been applied for. The two reefs were believed to be ‘quite distinct from any yet worked upon’. Henry Pierce Hornibrooke, an experienced prospector and mine manager,<sup>126</sup> who previously was sole owner of one claim and who managed several mines at Waiorongomai,<sup>127</sup> and was on the management committee of the Te Aroha Prospecting Association,<sup>128</sup> had ‘obtained excellent loose prospects from any part of the reef he inspected. Several additional claims have been pegged off in the vicinity within the past few days’.<sup>129</sup>

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<sup>125</sup> Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 20 May 1886, p. 3.

<sup>126</sup> See *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 2, pp. 489-490; *Coromandel County News*, 25 April 1919, p. 2.

<sup>127</sup> Te Aroha Warden’s Court, Register of Licensed Holdings 1881-1887, folio 182, BBAV 11500/9a, ANZ-A; H.P. Hornibrooke to Minister of Mines, 19 November 1887, Mines Department, MD 1, 92/116, ANZ-W; Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 5 April 1884, p. 3; *Te Aroha News*, 8 November 1884, p. 2.

<sup>128</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 6 December 1884, p. 2.

<sup>129</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 22 May 1886, p. 2.

Capital had been provided to keep the prospecting party at work when the first trial crushings proved successful.<sup>130</sup> Although 'active prospecting' was reported in October, with ten tons about to be taken out,<sup>131</sup> the warden reported in April 1887 that as returns were not payable the area was deserted.<sup>132</sup> A party calling itself the Golden Cross Gold and Silver Mining Company obtained a special claim in early 1888, but did not find any payable quartz. It took out about 100 tons 'at different times, yielding from 10 to 15dwt per ton, but these returns were not payable' because cartage to the Te Aroha battery exceeded 10s per ton and double that to the Waiorongomai one.<sup>133</sup>

Nothing else was reported from this district during the 1880s, but in 1895 it was reported that 'considerable work' had been done, 'with variable results':

For upwards of 2 years a party of two men worked on ground known as "Jacky claim," these men did a lot of work in opening up the reef. They were contented to work steadily and after the following fashion. The reef contains a lot of loose dirt which carried coarse gold; this rubble was treated to the same process as alluvial sluicing, while the quartz was thrown away. No one can tell exactly what they made, but there are rumours that they were successful.<sup>134</sup>

Any success was very limited, for they abandoned the ground.

### EARLY 1885

A representative of the Auckland Branch of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers told the Trades and Labour Council Congress at the beginning of 1885 that the field was 'progressing favourably', with 'plenty of work

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<sup>130</sup> See James Brand to Warden, 1 October 1885, Te Aroha Warden's Court, Complaints 1885, BBAV 11572/1a, ANZ-A.

<sup>131</sup> Te Aroha Correspondent, *Thames Advertiser*, 8 October 1886, p. 3.

<sup>132</sup> H.A. Stratford to Under-Secretary, Mines Department, 7 April 1887, *AJHR*, 1887, C-6, p. 5.

<sup>133</sup> James Don, David Brigham, Edward Gallagher, A.A. Smith, H.H. Adams, A.W. Edwards to Warden, 21 May 1888; George Wilson to Warden, 11 February 1889, Te Aroha Warden's Court, Applications for Protection 1888, BBAV 11289/12a, ANZ-A.

<sup>134</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 10 April 1895, p. 2.

going on in the shape of constructing tramways, erecting machinery &c'.<sup>135</sup> But costs continued to be a handicap. When William Larnach, the Minister of Mines, visited in May, he was 'astonished with the amount of work which the various mining companies had done' and their 'great enterprise'.<sup>136</sup> He later informed parliament of meeting 'miners getting plenty of stone, which they said would average 8dwt of gold and a little silver to the ton, but that would not pay' because of high tramway and battery charges.<sup>137</sup> The *Thames Directory for 1885* noted that the tramway charge of 4s 6d per truck holding one and a third tons and a crushing charge of ten shillings per ton meant that almost 14s 6d per ton had to be paid on top of the cost of mining. Excluding the latter, an approximate value of 5 1/4dwt was charged for cartage and treatment, prompting complaints about 'prohibitive charges'. Waiorongomai was 'essentially a capitalists' district, as distinguished from a working man's field - its reefs being large and of moderate grade, requiring the application of the most economic methods of working, and most effective crushing appliances'.<sup>138</sup>

These costs meant Kenrick's annual report was far less optimistic than his previous one, for mining had been restricted to 'a few of the old claims', no new ground was being opened up 'and but little prospecting done. The output of quartz, some 11,000 tons', was 'disappointing, for, with the large body of proved gold-bearing stone running through the claims being worked, at least double this quantity could and should have been treated'. This lack of activity was caused by 'unnecessarily heavy' transporting and crushing costs, along with the quantity of gold lost in treatment, making 'it necessary to throw on one side or leave untouched the larger portions of the reef, sending to the battery only such stone as will pay working expenses'.<sup>139</sup> Wilson also noted little prospecting because of the cost of crushing, adding that driving and stoping was 'also very expensive on account of the hardness of the rock and reefs, and a great saving would be effected by the

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<sup>135</sup> *Watchman*, 24 January 1885, p. 6.

<sup>136</sup> *Waikato Times*, 28 May 1885, p. 2.

<sup>137</sup> *Waikato Times*, 28 July 1885, p. 3.

<sup>138</sup> *Thames Directory for 1885* (Thames, 1885), pp. 106, 114.

<sup>139</sup> Harry Kenrick to Under-Secretary, Mines Department, 20 April 1885, *AJHR*, 1885, C-2, p. 29.

use of rock drills driven by water-power'.<sup>140</sup> Only in the New Find would these to be used.<sup>141</sup>

In January 1886, one correspondent, exaggerating somewhat, wrote that one year previously the field 'was in a word insolvent, and not a claim was working'.<sup>142</sup> At the time it was merely reported that miners had 'not readily recovered from their holiday indulgence' and only 'a comparatively small' had returned to work, meaning 'a considerable delay' in starting crushing, as the battery was not likely to start 'until a reserve stock of quartz has accumulated in the hoppers'.<sup>143</sup> At the beginning of February, the *Waikato Times* correspondent admitted that mining had 'been exceptionally quiet this year', made even 'duller' by all mining stopping in the Colonist, putting 18 or 20 miners out of work. And with no prospecting, there was little prospect of the field improving.<sup>144</sup> At the end of that month, mining was 'very quiet'; the Colonist was likely to be protected and let to tributers, to the annoyance of some miners who wanted the company to continue working it.<sup>145</sup> It was hoped Ferguson's battery, being erected, would rescue the field 'from its present very depressed state'.<sup>146</sup> The local newspaper had called for the council to assist it and all future batteries, for without these there was 'little hope'.<sup>147</sup> This lack of activity was not confined to Waiorongomai, but quite general throughout Hauraki.<sup>148</sup> Te Aroha's economy was kept afloat by the increasing number of invalids using the hot springs: one newspaper believed the invalid trade was 'more valuable' than mining.<sup>149</sup>

At the end of March, mining was 'still languishing and never since the opening' of the field had things been 'so unsatisfactory'. Once again, all hopes were placed on the New Era battery's process.<sup>150</sup> Kenrick's report on

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<sup>140</sup> George Wilson to Harry Kenrick, 9 April 1885, *AJHR*, 1885, C-2, p. 30.

<sup>141</sup> See paper on the New Find mine.

<sup>142</sup> Ohinemuri Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 9 January 1886, p. 3.

<sup>143</sup> *Thames Advertiser*, 8 January 1885, p. 2.

<sup>144</sup> Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 3 February 1885, p. 2.

<sup>145</sup> Te Aroha Correspondent, *Thames Advertiser*, 28 February 1885, p. 3.

<sup>146</sup> Editorial, *Te Aroha News*, 28 February 1885, p. 2.

<sup>147</sup> Editorial, *Te Aroha News*, 10 January 1885, p. 2.

<sup>148</sup> *Thames Star*, 21 March 1885, p. 2; Ohinemuri Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 9 January 1886, p. 3.

<sup>149</sup> *Bay of Plenty Times*, n.d., cited in *Thames Advertiser*, 5 March 1885, p. 2.

<sup>150</sup> Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 28 March 1885, p. 3.

the year to 31 March summarized the parlous state: he had dealt with 171 cases for forfeiture, 14 claims had been marked out, one licensed holding and one machine site had been granted, and 'a very considerable number of miners' had left.<sup>151</sup> Wilson considered the returns of 9,506oz 6dwt from 11,041 tons 11cwt were 'satisfactory', but the difficulty of saving the fine gold meant that since the beginning of 1885 several companies had decided 'to stay operations for the present'. A 'very large percentage of the gold escapes in the tailings, and the further cost of grinding the blanketings and tailings in berdans adds materially to the charges'. Even with that extra treatment, 'a considerable amount of gold' was lost, making the margin of profit 'so small that large blocks of ground already opened up in the New Find, Colonist, Canadian and other mines are left until further improvements are made in saving gold' and reducing the cost of treatment. Until Ferguson's Battery was completed there would be no more prospecting.<sup>152</sup>

At the beginning of April, the *Waikato Times* correspondent, normally so positive, admitted that mining could not 'be spoken of as flourishing', as illustrated by the tramway only working two days a week. Some people considered miners were 'not sending down so much quartz because it is not so payable' now, others arguing that the ore was 'as good as ever, the cause for the falling off being that miners prefer waiting until the new battery is completed'.<sup>153</sup> When the Battery Company did reduce its charges,<sup>154</sup> he commented that if this had been done earlier the field would not be in the 'present unsatisfactory state'. He expected many mines to remain closed until Ferguson's battery opened to see whether its process was better and its charges lower.<sup>155</sup> Nonetheless, some optimism continued, at least when people were questioned by outsiders: a visiting journalist wrote that 'everyone in the district expressed themselves quite satisfied from the return got from most of the mines' that the field would soon become 'one of the most important goldfields of the colony'.<sup>156</sup>

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<sup>151</sup> Harry Kenrick to Under-Secretary, Mines Department, 20 April 1885, *AJHR*, 1885, C-2, p. 29.

<sup>152</sup> George Wilson to Harry Kenrick, 9 April 1885, *AJHR*, 1885, C-2, pp. 29-30.

<sup>153</sup> Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 2 April 1885, p. 2.

<sup>154</sup> See paper on the Battery Company.

<sup>155</sup> Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 16 April 1885, p. 3, 23 April 1885, p. 2.

<sup>156</sup> 'Voz', 'A Trip to the Te Aroha Hot Springs', *Auckland Weekly News*, 4 April 1885, p. 7.

In April, the Te Aroha Prospecting Association was reported to have found gold in the Golden Hill spur, above the township. 'The present association, which now dissolves by effluxion of time, will shortly be reorganized, and the systematic working of the vein just discovered will then be vigorously proceeded with'.<sup>157</sup> The association's income since the beginning of December 1884 was £112 10s, all but 19s 11d having been spent, mostly on wages.<sup>158</sup> After being reorganized, in June its prospectors returned to work near Te Aroha. Prospects were 'encouraging, but they have not yet found anything likely to be of a permanent nature. Success to the Association would be of inestimable value to Te Aroha; consequently their operations have a deep interest to the people here'.<sup>159</sup> Four to five tons were crushed in July, for 25 ounces, which encouraged further prospecting.<sup>160</sup> In August two men were working a claim pegged out on the northern side of the Golden Hill creek.<sup>161</sup> By that time the association was managed by Thomas Gavin,<sup>162</sup> who spent the balance of its funds seeking silver instead of confining operations to old prospectors' leader discovered by Hone Werahiko.<sup>163</sup> After failing to find anything payable, in mid-1886 the association wound up.<sup>164</sup>

#### A NEW PROCESS AND ANOTHER MINERAL

In May 1885, a potential saviour appeared in the form of an American mining engineer, John D. LaMonte,<sup>165</sup> whose process promised to make 'many' currently idle mines payable.<sup>166</sup> Accompanied by 'several prominent shareholders', he inspected all the leading mines, pronounced that a better

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<sup>157</sup> Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 28 April 1885, p. 3; see also Warden's Court, *Waikato Times*, 30 April 1885, p. 2.

<sup>158</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 23 May 1885, p. 2.

<sup>159</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 2 May 1885, p. 7; Te Aroha Correspondent, *Thames Advertiser*, 13 June 1885, p. 3.

<sup>160</sup> Te Aroha Correspondent, *Thames Advertiser*, 21 July 1885, p. 3.

<sup>161</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 22 August 1885, p. 2.

<sup>162</sup> See paper on his life.

<sup>163</sup> *Waikato Times*, 13 August 1885, p. 4; Te Aroha Correspondent, *Thames Advertiser*, 22 August 1885, p. 3.

<sup>164</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 22 May 1886, p. 7.

<sup>165</sup> See paper on the Tui district.

<sup>166</sup> *Thames Advertiser*, 9 May 1885, p. 3.

battery was required, and unsurprisingly announced that his process would be more effective.<sup>167</sup> His testing had revealed less silver than expected, 'but there were some silver veins' yet to be opened up, a statement alerting miners to the silver that previously they had either ignored or not detected.<sup>168</sup> Using his process, LaMonte tested tailings that had already been through the berdans and declared the result to be 'very satisfactory' because more gold was extracted.<sup>169</sup> In mid-May, the *Te Aroha News* noted that the gold's 'extreme fineness' meant that 'the common mode of treatment by stamper and berdans, etc', was 'utterly ineffectual to save more than a very small proportion'. If for 'a moderate cost' 75 to 95 per cent was saved, compared with 25 to 35 per cent using the current process, 'what a reaction would quickly set in, where now the mining industry is at such a very low ebb'.<sup>170</sup>

In late July, James Mills, a carpenter,<sup>171</sup> who had had an interest in one mine and was sole owner of another for just one and a half months during this year,<sup>172</sup> suggested prospectors should look 'for other minerals as well as gold, for the discovery of such in large quantities might prove even greater value than gold'.<sup>173</sup> Encouraged by LaMonte's claims and the revival of mining at Ohinemuri, a number of Te Aroha residents were searching for silver near the township, finding 'several promising reefs' and sending samples to Auckland for assay. 'Some three or four claims' had been pegged out and registered, several prospectors were at work, and it was 'highly probable' more claims would be pegged off.<sup>174</sup> That reefs near Te Aroha contained lead was an asset, for LaMonte's process required it for smelting. Prospecting for silver reefs was 'all the rage at the present, and several very valuable looking' ones were found. Investors associated with LaMonte visiting Te Aroha were impressed with the number and value of the reefs

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<sup>167</sup> *Thames Advertiser*, 26 May 1885, p. 3; Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 28 May 1885, p. 2.

