

‘PAKEHA BILL’: WILLIAM JOHN McCLEAR, A PAKEHA WHO LIVED AT TE AROHA

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‘PAKEHA BILL’: WILLIAM JOHN McCLEAR, A PAKEHA BROUGHT UP BY MAORI

Abstract: *Born in Ireland to a Scottish soldier, Charles McAleer, William John McClear, as he would spell his surname, was uncertain of his age and his birthplace – for, like his parents, he was illiterate. After his drunken father sold him at an unknown date to Maori living in Piako, he was educated in a Maori school and was unable to speak English until the early 1870s, when he was living with his Maori foster parents was well-known to Ngati Tumutumu at nearby Te Aroha. When Pakeha visitors first met him in 1877, he was commonly known as both Pakeha Bill and Pakeha William.*

McCclear invested in mining during the Te Aroha rush and afterwards, mined in several claims, and at the end of the 1880s was one of a small group of Waiorongomai miners who took up a claim at Thames. When not mining, he took whatever jobs were available, struggling financially, in part because of a fondness for drink. Unlike other Pakeha Maori, he did not form any known close relationships with Maori women, thereby not benefiting from their landholdings, and dying in poverty.

FAMILY BACKGROUND

After a six months’ illness, William John McClear, a labourer, died in March 1914 of carcinoma of the rectum. His death certificate recorded his birthplace as Kilkenny, Ireland, his age as 68, his time in New Zealand as lasting 67 years, and that he was unmarried and a Catholic.¹ In its obituary, the *Te Aroha News* gave an alternate spelling of his name, and hinted that he had been a Pakeha Maori:

Another old pioneer of this district in the person of William McLearn has crossed over to the great majority. Deceased had been ailing for many months and died at the Hamilton Hospital. “Pakeha Bill” as he was known by the Maoris – being a well-known Maori linguist – was one of the first white men to arrive in Te Aroha.²

¹ Death Certificate of William John McClear, 17 March 1914, 1914/715, BDM.

² *Te Aroha News*, 20 March 1914, p. 2.

One year previously, when applying for an old age pension, he gave his name as William McAlleer but stated that he was now called McLear. Although he could not prove his age, he gave it as 68. His younger brothers and sisters had been born in Onehunga, but he had been born before his parents had reached New Zealand.³ When he went to hospital in August 1885, he gave his age as 40 and his place of birth as ‘unknown’;⁴ in January 1889 he told the police that he was aged 40 and had been born in New Zealand.⁵

Why the confusion over his name and uncertainty over his age and whether he had been born in New Zealand? His parents, Charles McAleer, born in 1812, and Ellen, née Burke, born in 1826, had arrived in New Zealand from Armagh, Ireland, aboard the ‘Oriental Queen’ in September 1849 along with their child, William John (the future Pakeha Bill), who had been born in 1848.⁶ McAleer, a Scotsman who had served for 18 years in the 83rd Regiment, ten of them in England’s North American colonies, had been discharged from the army after an attack of paralysis, and came to the colony as an Onehunga fencible (also described as pensioners).⁷ As he was a member of the Church of England,⁸ his wife must have been responsible for her son becoming a Catholic. In December 1850, when their daughter Mary Jane was born at Onehunga, her birth certificate revealed that her father was illiterate.⁹ as was her mother.¹⁰ In August 1852, Joseph Alier was born, and then Samuel McAleel in October 1854, when Charles was working as a labourer;¹¹ the variant spellings reflected their parents’ illiteracy. Another

³ Registrar of Old Age Pensions, Paeroa, to Registrar of Births, Onehunga, 31 March 1913, Te Aroha Warden’s Court, Applications 1913, BBAV 11572/3a, ANZ-A.

⁴ Thames Hospital, Register of Patients 1884-1901, folio 8, YCAH 14075/1a, ANZ-A.

⁵ Armed Constabulary Force, Return of Charges taken at Te Aroha Lock-Up 1880-1903, 3/1889, in private possession.

⁶ Passenger List, ‘Oriental Queen’, Internal Affairs Department, IA 1/82, 49/2131, ANZ-W; *The Royal New Zealand Fencibles 1847-1852* (Auckland, 1997), p. 155.

⁷ Auckland Hospital, Case Book 1859, folio 5, ZAAP 15291/1a, ANZ-A.

⁸ Auckland Hospital, Admission and Discharge Book 1859-1869, folio 1 no. 4, ZAAP 15287/1a, ANZ-A.

⁹ Birth Certificate of Mary Jane McAleer, 6 December 1850, 1851/1174, BDM.

¹⁰ Onehunga Magistrate’s Court, Notebook of Criminal Cases 1850-1854, folios 166-167, BADW 10585/1a, ANZ-A.

¹¹ Birth Certificates of Joseph McAlhier, 26 August 1852, 1852/1880; Samuel McAleel, 27 October 1854, 1854/2164, BDM.

daughter, Helena McAleer, was born at Onehunga, but her birth was not registered; she would die in 1860 aged 5. Admitted to Auckland hospital