<sup>168</sup> *Thames Advertiser*, 30 May 1885, p. 3; Ohinemuri Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 9 January 1886, p. 3.

<sup>169</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 6 June 1885, p. 2.

<sup>170</sup> Editorial, *Te Aroha News*, 16 May 1885, p. 2.

<sup>171</sup> See paper on his life.

<sup>172</sup> Te Aroha Warden's Court, Register of Licensed Holdings 1881-1887, folio 28, BBAV 11500/9a; Register of Te Aroha Claims 1880-1888, folio 324, BBAV 11567/1a, ANZ-A.

<sup>173</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 25 July 1885, p. 2.

<sup>174</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 1 August 1885, p. 2.

near the township, and suggested a furnace could be erected there before Christmas.<sup>175</sup>

The *Observer* reported the changed mood: 'Te Aroha is wild with excitement. Silver is known to exist in some of the reefs on the mountain ... and it is hoped that the LaMonte process may be introduced with the best results. The name of LaMonte is as familiar in people's mouths as household words'.<sup>176</sup> The *Waikato Times*' correspondent noted the 'excitement' at Karangahake and 'the fresh life' in mining there since it was decided to use La Monte's process, which had, 'in a smaller degree', reached Te Aroha. Silver was 'known to exist in some of the reefs' above the township, and it was believed 'the same excellent results' expected at Karangahake could be obtained locally.<sup>177</sup> A week later, he reported that the 'fever' to find gold still existed, 'though in a mild form. No find of any importance' had been reported, but hopes remained 'high'.<sup>178</sup>

Although several miners left for Karangahake because of the 'bright reports' of its revival,<sup>179</sup> LaMonte pointed out the silver in some Waiorongomai lodes, notably the Moa No. 1.<sup>180</sup> The *Te Aroha News* reported, in August, that renewed prospecting had produced 'very encouraging results' with more claims being pegged out. Several samples from reefs close to the township assayed in Auckland had produced as much as 36oz of silver per ton. 'Everything tends to show that we are on the eve of more stirring times again'.<sup>181</sup> A week later, more silver was being sent for testing, and 'some newcomers have lately put in an appearance amongst us, in the form of several experienced miners, who are busily engaged prospecting' near the township.<sup>182</sup> One correspondent believed the 'tide in mining affairs' was now 'on its return, there being numerous signs of a revival'.<sup>183</sup> Tests had 'surprised even the most sanguine', for as much as 340 ounces of silver to the ton had been discovered. The results of other tests were 'being kept quiet for reasons unknown to the general public', but he

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<sup>175</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 8 August 1885, p. 2.

<sup>176</sup> *Observer*, 8 August 1885, p. 11.

<sup>177</sup> Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 4 August 1885, p. 3.

<sup>178</sup> Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 13 August 1885, p. 4.

<sup>179</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 8 August 1885, p. 2.

<sup>180</sup> Te Aroha Correspondent, *Thames Advertiser*, 22 August 1885, p. 3.

<sup>181</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 22 August 1885, p. 2.

<sup>182</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 29 August 1885, p. 2.

<sup>183</sup> Te Aroha Correspondent, *Thames Advertiser*, 29 August 1885, p. 3.

had 'no doubt that, should LaMonte's process prove successful, mining would 'be sure to revive'.<sup>184</sup> But despite much prospecting, mining remained 'very quiet on the whole', and battery returns were small.<sup>185</sup>

At the end of August, the *Te Aroha News* commented that 'the gradual decline' in mining during the past 12 months was 'not by any means entirely due to scarcity of the precious metal'. Although 'many' mines had been 'disappointing', considering 'the small measure of enterprise that has been accorded the industry compared with the great extent of the field, the very limited amount of crushing power available, and the manner in which that has been monopolized, perhaps the wonder is that even so much has been achieved'.<sup>186</sup> One difficulty was that 'indications of silver' were 'very little understood, as few of our miners claim to be experts in working silver lodes'.<sup>187</sup>

In September, pegging out was 'the order of the day. LaMonte's process has imparted fresh vitality to the mining world, and we expect to have something more substantial than hope to live upon in the future'.<sup>188</sup> However, the hopes aroused were dashed by December by clear proof his process did not work,<sup>189</sup> When his furnace was later sold for a mere £29, the *Te Aroha News* saw this outcome as 'a kindly warning to speculators not to put their faith in every new process'.<sup>190</sup>

## STRUGGLING THROUGH IN MID AND LATE 1885

At the end of May, Firth told the council that a recent good discovery in the New Find 'had had a wonderful effect upon the field in the way of importing new vigour into mining circles. It had in fact put the whole field in unusually good heart'.<sup>191</sup> As so often, he was exaggerating: the tramway manager's report to the same meeting noted that, 'since the reduction in the cost of crushing, one or two mines have started work', but were only prospecting. Most ore came from the New Find, 'the other claims

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<sup>184</sup> Te Aroha Correspondent, *Thames Advertiser*, 2 September 1885, p. 3.

<sup>185</sup> *Auckland Weekly News*, 15 August 1885, p. 22.

<sup>186</sup> Editorial, *Te Aroha News*, 29 August 1885, p. 2.

<sup>187</sup> Te Aroha Correspondent, *Thames Advertiser*, 25 August 1885, p. 3.

<sup>188</sup> 'Te Aroha', *Observer*, 12 September 1885, p. 16.

<sup>189</sup> For example, see *Auckland Weekly News*, 5 December 1885, pp. 18-19.

<sup>190</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 9 January 1889, p. 2.

<sup>191</sup> Piako County Council, *Waikato Times*, 30 May 1885, p. 3.

contributing very little quartz'.<sup>192</sup> A Waiorongomai correspondent argued that the depression was caused, not by a shortage of ore, but by the industry 'being strangled by a monopoly whose only aim can be to secure for its own the whole of the gold-producing claims'. Firth was believed to be preventing a tramway being constructed to Ferguson's battery because it would break his monopoly, and miners intending to use this battery were 'doing very little work, if any, awaiting the result of the struggle'.<sup>193</sup> At the next council meeting, the tramway manager reported only two mine managers at work in the past month and only 357 trucks being sent down. Firth, yet again, was sanguine: 'some new drills would soon be at work on the field and the use of these would be the means of starting some of the other mines and making them pay'.<sup>194</sup> One month later, when told only the New Find and Colonist were sending down quartz, he responded that the Canadian was about to re-start mining.<sup>195</sup>

In July a correspondent complained of 'the utter neglect of prospecting' and a 'desire to confine operations to ground in the vicinity of payable mines. 'Surely the spirit cannot have disappeared which moved the late Hone Werahiko',<sup>196</sup> and he hoped Ferguson's battery would inspire more prospecting, for the field was 'not deficient in men who possess the genius and the virtue of perseverance so requisite in a successful prospector'.<sup>197</sup>

Some had lost hope. Joshua Cuff, who had left the district, wrote in late September that 'things would have to be very good & established before I would try Te Aroha again'.<sup>198</sup> Three weeks later, he was 'glad to hear' that the district was 'likely to look up again but I think it will be some months before things are very lively'.<sup>199</sup> Some of those interested in mining decided 'to erect a small furnace, for the purpose of testing for themselves samples of ore from time to time',<sup>200</sup> but this did not eventuate. One indication of

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<sup>192</sup> Tramway Manager's Report, *Waikato Times*, 30 May 1885, p. 3.

<sup>193</sup> Waiorongomai Correspondent, *Thames Advertiser*, 23 June 1885, p. 3.

<sup>194</sup> Piako County Council, *Waikato Times*, 27 June 1885, p. 3.

<sup>195</sup> Piako County Council, *Waikato Times*, 25 July 1885, p. 3.

<sup>196</sup> See paper on his life.

<sup>197</sup> Te Aroha Correspondent, *Thames Advertiser*, 21 July 1885, p. 3.

<sup>198</sup> Joshua Cuff to T.H. Smith, 21 September 1885, Te Aroha Warden's Court, Mining Applications 1885, BBAV 11591/1a, ANZ-A.

<sup>199</sup> Joshua Cuff to T.H. Smith, 13 October 1885, Te Aroha Warden's Court, Mining Applications 1885, BBAV 11591/1a, ANZ-A.

<sup>200</sup> *Thames Advertiser*, 7 September 1885, p. 2.

recovery was a man jumping a claim, for now ground previously ‘abandoned and looked upon as useless’ was attracting claimants.<sup>201</sup> In the month to mid-September, ‘about £300’ was paid for new licenses’, which was ‘certainly very encouraging’, and the tramway made a rare profit, £21.<sup>202</sup> Six claims close to Te Aroha were registered on 21 September.<sup>203</sup>

By September the battery was being kept busy, and the former pervading ‘despondency’ was ‘gradually passing away’ as confidence was restored.<sup>204</sup> An indication of its previous decline was that the Canadian Company had to extend the time for tendering for a crosscut ‘on account of the scarcity of men’.<sup>205</sup> Prospecting for silver continued at Waiorongomai and close to Te Aroha.<sup>206</sup> Work was about to resume in the May Queen and other mines, and coupled with Ferguson’s new battery this meant that there was ‘a prospect of the return of at least some of the life and activity that formerly prevailed’.<sup>207</sup> One visitor considered the field was ‘looking very well just now, and everywhere there are signs of a revival of prosperity’.<sup>208</sup>

The greatest excitement for September was the announcement of the discovery by one prominent prospector, Clem Cornes,<sup>209</sup> of a good reef in the Tui district,<sup>210</sup> which prompted miners to peg out nearby.<sup>211</sup> Late in the month, the *Waikato Times* correspondent reported that the recent ‘silver fever’ had ‘broken out afresh, and the all engrossing subject of thought in the minds of the townsfolk’ was the discovery and its likely ‘benefits’.<sup>212</sup> Anticipating that the LaMonte furnaces would process local bullion, the council decided to improve the road from Waiorongomai, for Firth had ‘no doubt there would be a considerable amount of carting’ to the Karangahake

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<sup>201</sup> *Waikato Times*, 15 September 1885, p. 2.

<sup>202</sup> *Waikato Times*, 19 September 1885, p. 2.

<sup>203</sup> Memorandum of 21 September 1885, Te Aroha Warden’s Court, Letterbook 1883-1900, p. 83, BBAV 11534/1a, ANZ-A.

<sup>204</sup> *Waikato Times*, 8 September 1885, p. 2.

<sup>205</sup> Te Aroha Correspondent, *Thames Advertiser*, 14 September 1885, p. 3.

<sup>206</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 5 September 1885, p. 2; *New Zealand Herald*, 5 October 1885, p. 5.

<sup>207</sup> Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 26 September 1885, p. 3.

<sup>208</sup> *Waikato Times*, 6 October 1885, p. 2.

<sup>209</sup> See paper on his life.

<sup>210</sup> *Waikato Times*, 15 September 1885, p. 2, 1 October 1885, p. 2.

<sup>211</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 12 September 1885, p. 2; Te Aroha Correspondent, *Thames Advertiser*, 14 September 1885, p. 3.

<sup>212</sup> Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 26 September 1885, p. 3.

furnaces.<sup>213</sup> By mid-November, several mines had resumed work.<sup>214</sup> Others remained closed because of tramway charges, and by mid-December another couple had closed.<sup>215</sup> In its first editorial for 1886, the *Te Aroha News* argued that ‘the inevitable result’ of the ‘excessive battery charges (long foreseen and often predicted)’ had been ‘the closing or forfeiture of most of the mines’.<sup>216</sup> However, although Waiorongomai was said to be in a state of depression, for eight months of 1885 its production of gold was greater than that produced by all the Ohinemuri mines during these months.<sup>217</sup>

In December, Professor James Black of Otago University College investigated the mines when touring Hauraki to teach miners how to test for gold and silver.<sup>218</sup> He considered the mines should produce payable ore, and thought that ‘surely out of 15 or 16 distinct processes’ used to extract silver ‘in America, Australia and Europe, there should be no difficulty in finding one suitable for profitably working’ the local ore.<sup>219</sup> He was talking of what should work, and did not indicate a method guaranteed to succeed.

At the end of March, the 17 companies registered had a nominal capital of £345,000 but only £14,000 was paid up.<sup>220</sup> The *Te Aroha News* regretted ‘the craze for companies with thousands of shares’ had ‘so greatly overcome the old disposition to invest small sums in supporting prospecting parties’. Discoveries in Victoria had been made by small parties working for half wages and the promise of shares in any find: 12 shareholders would form a syndicate, ten of whom would supply the wages of the two prospectors. Forming a few such syndicates ‘would, without the smallest doubt, soon have a beneficial effect’, for ‘hundreds of localities in the district’ were ‘likely spots’. Prospecting could be supervised by local shareholders, and expenses be ‘kept down as far as possible. By adopting such a plan the expenditure of comparatively small sums might be productive of very important results’.<sup>221</sup> Although some small local syndicates would be created on this model, the main trend was forming companies with even

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<sup>213</sup> Piako County Council, *Waikato Times*, 17 October 1885, p. 3.

<sup>214</sup> *Waikato Times*, 17 November 1885, p. 4.

<sup>215</sup> *Waikato Times*, 5 December 1885, p. 2, Piako County Council, 19 December 1885, p. 3.

<sup>216</sup> Editorial, *Te Aroha News*, 2 January 1886, p. 2.

<sup>217</sup> *Thames Directory for 1886* (Thames, 1886), pp. 132-141.

<sup>218</sup> See paper on prospectors’ and miners’ skills.

<sup>219</sup> *Waikato Times*, 15 December 1885, p. 2.

<sup>220</sup> *AJHR*, 1885, C-2, Appendix, p. 65.

<sup>221</sup> Editorial, *Te Aroha News*, 29 August 1885, p. 2.

larger amounts of nominal capital and a very small amount of working capital, especially in the case of overseas companies.<sup>222</sup> The only development that excited interest amongst Auckland investors in 1885 was the discovery of reefs at Tui because this would lead to British investment.<sup>223</sup>

## 1886

Mining got off to a very quiet start in 1886, made even quieter by a drought. Early in January, it was 'not likely that the usual number of men will be employed' until it rained, for as the battery could not operate 'it would be unprofitable to pile up large quantities of quartz at the claims to lie there perhaps for weeks to come. Operations under ground will therefore be carried on with small staffs until full crushing power is again available'.<sup>224</sup> Late in the month, mining remained 'almost at standstill' and most miners were unemployed. The battery hoppers were 'full of quartz and at the claims considerable quantities' were stacked.<sup>225</sup> By mid-February, the tramway had worked for only seven days during the past month.<sup>226</sup> Not till late February did a good rainfall enable mining to start again.<sup>227</sup> In the same month, unworked claims, including some at Tui, were forfeited.<sup>228</sup> This pleased the *Te Aroha News*, which in its first editorial for the year did not 'expect any very rapid improvement in a district which has suffered so long through monopoly; but that it will yet come out alright there need not be the slightest doubt'. It wanted 'the strict enforcement of mining laws' to ensure claims were either worked or 'thrown open to the public' to induce 'prospectors to again return and go to work on so valuable a field'.<sup>229</sup>

In his speech at the March luncheon celebrating the opening of the railway line to Te Aroha, Kenrick repeated that they had a 'good permanent

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<sup>222</sup> See, for example, papers on the Te Aroha Silver and Gold Mining Company and the New Zealand Exploration Company.

<sup>223</sup> See paper on the Tui district.

<sup>224</sup> Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 9 January 1886, p. 3.

<sup>225</sup> Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 21 January 1886, p. 2; see also *Te Aroha News*, 16 January 1886, p. 2, 23 January 1886, p. 2.

<sup>226</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 13 February 1886, p. 7.

<sup>227</sup> *Waikato Times*, 23 February 1886, p. 2.

<sup>228</sup> Warden's Court, *Waikato Times*, 4 February 1886, p. 2.

<sup>229</sup> Editorial, *Te Aroha News*, 2 January 1886, p. 2.

goldfield'.<sup>230</sup> Yet in his annual report, dated 27 April, he admitted that mining had, 'from various causes, been somewhat restricted'. Lack of water preventing the battery working to full capacity (or indeed at all on several occasions) was one reason, but in addition high crushing charges meant that the Colonist, for example, with ore averaging half an ounce of gold to the ton, could not pay to work. Such results were 'more than disappointing', for 'half an ounce to the ton, even at the low value of Te Aroha gold, should pay working expenses'. The only bright spot was Tui, for there could 'be but little doubt that very valuable returns will come from this portion of the district in the near future'. The yield of gold for the year ending 31 March was 4,489oz from 6,552 tons, compared with 9,506oz from 11,041 tons in the previous 12 months. Of the 107 claims marked out, only 13 had been registered, and 12 were abandoned.<sup>231</sup> The battery manager's report for that year revealed the success or otherwise of all the mines:

New Find Co	2213 trucks crushed for	2637oz of retorted
gold		
Colonist Co	1502	1408
Canadian Co	108	13
Premier Co	148	100
Waiorongomai Co	65	77
Galena Claim	228	180
Wellington Co	23	38
Cousin Jacky Claim	2	3oz 13dwt
Silver King Claim	32	63
Silver Queen Claim	14	4
May Queen Co	18	40
Werahiko Co	16	5
Eureka Co	8	2
Lone Hand Claim	1	10dwt <sup>232</sup>

Wilson reported 'several' companies suspending operations entirely and portions of the reefs opened in mines still working not producing 'the amount of gold expected'. One positive feature was that miners had started 'prospecting for silver and other minerals, especially since Professor Black

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<sup>230</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 6 March 1886, p. 7.

<sup>231</sup> Harry Kenrick to Under-Secretary, Mines Department, 27 April 1886, *AJHR*, 1886, C-4A, pp. 5-6.

<sup>232</sup> Battery Company, Manager's Report for year ending 31 March 1886, Te Aroha Warden's Court, General Correspondence 1886, BBAV 11584/3a, ANZ-A.

delivered his lectures', and great interest was taken in the different methods of testing ores.<sup>233</sup> That miners needed more skills was mentioned at the celebration for arrival of the first train: 'Several speakers pointed out that gold abounded in the ranges, but the scientific knowledge of the miners was not sufficiently cultivated to extract it'.<sup>234</sup>

In April it was hoped the New Era battery, by saving more gold, would create 'a revolution' in mining and the long period of 'dullness' would 'be succeeded by a period of steady prosperity'.<sup>235</sup> A month later, 'stagnation' prevailed, especially at Waiorongomai.<sup>236</sup> The New Find produced most of the gold during this year.<sup>237</sup> And once more, there was a call for 'a little more spirit' in prospecting.<sup>238</sup> By September, one owner of the New Era battery was predicting its success would mean re-opened mines and Waiorongomai ceasing to be a 'deserted place'.<sup>239</sup>

Despite all the gloom, mining did continue, mainly under the control of the Battery Company, which had taken over most of the leading mines. In October, it was working one shift a day in the New Find, Colonist, and Galena, with the ore 'shaping fairly well'.<sup>240</sup> Otherwise, 'dullness' was 'everywhere prevalent', with the occasional find of better grade quartz encouraging continued work.<sup>241</sup> Because so few miners were at work, sometimes less than 16 trucks, and never more than 20, were sent down the tramway each day.<sup>242</sup>

The one item of good news late in the year was the discovery in September of a new reef in what was formerly the Waitoki Extended, now owned by Philip Robert Tringham and John McLeod Murray as the Success.<sup>243</sup> Tringham, a miner, was sole owner of one claim, an owner of

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<sup>233</sup> George Wilson to Harry Kenrick, 10 April 1886, *AJHR*, 1886, C-4A, p. 6.

<sup>234</sup> *Observer*, 6 March 1886, p. 13.

<sup>235</sup> Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 27 April 1886, p. 2.

<sup>236</sup> Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 20 May 1886, p. 3.

<sup>237</sup> See Travelling Correspondent, *Thames Advertiser*, 2 August 1886, p. 2.

<sup>238</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 25 September 1886, p. 2.

<sup>239</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 17 September 1886, p. 6.

<sup>240</sup> *Thames Advertiser*, 8 October 1886, p. 3.

<sup>241</sup> Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 9 October 1886, p. 2.

<sup>242</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 9 October 1886, p. 3.

<sup>243</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 18 September 1886, p. 2, 25 September 1886, p. 2; *Waikato Times*, 9 October 1886, p. 2.

four others, and a shareholder in two companies.<sup>244</sup> Murray, who owned interests in five other claims and the company that later worked one of these,<sup>245</sup> was a Waiorongomai storekeeper and bookkeeper.<sup>246</sup> His involvement was financial; one month after obtaining half the interest he sold one of his seven shares ‘at a satisfactory price’, and later sold others.<sup>247</sup> The find was ‘partly a result of the prospecting track recently made’ by the council, as the reef was first struck during its formation, ‘although it did not at the time attract attention’. Two truckloads plus 30 pounds of picked stone had produced ‘the very excellent return’ of 60 ounces of ‘hard squeezed amalgam’.<sup>248</sup> In October, about a dozen experienced prospectors rushed the area and pegged off two claims.<sup>249</sup> The branch tramway from the top of Butler’s Incline was extended to the mine, and a steady but small amount of gold with a higher than normal value was broken out.<sup>250</sup> By the end of March 1887, 36 tons had been crushed for a return of 36 ounces.<sup>251</sup> Work soon ceased because of problems treating the ore, and the claim was forfeited in 1889.<sup>252</sup>

At the very end of the year, anticipating that new techniques would save more bullion, ‘a large area’ of abandoned ground was marked out,

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<sup>244</sup> Te Aroha Warden’s Court, Register of Te Aroha Claims 1880-1888, folios 142, 148, BBAV 11567/1a; Register of Licensed Holdings 1881-1887, folio 88, BBAV, 11500/9a; Plaintiff Book 1880-1898, 49/1882, BBAV 11547/1a, ANZ-A; *New Zealand Gazette*, 14 December 1882, p. 1885; *Te Aroha News*, 15 August 1885, p. 7, Piako County Council, 4 September 1886, p. 2.

<sup>245</sup> Te Aroha Warden’s Court, Register of Aroha Claims 1880-1888, folio 327, BBAV 11567/1a; Register of Licensed Holdings 1881-1887, folios 39, 40, 45, 99, BBAV 11500/9a, ANZ-A; *New Zealand Gazette*, 14 December 1882, p. 1884.

<sup>246</sup> See Birth Certificate of John Murray, 1 February 1885, 1885/1360, BDM; Mines Department, MD 1, 87/1298, ANZ-W; *Waikato Times*, 17 June 1886, p. 3; *Te Aroha News*, 22 March 1884, p. 2, 7 March 1885, p. 7, 23 January 1886, p. 2, 20 February 1886, p. 2, 3 July 1886, p. 2, advertisement, 15 January 1887, p. 3.

<sup>247</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 16 October 1886, p. 2; Te Aroha Warden’s Court, Register of Te Aroha Claims 1880-1888, folio 139, BBAV 11567/1a, ANZ-A.

<sup>248</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 9 October 1886, p. 2.

<sup>249</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 23 October 1886, p. 2, 4 December 1886, p. 2.

<sup>250</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 23 October 1886, p. 2, 30 October 1886, p. 2, 27 November 1886, p. 2, 4 December 1886, p. 2.

<sup>251</sup> *AJHR*, 1887, C-5, p. 32.

<sup>252</sup> See paper on the Silver King mine.

mostly by the Battery Company.<sup>253</sup> The *Te Aroha News*' assessment of 1886 noted 'several sharp rebuffs' with the failure of the LaMonte and New Era processes,<sup>254</sup> but stressed the latter had revealed 'in the most satisfactory manner possible the richness of vast mineral resources that lie awaiting the magic wand of the capitalist, on every hand'. Hopeful signs were the reduction of battery and tramway charges and as well the 1886 Mining Act's reducing rentals of licensed holdings from £3 to 10s an acre.<sup>255</sup>

## 1887

In February, after his inspection, the warden, now Henry Aldborough Stratford, argued that the sole reason the field had 'retrograded' was 'the want of means on the part of Individual Miners to perform work requiring considerable capital at the onset'. Firth and Ferguson agreed 'that Individual miners or small parties with limited areas and no means could never work the mines profitably'; when this was tried, the result was abandoned claims. As the nature of the reefs required replacing small claims with larger ones, he had decided that, 'with due regard to individual rights now held by enterprising men who have stood by their claims undaunted by the difficulties', he would grant large areas 'to those persons and companies who have already expended fortunes in developing reefs and proved their sincerity by their works'.<sup>256</sup> This decision was publicized in his annual report, which argued that the future depended on developing the reefs systematically, reducing costs, and improving treatment methods. 'Individual miners or companies cannot hope to hold and work small claims to advantage'.<sup>257</sup> Accordingly, he had granted Firth Special Claim No. 1 and Ferguson Special Claim No. 2,<sup>258</sup> creating hope that 'some of the old life in mining' would be revived.<sup>259</sup> A visiting journalist found tradespeople

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<sup>253</sup> *Waikato Times*, 1 January 1887, p. 3.

<sup>254</sup> See papers on the Tui district and Peter Ferguson and his New Era.

<sup>255</sup> Editorial, *Te Aroha News*, 1 January 1887, p. 2.

<sup>256</sup> Peter Ferguson to Warden, 2 February 1887, Te Aroha Warden's Court, Applications 1887, BBAV 11591/1a, ANZ-A; H.A. Stratford to Minister of Mines, 2 February 1887, Mines Department, MD 1, 87/89, ANZ-W.

<sup>257</sup> H.A. Stratford to Under-Secretary, Mines Department, 7 April 1887, *AJHR*, 1887, C-6, pp. 6-7.

<sup>258</sup> See papers on the Battery Company and Peter Ferguson and his New Era.

<sup>259</sup> *Waikato Times*, 29 January 1887, p. 3.

'looking forward with great hope to a prosperous year' because Firth's claim was expected to attract foreign investment and there was faith in a new process at his battery.<sup>260</sup>

In reporting on mining for the year to 31 March, Gordon described the field as 'in a very low state. Most of the mines that were originally taken up have changed hands or been abandoned; but there is little doubt that the whole of the ground will yet be worked when a better method of treating the ores is adopted'.<sup>261</sup> He also mentioned the latest discovery, at nearby Waitoa,<sup>262</sup> a mirage whose true nature was exposed later in the year.<sup>263</sup> Gordon gave the number of tons crushed since the Waiorongomai goldfield opened as 26,599, for 22,282 ounces of gold, an average yield per ton of 16dwt 18gr. For individual mines, the best results were the Silver King, with an average yield from 32 tons of 1oz 19dwt 9gr, the Phoenix, 1oz 7dwt 9gr from 27 tons, the Waiorongomai with 1oz 1dwt 17gr from 344 tons, and the New Find with 1oz 1gr from 13,121 tons, nearly double the amount extracted by the next largest mine, the Colonist. The Welcome's average of 56oz 10dwt came from only two tons.<sup>264</sup>

Stratford blamed decreasing gold production during the past 12 months on the lack of water to crush ore from the New Find and Colonist in January and February, work in other mines not being 'vigorously prosecuted', and failure to find satisfactory processes. Nevertheless, 'a more hopeful feeling' prevailed than for some time, 'two influential companies' having been created to work large areas. 'With a comprehensive and systematic plan of working, improved and suitable machinery, and the control of the capital necessary to carry out works of such magnitude, there is every probability of a revival'.<sup>265</sup> This was a long list of requirements to fulfil his optimism. And, as Wilson noted in a comment that Stratford repeated verbatim in his own report, the goldfield was sharing in 'the general depression' in New Zealand, and 'no fresh capital' had been spent on mining during the year.<sup>266</sup> The reason was explained in a private report by

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<sup>260</sup> Own Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 22 January 1887, p. 8.

<sup>261</sup> H.A. Gordon to Minister of Mines, 5 May 1887, *AJHR*, 1887, C-5, p. 30.

<sup>262</sup> H.A. Gordon to Minister of Mines, 5 May 1887, *AJHR*, 1887, C-5, pp. 30-31.

<sup>263</sup> See paper on the Waitoa Find.

<sup>264</sup> H.A. Gordon to Minister of Mines, 5 May 1887, *AJHR*, 1887, C-5, p. 32.

<sup>265</sup> H.A. Stratford to Under-Secretary, Mines Department, 7 April 1887, *AJHR*, 1887, C-6, pp. 5, 7-8.

<sup>266</sup> George Wilson to Warden, 3 April 1887, *AJHR*, 1887, C-6, p. 8.

the inspector of the Bank of New South Wales on Auckland's commercial community:

The state of business in Auckland just now is simply deplorable. The timber trade has almost collapsed for the time being ... and as this has been one of the principal mainstays of Auckland the ill effects have been very much felt. But what is perhaps the greatest cause of the present state of affairs is the widespread feeling of distrust and uncertainty as to the position of many of the leading men in the place who have until recently been viewed as wealthy. These have involved themselves in extensive land speculations of a more or less doubtful nature and as these properties are absolutely unsaleable but are more sinks for money in the meantime, those who are concerned in them are many of them in embarrassed circumstances.<sup>267</sup>

The solution to the lack of capital was to attract foreign investors. 'All over the goldfields at the present time, but very especially so on the Upper Thames', there was a 'frantic desire that English capitalists may be induced to invest large sums of money'. In some places work was 'almost at a standstill, awaiting the result of the various efforts in that direction'. Many of the 'most promising localities', including Waiorongomai, could 'never be fully tested' without such capital.<sup>268</sup> In the early part of the year, Firth created the impression that English capital would be introduced to work his special claim on a large scale, and an Englishman, Price Williams, negotiated with him and also the owners of Tui mines on behalf of a 'large and wealthy Financial Association in England', unsuccessfully.<sup>269</sup>

Late in July there was a brief flurry of excitement when gold was found between the old Prospectors' Claim at Te Aroha and Stoney Creek, prompting other parties to start prospecting nearby.<sup>270</sup> Wilson wisely discounted the news, for only loose stones had been located.<sup>271</sup> A new

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<sup>267</sup> Bank of New South Wales, Inspector's Half-Yearly Report, 31 March 1887: Auckland, Acc. No. 102, Westpac Archives, Wellington.

<sup>268</sup> *Observer*, 2 April 1887, p. 10.

<sup>269</sup> *Te Aroha News*, editorial, 15 January 1887, p. 2, Piako County Council, 29 January 1887, p. 2, 6 February 1887, p. 2, Warden's Court, 28 May 1887, p. 2, 2 July 1887, p. 2, 23 July 1887, p. 2, editorial, 31 December 1887, p. 2.

<sup>270</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 30 July 1887, p. 2.

<sup>271</sup> George Wilson to H.A. Stratford, 26 July 1887, Te Aroha Warden's Court, Letterbook 1883-1900, p.189, BBAV 11534/1a, ANZ-A.

Waiorongomai prospecting association requested 15s a week from the council to match its contribution, for the combined amounts would enable two men to prospect between Wairakau and the Wairere Falls. A motion to grant this aid, 'though vigorously advocated' by Denis Murphy, 'was not seconded, and accordingly lapsed'.<sup>272</sup> Francis Pavitt, a local engineer, architect, and surveyor,<sup>273</sup> who had earlier held interests in three Waiorongomai mines,<sup>274</sup> made a much more ambitious proposal:

I believe that by making a tunnel from the Te Aroha side of the hill, say from the neighbourhood of Stoney Creek, towards the New Find mine, at such a low level as may be determined upon by good and practical miners, good and payable gold would be obtained, and would well repay the promoters. I would propose that a sum, say five shillings per week, should be paid by each person wishing to join in the undertaking, and that the Government should be asked to subsidise the amount so raised by £1 for £1, and at the end of one month work should be commenced. A board of directors should be appointed by the subscribers, to see to the proper carrying out of the work, and the expenditure of the money. Ground should be applied for through the Warden, of say five chains wide on each side of the centre of the tunnel, and as leaders were struck, tributes should be let, and every encouragement given to thoroughly test the ground through which the tunnel would run. I believe by a proper canvass many would be only too ready to join to further the above object; and even people in Auckland and other places would readily subscribe. I purposely leave out any ideas re the forming of a company, and other details, such as size of tunnel, and exact spot to commence work, direction of drive, etc, and if my crude scheme is thought well of, a public meeting should be held, to adopt this or any better one that may be forthcoming, for if we expect any good from our goldfield, we must try our best to prospect it.<sup>275</sup>

One month later, having received 'very encouraging promises of assistance', Pavitt convened a public meeting. Naturally, the local newspaper supported his initiative and, equally naturally, called for

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<sup>272</sup> Piako County Council, *Waikato Times*, 2 August 1887, p. 2.

<sup>273</sup> See *Thames Advertiser*, 8 October 1883, p. 2, 31 October 1885, p. 3, 17 August 1886, p. 2; *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 2, p. 825.

<sup>274</sup> Te Aroha Warden's Court, Register of Licensed Holdings 1881-1887, folios 118, 150, 151, BBAV 11500/9a, ANZ-A.

<sup>275</sup> Letter from Francis Pavitt, *Te Aroha News*, 29 October 1887, p. 2.

financial aid from both council and government.<sup>276</sup> The 'large gathering' was told by Pavitt that 'he had heard it stated by good and trusty miners that there was gold in the hills from Te Aroha to Waiorongomai, and that if they could but get into the hills most probably a good vein of country would be met with'. He suggested they form 'an association or company, in which all and every one could join', to avoid a monopoly. He proposed 'that say 50 men should join the association contributing 5s per week each. He said 50 men, but if 100 or 150 were to join, it would be so much the better'. A weekly income of £12 10s meant they could employ six men working in three shifts. 'The miners employed would no doubt possess shares themselves, and therefore if anything good was struck would be as much benefited as anyone else. If payable gold was met with, it could be let to tributers'. He suggested seeking council and government backing, and had been told 'by several persons' that assistance from Auckland was likely, 'and that shares in the association if formed, would be taken up there. He thought possibly they might look forward to having their own reduction works by and bye'. The motion to form the Te Aroha Prospecting Association was carried unanimously, and a provisional committee elected, comprising Pavitt along with a carpenter, a miner, a storekeeper, and an ironmonger. Its capital was £30,000 in £1 shares, of which 20,000 were to be sold to the public and the remainder reserved for future sale. A first call of 3d per share was made 'on allotment of applications, the balance to be called up, if required, in monthly calls, not exceeding 1d'.<sup>277</sup>

The *Waikato Times* was pleased that 7,000 shares had been taken up immediately in Te Aroha and hoped Waikato residents would purchase some. 'We look upon Te Aroha as intimately associated with, if not a part of the great Waikato country, and whatever tends to advance the interests of Te Aroha must also operate materially on the prosperity of the whole district'.<sup>278</sup> The *Te Aroha News* wrote that, 'judging from the spirit with which the matter has been taken up here, it would seem that extraneous assistance will hardly be wanted'. Mills, the association's secretary, as a member of the council 'made a forcible appeal' to it for assistance, foreshadowing a motion for a subsidy.<sup>279</sup>

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<sup>276</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 26 November 1887, p. 2.

<sup>277</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 3 December 1887, p. 2.

<sup>278</sup> *Waikato Times*, 24 December 1887, p. 2.

<sup>279</sup> Piako County Council, *Waikato Times*, 24 December 1887, p. 2.

The prospectus of the Te Aroha Prospecting Association, published on 7 January, indicated that it required a large sum of money, for it now planned to drive a tunnel starting near the old Morning Star mine, close to Te Aroha, towards the New Find until it reached 'ground owned by existing companies and individuals'; wisely, neither the distance nor the cost was specified. Its justification this low level tunnel was the 'well-known fact' that 'a large amount of capital' had been spent 'in mere surface prospecting' whereas a 'small proportion' of this sum spent in the 'systematic manner' now proposed 'would have undoubtedly demonstrated the value of the reef'. The prospectus 'confidently expected' both government and council would assist.<sup>280</sup> When the financially stretched council declined to assist either this or a similar Waiorongomai association,<sup>281</sup> these associations were stillborn.

In the previous November, when the Battery Company took over the tramway and lowered its charges, the *Te Aroha News* expected this would 'enable much lower grade quartz to be profitably dealt with'.<sup>282</sup> But at first there was only a superficial revival, for independent miners still faced the same problems, as illustrated by a letter to the warden from an owner of the Success No. 2 requesting (successfully) protection to work with two men for three months, for five reasons:

Firstly, That the ground has been worked on behalf of myself and partners for the past two years.

Secondly, That a very large amount of work has been done, in the way of prospecting and opening up the ground, consisting of a winze 75 feet deep, a tunnel over three hundred feet, and several drives in different parts of the ground.

Thirdly, That we have a well defined gold bearing reef, two feet thick, the assay value of which reaches as much as £40.0.0 per ton, but the ore being of a refractory nature, the Battery process will not save it, therefore it is useless in the mean time to stope it out.

Fourthly, That the present owners being unequal to the introduction of the necessary plant to save the bullion (they having already spent over a thousand pounds) it becomes necessary to introduce outside Capital.

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<sup>280</sup> *Waikato Times*, 7 January 1888, p. 3.

<sup>281</sup> Piako County Council, *Te Aroha News*, 21 January 1888, p. 2.

<sup>282</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 5 November 1887, p. 2.

Fifthly, that the property is now under offer to a London firm a member of which inspected the ground in May last, and made a conditional offer for it.<sup>283</sup>

Access continued to be difficult because of both topography and weather. For example, in March, Richard Burke, who owned the Welcome,<sup>284</sup> obtained £8 from the council to repair the upper road from Butler's Spur to his claim because of its 'very bad state': trees had fallen across it and a slip had left it 'too narrow to get along with safety'.<sup>285</sup> The problems of treatment and lack of capital continued, and even the introduction of overseas capital did not solve these.<sup>286</sup> Profitability was further handicapped by the average price for Hauraki gold for the year to April 1889 being 2s per ounce less than the average price for the previous year.<sup>287</sup>

In January, visitors associated with Australian and British capitalists inspected Tui and Waiorongomai mines, raising hopes of overseas capital,<sup>288</sup> but nothing resulted immediately. Attempts to find such capital, according to one correspondent, meant less mining. Whilst 'want of funds' was one reason for little mining late in the year, 'the main cause of inaction' was that many claims were under offer to investors.<sup>289</sup>

Gordon reported that, at the end of March, all Waiorongomai's mines were owned by the Battery and New Era companies.<sup>290</sup> When mining

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<sup>283</sup> T.G. Marlow to Warden, 17 August 1888, Te Aroha Warden's Court, Applications for Protection 1888, BBAV 11289/12a, ANZ-A.

<sup>284</sup> See Te Aroha Warden's Court, Register of Te Aroha Claims 1880-1888, folio 148, BBAV 11567/1a; Applications for Licensed Holdings 1888, 27, 81/1888, BBAV 11582/3a, ANZ-A; *Te Aroha News*, 19 May 1888, p. 2.

<sup>285</sup> Piako County Council, *Te Aroha News*, 17 March 1888, p. 2; Piako County Council, *Waikato Times*, 17 March 1888, p. 2.

<sup>286</sup> See papers on the Tui District, Peter Ferguson and his New Era and the Te Aroha Silver and Gold Mining Company.

<sup>287</sup> George Wilson to Under-Secretary, Mines Department, 20 April 1889, Inspector of Mines Letterbook 1888-1892, p. 159, YBAZ 1240/1, ANZ-A.

<sup>288</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 7 January 1888, p. 2, 14 January 1888, p. 2; *Auckland Weekly News*, 28 January 1888, p. 10.

<sup>289</sup> Te Aroha Correspondent, *Thames Advertiser*, 2 October 1888, p. 2.

<sup>290</sup> H.A. Gordon to Under-Secretary, Mines Department, 1 May 1888, *AJHR*, 1888, C-5, p. 29.

started it had been expected that ‘properly developed’ reefs would ‘give employment to a large population for many years’, but plentiful work and good dividends had not resulted. ‘First one claim gave up, and then another. At the time of my visit, in January, there was only one claim at work’. Nevertheless, he was confident that when there was a plant ‘capable of treating the ore properly many of the mines now idle will be taken up again and worked with profit’.<sup>291</sup> For the year to 31 March, an average of 76 miners were at work.<sup>292</sup> In that period, gold production fell by 740oz 11dwt 12gr compared with the previous 12 months.<sup>293</sup> Wilson explained this was because the New Find had not been worked as successfully as previously and other mines had ‘either been abandoned or not worked in a vigorous manner’, meaning ‘unimportant’ returns.<sup>294</sup> Further prospecting in the Mangakino Valley to trace the Tui and Waiorongomai reefs required prospecting tracks, and the ‘belt of country’ between Tui and Waihi ‘should be opened up by tracks, as those reefs appear to run in the direction of Waihi’. Prospects had ‘greatly improved’ in the first three months of the year, because of the discovery of rich ore in the New Find and the Silver King.<sup>295</sup> But some young men left for Broken Hill, in Australia, in March, seeing brighter prospects there.<sup>296</sup>

The Silver King discovery, of quartz rich in silver, was near the old Werahiko claim and above the Success.<sup>297</sup> It attracted considerable attention,<sup>298</sup> and in March was bought for £4,000 by William Robert Wilson, of the future Te Aroha Silver and Gold Mining Company,<sup>299</sup> at the same

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<sup>291</sup> H.A. Gordon to Under-Secretary, Mines Department, 1 May 1888, *AJHR*, 1888, C-5, p. 28.

<sup>292</sup> *AJHR*, 1888, C-6, p. 13.

<sup>293</sup> *AJHR*, 1888, C-6, p. 11.

<sup>294</sup> George Wilson to Under-Secretary, Mines Department, 4 April 1888, *AJHR*, 1888, C-6, p. 11.

<sup>295</sup> George Wilson to Under-Secretary, Mines Department, 4 April 1888, *AJHR*, 1888, C-6, p. 12.

<sup>296</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 3 March 1888, p. 2.

<sup>297</sup> Plan of Silver King Licensed Holding, applied for by Hugh McLiver and Thomas Gavin, 5 April 1888, Te Aroha Museum.

<sup>298</sup> See paper on the Silver King mine.

<sup>299</sup> See paper on this company.

time that he purchased Firth's Special Claim.<sup>300</sup> The owners were commended by the *Te Aroha News* 'for disposing of it on such reasonable terms, and not sticking out for an unreasonable price as so many have done in somewhat similar circumstances, most frequently to find that in grasping at the shadow they had lost the substance'.<sup>301</sup>

The injection of overseas capital had a great impact on mining and on miners' morale. In January, an average of only about 12 trucks a day were sent down the tramway,<sup>302</sup> but a month later there was 'a more hopeful feeling' than for 'some time past. The prospect of the early introduction of English capital to develop the Tui Creek and other mines encourages the belief that there will soon be a revival'.<sup>303</sup> In March, with discoveries of good ore at Tui and the Silver King combined with visiting mining experts, notably Wilson, 'a very large area' at Waiorongomai was pegged out.<sup>304</sup> By the end of the month, 'the mining boom' was 'beginning to make itself felt'.<sup>305</sup> Reflecting its faith in the revival, the *Te Aroha News* was published bi-weekly instead of weekly and hoped to be able to publish even more frequently.<sup>306</sup> Wilson's purchase of the Battery Company's properties would bring, it anticipated, 'a tide of prosperity' unlike anything yet witnessed 'on any of the Upper Thames goldfields'.<sup>307</sup>

At Waiorongomai the transformation that has been effected since Mr W.R. Wilson, a week ago, came upon the scene, has been almost as sudden and complete as if brought about by the wand of a magician. A fortnight ago a very considerable number of men were unemployed, and were looking disconsolately forward to the coming winter, as to a period of privation and distress. The hopes which were entertained by a few that one or other of the English companies about which there has been so much said would come to the rescue, had almost died out, and gloomy forebodings were generally indulged in.... Today there is not an idle man in the

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<sup>300</sup> J.C. Firth to W.R. Wilson, March 1888, Te Aroha Warden's Court, Certified Instruments 1888, BBAV 11581/9a, ANZ-A.

<sup>301</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 24 March 1888, p. 2.

<sup>302</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 21 January 1888, p. 2.

<sup>303</sup> Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 25 February 1888, p. 2.

<sup>304</sup> *Waikato Times*, 22 March 1888, p. 2.

<sup>305</sup> *Thames Advertiser*, 26 March 1888, p. 2; see also *Te Aroha News*, 17 March 1888, p. 2.

<sup>306</sup> Editorial, *Te Aroha News*, 10 March 1888, p. 2.

<sup>307</sup> Editorial, *Te Aroha News*, 24 March 1888, p. 2.

township, and instead of the cry of no employment we are likely shortly to hear of a scarcity of labour.

It expected the company would employ 200 men and that other companies would be formed, making Waiorongomai once more 'a scene of busy life and industry'.<sup>308</sup> At that settlement all were 'in high spirits in the anticipation of prosperous times once more'.<sup>309</sup> At a banquet held to thank Adams for attracting Australian capital, 'all through the evening the speeches showed that a hope of better times to come pervaded the community ... and that an era of prosperity was about to succeed the heavy depression which has so long been felt'.<sup>310</sup> In Auckland, it was noted that the Te Aroha Silver and Gold Mining Company, with a nominal capital of £200,000, had twice the capital of the Waihi mine, floated in London, and of the Maratoto, floated in Sydney. It was also noted that the owners of these properties, like those at Tui, had

not been able to make very advantageous bargains, and have had to accept very low terms from outside capitalists. The actual cash paid to the original companies or owners aggregates to a very small amount, although in several cases shares have been allotted, and local residents will therefore come in for some proportion of the profits, should results be favourable.<sup>311</sup>

On 7 April, the *Te Aroha News* stated that the importance of the formation of the Champion Gold and Silver Mining Company to work the main Tui mines could 'scarcely be over estimated', for 'it appears as if our most sanguine expectations' for the goldfields were 'about to be more than realized, and that speedily. So may it be. ADVANCE TE AROHA'.<sup>312</sup> Pegging out was 'the order of the day', with seven special claims applied for at Tui, Te Aroha, and Waiorongomai in early April.<sup>313</sup> These larger areas would overcome 'the great difficulty' of small claims discouraging foreign

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<sup>308</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 28 March 1888, p. 2.

<sup>309</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 31 March 1888, p. 2.

<sup>310</sup> *Waikato Times*, 14 April 1888, p. 2.

<sup>311</sup> *Auckland Weekly News*, 21 April 1888, p. 3.

<sup>312</sup> Editorial, *Te Aroha News*, 7 April 1888, p. 2.

<sup>313</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 7 April 1888, p. 2.

capital, Gavin arguing that ‘capitalists must have large areas as a rule to work upon’.<sup>314</sup> The *Te Aroha News* agreed:

It has been amply demonstrated capitalists will not, unless under very exceptional circumstances indeed, put money into small areas, because these small areas admit of so little scope for prospecting, and if they did prospect and make a discovery, immediately they would find themselves pegged in on all sides by those who had quietly looked on, watching the progress of events, and waiting for a chance of dropping in for unearned increment, or hoping to be bought out. The Te Aroha goldfield was opened under the 5 acre licensed holding system, and so worked for some years, and practically abandoned as unpayable.

The ‘welcome change’ in the past few months was not caused by ‘any very rich discovery, but by a capitalist’, Wilson, investing ‘largely’ and thereby ‘directing the attention of other capitalists to this goldfield’, which was ‘not a poor man’s field, and is never likely to be. Without the capitalist it must and would simply lie neglected’. As large special claims were necessary, it objected to some people complaining the land was being locked up. Plenty of land remained for pegging out, and those raising ‘the false cry of the goldfield being locked up’ were ‘those who, were it all once more thrown open, would be the very last to go and prospect it’. They were ‘simply jealous’; no ‘miners (in the true sense of the word)’ were complaining. The warden could be trusted to require spending a ‘reasonable amount of money within a certain time’ and to throw the ground open again if this was not done.<sup>315</sup>

In late April it reported more prospecting, more pegging out, and ‘new life and energy all round’. There were ‘about a hundred men at work’ in several mines, prospecting, driving, stoping, and timbering.<sup>316</sup> Thames readers were informed there was ‘plenty of work for miners and others at Te Aroha. A resident states that if 50 men were to arrive they would have no difficulty in securing employment’.<sup>317</sup> It was later rumoured that ‘a number’ of Thames prospectors did come to seek gold.<sup>318</sup> At the end of the month, a good discovery in the Colonist resulted in many people being ‘asked, “have

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<sup>314</sup> Warden’s Court, *Te Aroha News*, 12 May 1888, p. 7.

<sup>315</sup> Editorial, *Te Aroha News*, 9 June 1888, p. 2.

<sup>316</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 21 April 1888, p. 2.

<sup>317</sup> *Thames Advertiser*, 25 April 1888, p. 2.

<sup>318</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 28 November 1888, p. 2.

you any Colonists?" an interrogation that has not been put for a length of time before. Holders however, having stuck to their scrip so far, did not appear to care to part with them, but prefer awaiting further developments'.<sup>319</sup> Prospecting adits were being driven in other mines, and some new reefs were found in which gold had 'occasionally been seen, but nothing that deserves special notice'.<sup>320</sup>

In June, a Waiorongomai correspondent referred to a 'mining boom'. 'Since Millionaire Wilson bought up the mines' the field had 'awakened from its long lethargy' and 'assumed a busy and thriving aspect, reminding one of the good old times of '82 and '83'. All this was 'mere child's play to the revival anticipated when Howell, the celebrated California expert, comes on the scene'.<sup>321</sup> John Howell was brought in to reconstruct the battery.<sup>322</sup> Exaggerating mightily, this correspondent claimed 'nearly every second man you meet' was a surveyor 'busy making surveys of the thousand and one special claims, licensed holdings, etc, between here and the Tui'.<sup>323</sup>

A Hamilton editorial stressed the reality behind the introduction of British and Australian capital that created the Te Aroha and Ohinemuri boom. The 'share speculators' had introduced capital

more in name than reality. Companies have been formed as mere speculations, the promoters receiving the larger share of the paid up capital whilst but a very small amount comparatively is allotted for actual working of the mines. By and bye, when the right moment comes, there will be some startling announcement made of rich lodes struck and astounding yields per ton, which will send shares up to fancy values, and certain people will reap fine fortunes, but the fortunate ones will not be the hard-working miners, nor, perhaps, the local tradespeople.

The ground between Tui and Waiorongomai had been pegged off mostly by people 'of the non-mining class, sheer speculators and schemers in fact' who would neither mine nor test the ore but 'manipulate their holdings' in the hope of filling 'their pockets by a successful hocus-pocus that does not require hard manual labour or mechanical appliances', and be

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<sup>319</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 19 May 1888, p. 2.

<sup>320</sup> *Waikato Times*, 15 May 1888, p. 2.

<sup>321</sup> Waiorongomai Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 14 June 1888, p. 2.

<sup>322</sup> See paper on the Te Aroha Silver and Gold Mining Company.

<sup>323</sup> Waiorongomai Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 14 June 1888, p. 2.

a 'positive curse' that would 'seriously retard' the fields.<sup>324</sup> This jaundiced view of foreign capital accurately assessed the Champion Company in particular.<sup>325</sup> As for the smaller schemers, most ground pegged out was soon abandoned as the mini-boom of 1888 faded with the fortunes of the Te Aroha Silver and Gold Mining Company,<sup>326</sup> foiling schemes of coining money by selling claims.

The authorities were aware of the profiteering motivations for the renewed enthusiasm for owning possibly auriferous ground. At a hearing at Te Aroha, the new warden, Henry William Northcroft, warned that all applicants for special claims must prove gold existed and provide details of the amount of capital to be spent. The government wanted to prevent land being granted for 'bogus purposes'. Having some genuine mines floated would be good 'for the whole of the peninsula', but speculative ventures would have 'very bad' consequences. He had been instructed 'to see not only that there is capital, and that not fictitious capital, meaning on paper, but that there is a reasonable probability of its being expended on the ground'.<sup>327</sup>

The *Te Aroha News*, then keeping quiet about any qualms it might have about speculators, reported 'nearly the whole main line of reef' was pegged out between the Tui and New Find mines, with prospecting being carried on 'by several experienced miners'.<sup>328</sup> Naively, it expressed pleasure that several new claims were manned.<sup>329</sup> It hoped and expected that more British and Australian capitalists would invest.<sup>330</sup> When the successful floating of the Champion Company to work the Tui mines was announced in August, it noted that the value of properties nearby would be 'greatly enhanced'. The outlook for this part of the field was 'most encouraging', and 'the long expected boom' appeared 'to be within measurable distance; and we believe our most sanguine predictions for Te Aroha as the prosperous centre of vast mining operations will be fulfilled at no distant date. So may it be'.<sup>331</sup>

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<sup>324</sup> Editorial, *Waikato Times*, 26 June 1888, p. 2.

<sup>325</sup> See chapter on the Tui district.

<sup>326</sup> See chapter on this company.

<sup>327</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 12 May 1888, p. 7.

<sup>328</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 19 May 1888, p. 2; 2 June 1888, p. 2.

<sup>329</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 11 August 1888, p. 2.

<sup>330</sup> Editorial, *Te Aroha News*, 23 June 1888, p. 2.

<sup>331</sup> Editorial, *Te Aroha News*, 4 August 1888, p. 2.

In reality, not much mining was taking place: in the month to mid-June, only 200 trucks were sent down.<sup>332</sup> Until the battery was improved, most mining was restricted to ‘continuing the low levels ... and generally opening up the ground’, and no additional miners would be employed.<sup>333</sup> In July, the Te Aroha Silver and Gold Mining Company employed from 130 to 150 miners, but Ferguson’s ground was not being worked. In five small Waiorongomai mines, two men were working in one, two had a man working in each, and no one was working in the other two. At Tui, only 19 men were employed in ten claims.<sup>334</sup> Nearly four months later, because the battery was being extended ‘very little quartz’ was sent down and only four men were working.<sup>335</sup>

The *Te Aroha News* considered that, with the imminent arrival of experts to devise new treatment processes, ‘everything that money and science can do to solve the difficult problem of “how best to successfully treat our refractory ores” ’ was likely to be done.<sup>336</sup> This created ‘great confidence in the future’; indeed, ‘at no past period’ had ‘the outlook been more cheerful than at present’.<sup>337</sup> One reporter agreed that mining would now succeed, for ‘the best experts’ brought from England and America, ‘after the most careful investigation and analysis’, believed success was possible. ‘It is not reasonable to suppose that companies would spend very large sums of money’ erecting ‘costly plants if they did not see their way clear to make money out of it’.<sup>338</sup> A Waiorongomai correspondent reported ‘a somewhat more satisfied feeling’ there, and ‘sincerely hoped that we have bottomed the bad times, and that the past severe lesson of struggle’ would ‘give renewed vigour to those miners who, either through stress of circumstances or a fixed faith in the place, have stood by it waiting for better times’.<sup>339</sup>

At the end of November, most of the work reported was surface prospecting.<sup>340</sup> In mid-December, although there was ‘little doing’ it was

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<sup>332</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 23 June 1888, p. 2.

<sup>333</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 1 August 1888, p. 2.

<sup>334</sup> George Wilson to Warden, 2 July 1888, 4 July 1888, Inspector of Mines Letterbook 1888-1892, p. 52, YBAZ 1240/1, ANZ-A.

<sup>335</sup> Special Reporter, *Auckland Weekly News*, 27 October 1888, p. 37.

<sup>336</sup> Editorial, *Te Aroha News*, 9 June 1888, p. 2.

<sup>337</sup> *Waikato Times*, 17 July 1888, p. 2.

<sup>338</sup> Special Reporter, *Waikato Times*, 4 October 1888, p. 2.

<sup>339</sup> Waiorongomai Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 10 November 1888, p. 2.

<sup>340</sup> ‘Waiorongomai Mining News’, *Waikato Times*, 29 November 1888, p. 2.

expected work would start in some mines before the end of the year.<sup>341</sup> By then, since its inception Waiorongomai had produced 26,313 ounces of gold from 35,146 tons, an average yield per ton of 14dwt 23gr.<sup>342</sup>

## 1889

After the excitement created by the introduction of overseas capital, 1889 was to be an anti-climax. As at 31 March, the 43 mining leases registered covered 1,221 acres,<sup>343</sup> but these figures were meaningless because there was little mining apart from in the Te Aroha Silver and Gold Mining Company's ground. Northcroft reported that 'very little ore had been treated. Owing to its refractory nature mine-owners have contented themselves with getting their ore out and waiting to see' what the improved battery could do. Most of the large reefs were low grade, and it was questionable whether many would pay. Both batteries 'were stopped two-thirds of the year, pending alterations; but with these drawbacks' gold worth 1,112oz 15dwt was extracted, besides 50 tons, worth fully £250'. No claims taken up where gold was discovered in 1880 had 'produced anything worth reporting'.<sup>344</sup>

Output was seriously handicapped because lack of water during most of March and April meant the battery was unable to operate. With its hoppers full, almost all mining had to stop.<sup>345</sup> Concerned to discover whether this was the real reason for the lack of activity, Northcroft inspected 'a great many' mines 'to form his own opinions' about the work done.<sup>346</sup> Six complaints heard on 2 April to forfeit claims for non-working were typical. When two parties claimed arrangements were likely to work their claims by one tunnel, their cases were adjourned for a month. In the third case, where 'a certain amount of work had been done', one owner promised to 'try and have the mine regularly worked'.<sup>347</sup> (He also 'admitted that a

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<sup>341</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 15 December 1888, p. 2.

<sup>342</sup> *AJHR*, 1890, C-3, p. 43.

<sup>343</sup> *AJHR*, 1889, C-2, p. 148.

<sup>344</sup> H.W. Northcroft to Under-Secretary, Mines Department, 4 May 1889, *AJHR*, 1889, C-2, p. 95.

<sup>345</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 20 March 1889, p. 2, 23 March 1889, p. 2, 6 April 1889, p. 2, 10 April 1889, p. 2, 1 May 1889, p. 2.

<sup>346</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 20 March 1889, p. 2.

<sup>347</sup> Warden's Court, *Te Aroha News*, 3 April 1889, p. 2.

swindle had been tried with this ground but now that element had been removed'.<sup>348</sup> Northcroft adjourned this case for a month after warning him 'If you put hands on you will need to put on men who will work the ground'. In the fourth case, as Wilson had visited 'on two occasions and could see no sign of any work being done', it was forfeited'. In the fifth mine (in which one owner had not assisted his partners), Northcroft adjourned the case for one month because it was 'in comparatively new country'. In the last case, the manager said it had been difficult to get in calls, 'but he had seen some of the shareholders recently, who had promised to pay up; and he would ask for an adjournment. He was prepared to put on some men at once'. This case was also adjourned for one month, 'two men to be put on at once'.<sup>349</sup> After the month was up, three of these claims were forfeited.<sup>350</sup> In August, when considering the possible forfeiture of a special claim, Northcroft said that he had

no wish to forfeit ground where there is disposition shown to prospect it, and test its value. I well know there is a great deal of ground taken up that it would not pay to fully man. What I object to is ground being taken up and not worked, but simply held for speculative purposes, and with no attempt to really work it being made. I will render every assistance to those who do show a disposition to work the ground they hold.<sup>351</sup>

Despite mining decreasing, some prospecting continued,<sup>352</sup> and in October the tramway was working for four days each week, from 20 to 25 men extracting 'payable stuff'.<sup>353</sup>

In April, a Waiorongomai correspondent had considered that, with two 'great' batteries, it was 'but reasonable to hope this place will hold a very important position in the near future as a gold and silver producer, backed by capital and science'.<sup>354</sup> The cessation of work in the New Find in September 'cast quite a gloom', taking 'everyone by surprise'. This

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<sup>348</sup> Warden's Court, *Waikato Times*, 6 April 1889, p. 2.

<sup>349</sup> Warden's Court, *Te Aroha News*, 3 April 1889, p. 2.

<sup>350</sup> Warden's Court, *Te Aroha News*, 1 May 1889, p. 2.

<sup>351</sup> Warden's Court, *Te Aroha News*, 7 April 1889, p. 2.

<sup>352</sup> *Thames Advertiser*, 9 March 1889, p. 2; *Te Aroha News*, 5 June 1889, p. 2, 24 August 1889, p. 2.

<sup>353</sup> Waiorongomai Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 31 October 1889, p. 2.

<sup>354</sup> Waiorongomai Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 27 April 1889, p. 2.

correspondent hoped, 'for the benefit of the whole district, that active work will be resumed'.<sup>355</sup> Work did not resume; once again, this was an example of the generally depressed state of mining throughout the Upper Thames caused by the failure to find effective and cheap methods of treatment.<sup>356</sup> Werahiko ore sent to the experimental battery at the Thames School of Mines proved that the ordinary battery process saved only 55 per cent of the gold.<sup>357</sup> The same Waiorongomai correspondent continued to expect that, 'in the near future', the problems of successfully treating 'all descriptions of ores in our rich hills' would be solved, 'at an enormous expenditure of outside capital'.<sup>358</sup> The attitude of Auckland investors to requests for more capital was indicated by a letter from a lawyer closely associated with mining regretting being unable 'to make up a syndicate' to work a mine at Puriri, near Thames, because all his friends were 'tired of mining and want some returns before making further investments'.<sup>359</sup>

The decline forced miners to seek work elsewhere. In early April 'quite a number of men' left for Waihi to work for contractors 'constructing the water races, tail race tunnel, etc'.<sup>360</sup> In June, several took up claims in the Tararu portion of the Thames goldfield, which were developed with (misleading) signs of future success.<sup>361</sup> Some miners later in the year went to seek the even more illusory riches of Puhipuhi, near Whangarei.<sup>362</sup>

## SEEKING LOCAL AND CENTRAL GOVERNMENT ASSISTANCE

In 1884 both local and central government began to assist the construction of prospecting tracks. At the start of the year, a party was cutting a new track along the range between Karangahake and Te Aroha to shorten prospectors' trips. A planned branch track from the Te Aroha-

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<sup>355</sup> Waiorongomai Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 21 September 1889, p. 2.

<sup>356</sup> See *Auckland Weekly News*, 30 November 1889, p. 14.

<sup>357</sup> *AJHR*, 1889, C-2, p. 19.

<sup>358</sup> Waiorongomai Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 26 February 1889, p. 3.

<sup>359</sup> James Russell to Alexander Hogg, 9 February 1889, Letterbook no. 38, p. 722, Jackson and Russell Papers, MS 360, Library of the Auckland Institute and War Memorial Museum.

<sup>360</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 6 April 1889, p. 2.

<sup>361</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 22 June 1889, p. 2, 26 June 1889, p. 2, 23 November 1889, p. 2, 11 December 1889, p. 2, 14 December 1889, p. 2.

<sup>362</sup> *Auckland Weekly News*, 30 November 1889, p. 14.

Paeroa road would intersect it to enable miners to get quartz to the Waitawheta and Mangaiti streams.<sup>363</sup> In December the county engineer suggested several prospecting tracks should be made: one from Te Aroha to the top of 'Bald Hill', otherwise Bald Spur or Whakapipi; another from there along the ridge above the Waiorongomai claims to the end of the tramway; another from the top of Fern Spur to Buck Reef and back to the 'Bald Spur'; and another from Waiorongomai to the top of Stoney Creek and on to the Eureka claim.<sup>364</sup> The only ones ever constructed were from Te Aroha to the top of Bald Spur, for the benefit of tourists rather than miners, and from Fern Spur to Buck Rock and on to meet the southern end of the branch tramway from the top of Butler's Incline. To construct all of them would have cost £1,000, which the government declined to provide.<sup>365</sup> Officials also ignored one legal manager's suggestion that his under-capitalized company, which had struck hard ground, 'should be subsidised by the Government for the general weal'.<sup>366</sup>

Whenever the goldfield experienced financial difficulties, the government was expected to assist. Before William Larnach visited in May 1885 he was warned by Firth that a deputation would ask him for £1,800 to make a tramway to Ferguson's battery, the use of diamond drills, lectures on geology, and £710 for prospecting tracks.<sup>367</sup> Larnach was willing to assist, but not to provide diamond drills because they were of little use and too expensive, instead recommending a tiffin borer but not offering to lend one.<sup>368</sup> The condition of the upper road was made very clear to him when he rode uphill to the New Find: it was so 'very bad and slippery' that 'on reaching where the Eureka wire tramway passes overhead, owing to the condition of the roadway just there, it was decided best to complete the distance on foot'.<sup>369</sup> The government was expected to assist the council to repair this also.

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<sup>363</sup> *Thames Star*, 14 January 1884, p. 2, 2 February 1884, p. 2; *Te Aroha News*, 29 March 1884, p. 2.

<sup>364</sup> Piako County Council, *Waikato Times*, 18 December 1884, p. 2.

<sup>365</sup> Piako County Council, *Waikato Times*, 17 January 1885, p. 3.

<sup>366</sup> R. McDonald Scott to Receiver of Gold Revenue, 31 January 1884, Te Aroha Warden's Court, Mining Applications 1884, BBAV 11289/10a, ANZ-A.

<sup>367</sup> J.C. Firth to Minister of Mines, 22 May 1885 (telegram), Mines Department, MD 1, 85/1072, ANZ-W.

<sup>368</sup> *Waikato Times*, 28 May 1885, p. 2; *Te Aroha News*, 30 May 1885, p. 2.

<sup>369</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 30 May 1885, p. 2.

The track along the top of the range from Karangahake to Te Aroha was not completed in 1885, and no work was done on it during that year.<sup>370</sup> When Larnach visited, he agreed to assist a new track from Fern Spur to the head of Butler's Incline that would give access to the base of Buck Reef.<sup>371</sup> It would be about 80 chains long and capable of sledging out quartz from an area that was 'comparatively unprospected, owing to the difficulty of access'.<sup>372</sup> To convince the council to contribute £100 to ensure the government would provide its £200, Firth assured it that the track would 'run through one of the most promising parts of the field', but did not mention he owned claims there.<sup>373</sup> After six month's delay they agreed, and also accepted his suggestion that those who had prospected the area were the best people to make it.<sup>374</sup> Work on it did not start until early the following year.<sup>375</sup>

In an attempt to investigate a new area, in February 1886 Wilson suggested the council should subsidize prospectors to explore the Kaimai range to the east of Waiorongomai. This was declined after Firth stated that his company, when cutting a water race for one and a half miles in that area, met 'no indications of quartz whatever'.<sup>376</sup> Although Firth was right, no reefs ever being found there, at the time it was seen as another example of the council ignoring 'the interests of the mining industry'.<sup>377</sup> It was always believed that unexplored areas contained undiscovered treasures; for instance, the *Te Aroha News* claimed that, as the country between the Premier and Tui mines was 'well known to be richly auriferous', a prospecting track should be made.<sup>378</sup> At miners' requests, the council did commence a sledge track from the head of the tramway as far as the county boundary near the Tui mines to enable ore to be sent to the battery and to open the area for prospecting. The possible routes had been 'thoroughly explored by competent persons', and the county clerk assured the Mines

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<sup>370</sup> Editorial, *Te Aroha News*, 26 September 1885, p. 2.

<sup>371</sup> *Waikato Times*, 28 May 1885, p. 2.

<sup>372</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 30 May 1885, p. 2.

<sup>373</sup> Piako County Council, *Waikato Times*, 30 May 1885, p. 3; Waiorongomai Correspondent, *Thames Advertiser*, 9 June 1885, p. 3.

<sup>374</sup> Piako County Council, *Waikato Times*, 26 November 1885, p. 2.

<sup>375</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 23 January 1886, p. 7, 13 February 1886, p. 7.

<sup>376</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 13 February 1886, p. 7.

<sup>377</sup> *Thames Advertiser*, 4 March 1886, p. 3.

<sup>378</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 7 August 1886, p. 2.

Department that 'very valuable results' were anticipated. The new track was 'justly considered by the most competent men in the field as one of the utmost importance', as the country through which it would pass was 'of the most promising character'.<sup>379</sup> The chairman of the Ohinemuri County Council, who cannot have walked over the ground, assured Larnach that there were 'easy grades obtainable and very few engineering difficulties to overcome'.<sup>380</sup> Originally it was intended to would end at the New Era battery.<sup>381</sup> The Ohinemuri council agreed to complete its half if it received a subsidy, but only the Piako one received an allocation, of £213 6s 8d.<sup>382</sup> Work did not start until December, because of delays in finding the best route through difficult country.<sup>383</sup>

Miners also wanted to government to provide information and advice.<sup>384</sup> In August 1886, miners throughout Hauraki and investors petitioned the government to send an experienced person to America, England, and Germany to find the best methods of recovering gold and silver.<sup>385</sup> In the following May, Firth stated that as mining 'was at ebb tide', it was 'very difficult to induce people' to invest;<sup>386</sup> one solution stalwarts of private enterprise like himself sought was government assistance. One Auckland merchant, Charles Cookman McMillan,<sup>387</sup> who had invested in

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<sup>379</sup> County Clerk to Minister of Mines, 26 October 1886, Mines Department, MD 1, 87/159, ANZ-W.

<sup>380</sup> Frederick Cock (Chairman, Ohinemuri County Council) to William Larnach, 12 May 1886, Mines Department, MD 1, 86/1122, ANZ-W.

<sup>381</sup> *Thames Advertiser*, 12 May 1886, p. 2, 13 May 1886, p. 2.

<sup>382</sup> Frederick Cock to William Larnach, 12 May 1886; memoranda of 17 June 1886, 17 January 1888, Mines Department, MD 1, 86/1122, ANZ-W; *Waikato Times*, Te Aroha Correspondent, 18 May 1886, p. 3, Piako County Council, 1 June 1886, p. 2.

<sup>383</sup> Piako County Council, *Waikato Times*, 11 May 1886, p. 3, 5 August 1886, p. 2, 2 September 1886, p. 2, 28 October 1886, p. 3; see also *Waikato Times*, 7 December 1886, p. 3; Piako County Council, *Te Aroha News*, 30 October 1886, p. 2.

<sup>384</sup> See paper on prospectors' and miners' skills.

<sup>385</sup> Petition dated 19 August 1886, Mines Department, MD 1, 87/1298, ANZ-W; see also Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 7 August 1886, p. 3.

<sup>386</sup> *Auckland Weekly News*, 7 May 1887, p. 19.

<sup>387</sup> See *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 2, pp. 303, 435; *New Zealand Herald*, 11 February 1928, p. 12.

Waiorongomai mines and been the director of one company there,<sup>388</sup> told the Minister of Mines that 'in Te Aroha there was no opportunity of accumulating money, and therefore they came to the Government' for aid, in this case erecting a testing plant at Thames.<sup>389</sup> Six months later, when residents proposed that a low level tunnel test Waiorongomai thoroughly, it was predicated on obtaining a £1 for £1 subsidy from the government; the local newspaper considered the council should contribute also.<sup>390</sup>

Denis Murphy, when on the council, attempted to assist mining in various ways, in particular by convincing councillors to construct a bridle track from the hot springs to link with the upper road near the Colonist, arguing that because it would go across the top of the mountain it would be used by tourists as well. They agreed to construct one to connect with the track from the Premier to the Tui, on condition that the government provided half the estimated cost of £120; it did.<sup>391</sup> But when the Mines Department brought in a regulation that it would not subsidize any tracks steeper than one in ten, no more funding for the Tui and Stoney Creek tracks was provided until their grades were reduced.<sup>392</sup> Both Wilson and Gordon considered they were too steep, Gordon noting that the ones up Stoney Creek and from Premier Creek to Tui were 'laid off in a haphazard manner with grades that make them of very little service'.<sup>393</sup> Pavitt claimed that this new requirement meant the hot springs to Tui track would be six miles long, and councillors protested that the new requirements made constructing prospecting tracks on the steep hillside prohibitively

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<sup>388</sup> Te Aroha Warden's Court, Register of Licensed Holdings 1881-1887, folios 8, 45, 50, BBAV 11500/9a, ANZ-A; *New Zealand Gazette*, 23 March 1882, p. 490, 16 November 1882, p. 1733, 14 December 1882, p. 1884; Company Files, BBAE, 10286/9f, ANZ-A.

<sup>389</sup> *Auckland Weekly News*, 9 April 1887, p. 21.

<sup>390</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 29 October 1887, p. 2, 26 November 1887, p. 2.

<sup>391</sup> *Waikato Times*, Piako County Council, 25 January 1887, p. 2, 1 February 1887, p. 2, Piako County Council, 22 February 1887, p. 2; *Te Aroha News*, Piako County Council, 29 January 1887, p. 2, Piako County Council, 26 February 1887, p. 2, 16 April 1887, p. 3; County Clerk to Minister of Mines, 22 February 1887, with appended note, Mines Department, MD 1, 87/159, ANZ-W.

<sup>392</sup> Piako County Council, *Waikato Times*, 14 May 1887, p. 3, 14 June 1887, p. 2.

<sup>393</sup> H.A. Gordon to Minister of Mines, 25 May 1887; see also George Wilson to Under-Secretary, Mines Department, 22 January 1887, 5 May 1887, Mines Department, MD 1, 87/689, ANZ-W.

expensive.<sup>394</sup> These and later protests were ignored, and the issue was finally resolved by the government cancelling its subsidy for this track in the following January on the grounds of general retrenchment.<sup>395</sup> Two months later, its contribution towards the track from the Tui mines to Premier Creek was cancelled.<sup>396</sup>

When Mills, seconded by Murphy, asked the first council meeting for 1888 to subsidize the proposed prospecting association 'in the manner provided by the Mining Act; such as subsidizing the driving of tunnels', the chairman doubted such aid was possible. Mills 'said he had forgotten to bring the Act with him, but assured the chairman it gave county councils full power to do as suggested'. Murphy, who had earlier said that 'the subsidy would come to very little as work would not be carried out on a very large scale, and the Association was not floated yet', proceeded to undermine their argument by stating that 'they have no reef to exactly drive for, but wish to put in a tunnel to see what is in the hill, and what reefs they can cut'. An amendment was immediately carried to postpone any decision until the association was formed, the mover commenting that 'it would be rather absurd for the council to subsidise a prospectus'; only Mills and Murphy voted against it. A request from the Waiorongomai prospecting association for assistance was unanimously 'not entertained, Council having no funds at their disposal for the purpose'.<sup>397</sup>

The hope that a road from Karangahake to Te Aroha via the Waitawheta Gorge would open up what was believed to be an auriferous region was dashed when the government declined to assist.<sup>398</sup> Its subsidy to continue the prospecting track from Karangahake to Te Aroha was

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<sup>394</sup> Piako County Council, *Waikato Times*, 14 May 1887, p. 3, 14 June 1887, p. 2; Piako County Council to Minister of Mines, 17 May 1887, Mines Department, MD 1, 87/689, ANZ-W.

<sup>395</sup> Under-Secretary, Mines Department, to Chairman, Piako County Council, 12 January 1888, Mines Department, MD 1, 87/159, ANZ-W; Piako County Council, *Waikato Times*, 21 January 1888, p. 2.

<sup>396</sup> Under-Secretary, Mines Department, to Chairman, Piako County Council, 8 March 1888, Mines Department, MD 1, 87/159, ANZ-W.

<sup>397</sup> Piako County Council, *Te Aroha News*, 21 January 1888, p. 2; Piako County Council, *Waikato Times*, 21 January 1888, p. 2.

<sup>398</sup> *Waikato Times*, 17 January 1888, p. 3.

cancelled after the Ohinemuri council could not contribute.<sup>399</sup> The Piako council also lacked the resources to carry out works to assist mining. For example, in July Murphy told it that several residents wanted its engineer 'to survey and grade the lower hill track from its termination at Ferguson's battery to the Premier hopper' because this extension 'would open up country where a number of reefs were known to exist'. The motion was defeated on financial grounds.<sup>400</sup> At the June 1889 meeting, Mills and Murphy asked it to ask the government for £500 to extend the track linking the Tui and Premier mines towards Katikati. Murphy said that 'a track four feet wide would be sufficient to enable prospectors to take up "tucker" and to bring down quartz'.<sup>401</sup> The Mines Department instead offered £250 if the council provided the same, but as the latter could not contribute,<sup>402</sup> another attempt failed to have a prospecting track made into a largely unexplored (and valueless) area.

In 1888 a request for government assistance for prospecting came from settlers at Gordon, near Waiorongomai, most of who were miners before trying to become farmers.<sup>403</sup> The Minister of Mines informed them that this aid had ceased, because 'unfair advantage' had been taken of it.<sup>404</sup>

## CONCLUSION

The district, after initial high hopes, had struggled for most of the 1880s. In addition to Waiorongomai, gold was discovered at Stoney Creek and silver at Tui, but with shortage of capital and inadequate treatments, along with difficulties of access, these struggled to make headway, especially because of the poverty of the ore in the former area. All the difficulties and failures of this decade, along with the occasional temporary success, would be repeated in the following one.

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<sup>399</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 21 January 1888, p. 2, Ohinemuri County Council, 11 February 1888, p. 2.

<sup>400</sup> Piako County Council, *Te Aroha News*, 14 July 1888, p. 2.

<sup>401</sup> Piako County Council, *Te Aroha News*, 12 June 1889, p. 2.

<sup>402</sup> Piako County Council, *Te Aroha News*, 14 August 1889, p. 2.

<sup>403</sup> See *Te Aroha News*, 18 April 1885, p. 2; *Waikato Times*, 30 May 1885, p. 3, 6 October 1885, p. 2.

<sup>404</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 26 December 1888, p. 2.

*Appendix*

*Figure 1:* ‘Waiorongomai mining area’, mapped by Max Oulton, University of Waikato, published in Waitangi Tribunal, *The Hauraki Report: Wai 686* (Wellington, 2006), vol. 2, p. 478; used with permission.

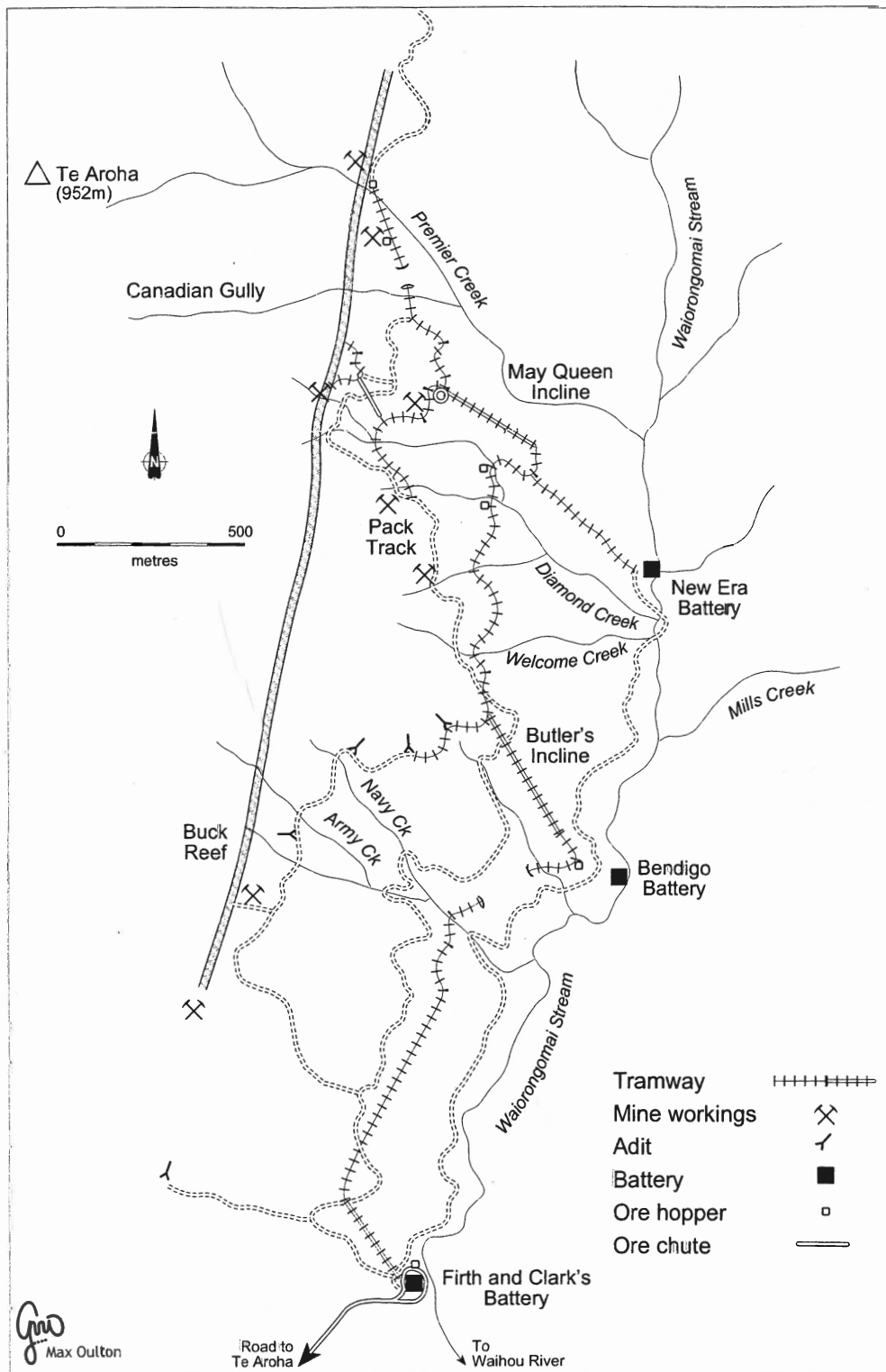
*Figure 2:* G.H.A. Purchas, portion of blueprint of Waiorongomai goldfield (from Fern Spur Incline to Butler’s Spur Incline), 8 January 1884, University of Waikato Map Library.

*Figure 3:* Purchas, portion of blueprint of Waiorongomai goldfield (from Butler’s Spur Incline to May Queen Incline), 8 January 1884, University of Waikato Map Library.

*Figure 4:* Purchas, portion of blueprint of Waiorongomai goldfield (from May Queen Incline to northern end of the field), 8 January 1884, University of Waikato Map Library.

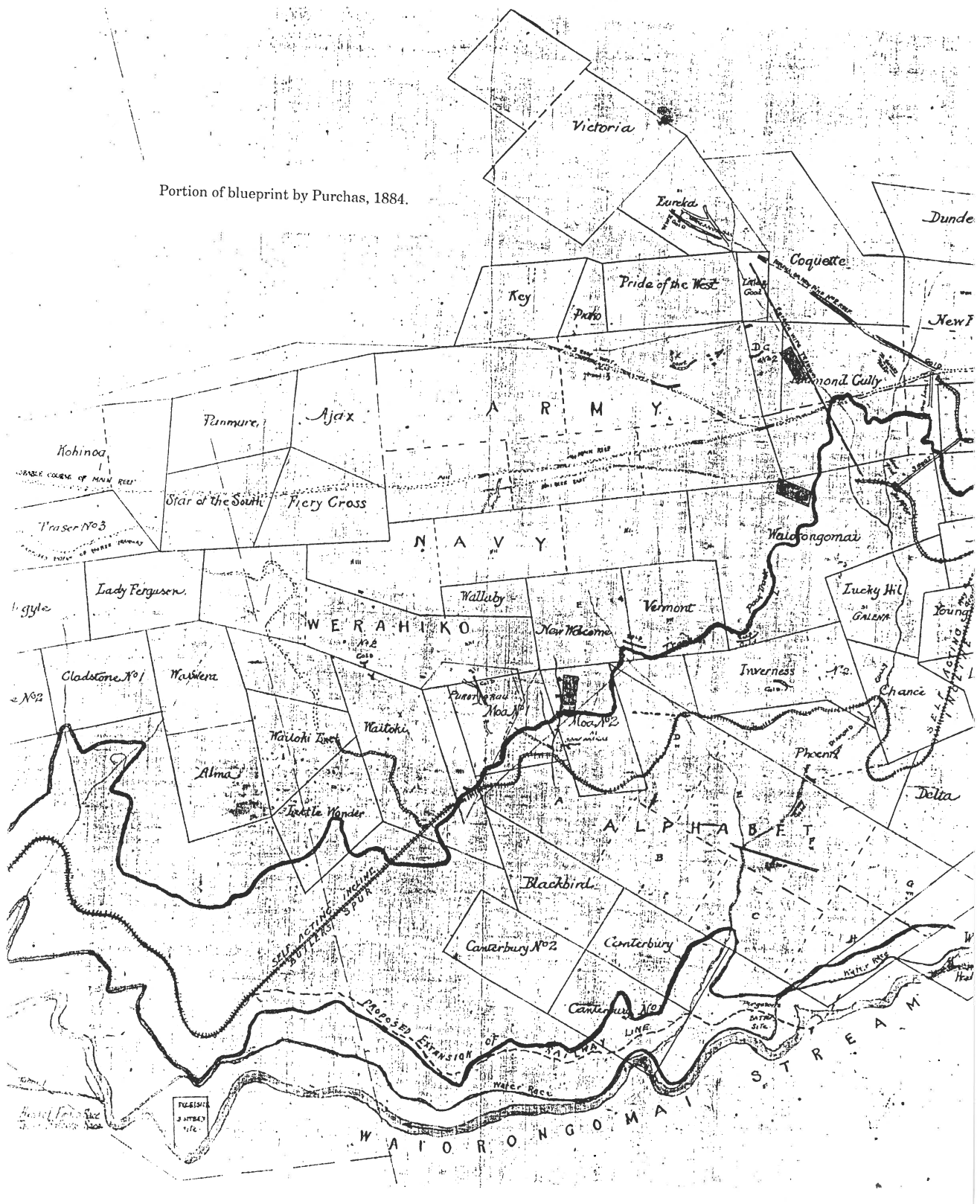
*Figure 5:* Henry Crump, ‘The Inverness G. M. Co., Te Aroha Mining Survey’, 12 June 1884, University of Waikato Map Library.

*Figure 6:* ‘Old Claims at Waiorongomai’, showing Firth’s and Ferguson’s Special Claims, c. 9 July 1887, SO 4479A, University of Waikato Map Library.



**Figure 1:** 'Waiorongomai mining area', mapped by Max Oulton, University of Waikato, published in Waitangi Tribunal, The Hauraki Report: Wai 686 (Wellington, 2006), vol. 2, p. 478; used with permission.





**Figure 3:** Purchas, portion of blueprint of Waiorongomai goldfield (from Butler's Spur Incline to May Queen Incline), 8 January 1884, University of Waikato Map Library.



**Figure 4:** Purchas, portion of blueprint of Waorongomai goldfield (from May Queen Incline to northern end of the field), 8 January 1884, University of Waikato Map Library.

# INVERNESS G.M. CO.

TE AROHA

MINING SURVEY.

Scale 30 Feet to 1 Inch

WAIORUNCUMAI G.M. CO.

LUCKY HIT

CHANCE

PHENIX

VERMONT

WELLSOME

Henry Crump  
Mining Engineer  
Inverness

12 June 1884

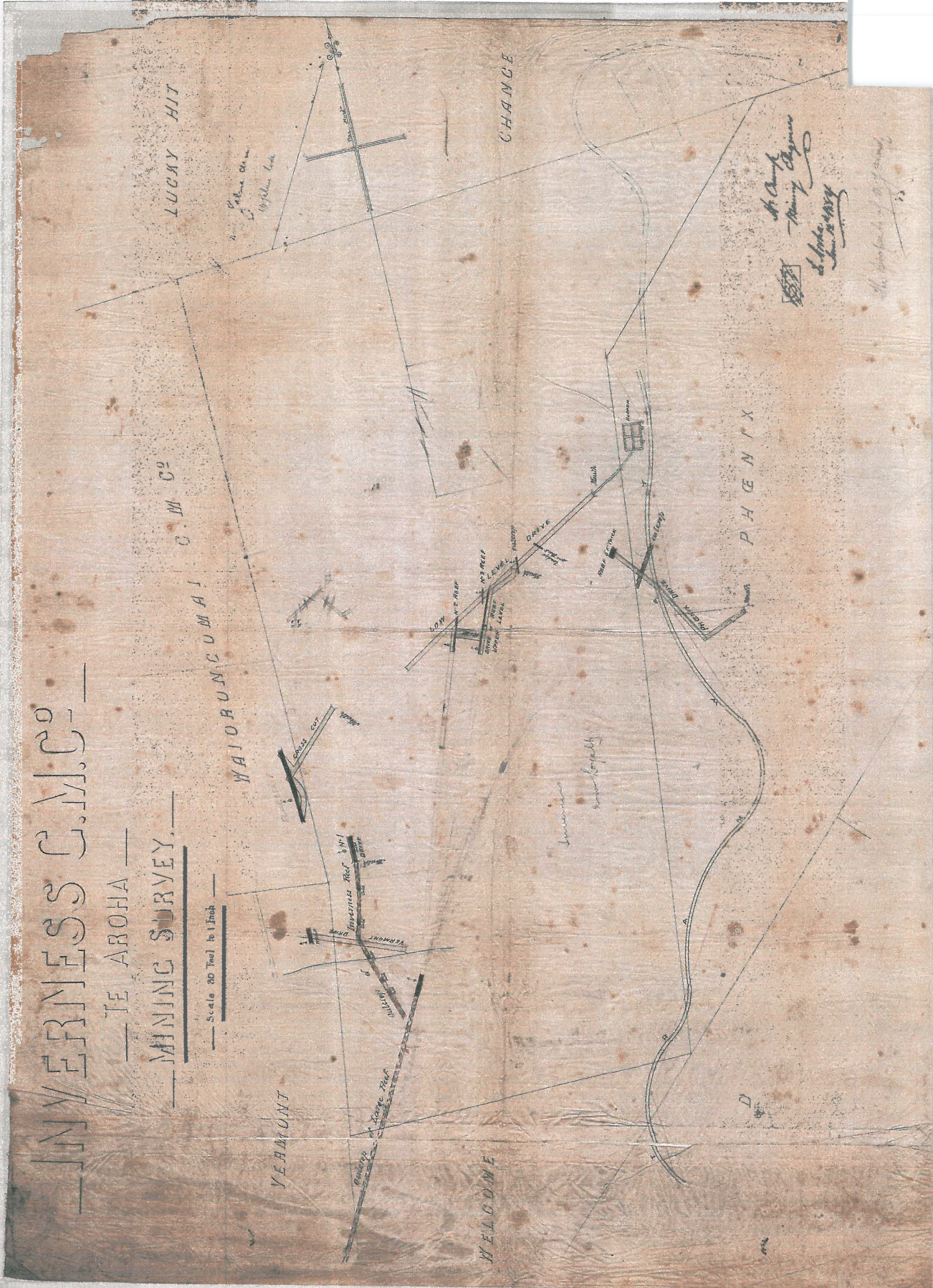
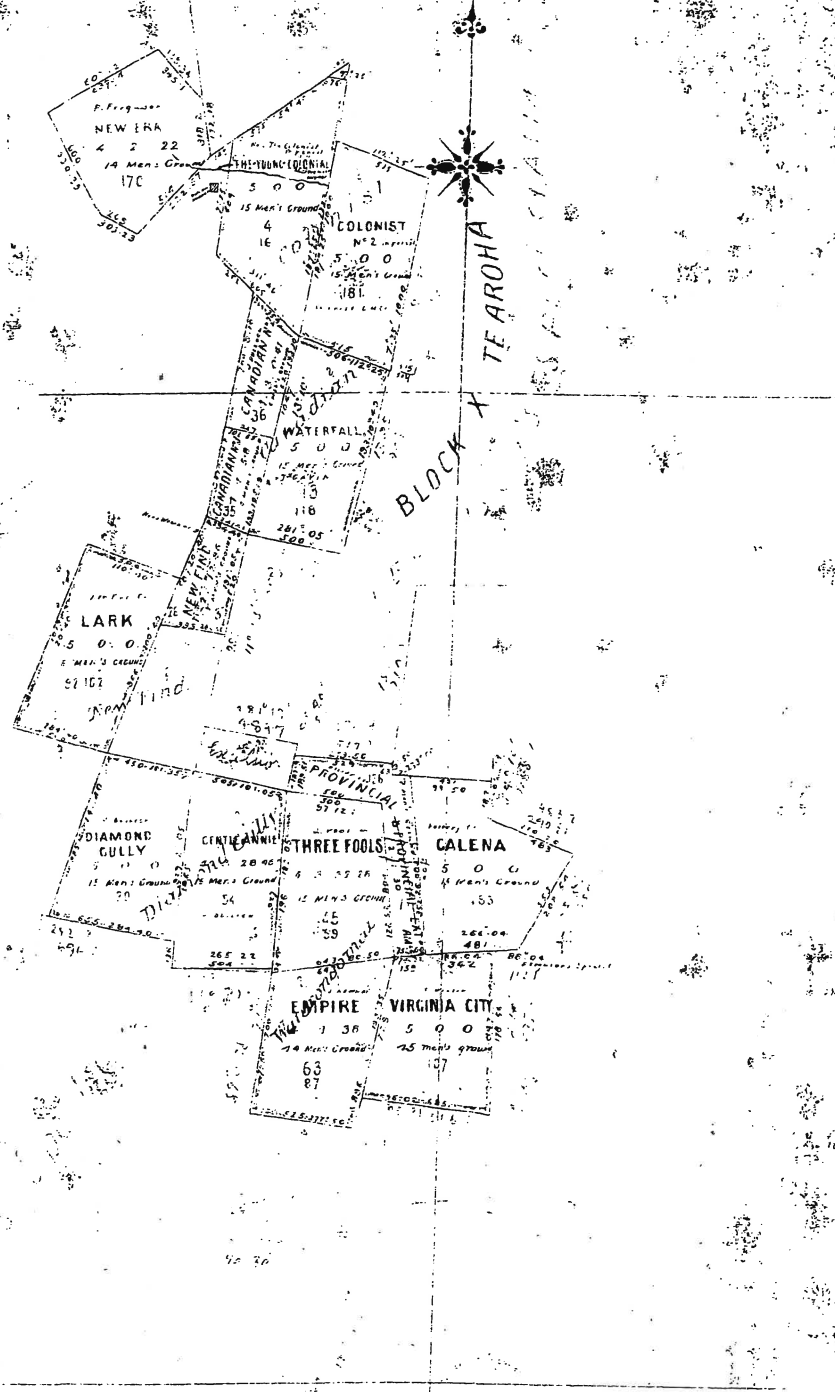


Figure 5: Henry Crump, 'The Inverness G. M. Co., Te Aroha Mining Survey' , 12 June 1884, University of Waikato Map Library.

# OLD CLAIMS AT WAIORONGOMAI

5 CHAINS TO AN INCH



*License Not shown in Blue*

*Entered on TeAroha & M Record  
IN PENCIL ONLY*

*Copy  
9 7 87  
AI*

WERAHIKO  
Nº 2  
14 Men's Ground  
30  
55

*GOLD MINING FOLIO*

*4479A*

Figure 6: 'Old Claims at Waiorongomai', showing Firth's and Ferguson's Special Claims, c. 9 July 1887, SO 4479A, University of Waikato Map Library.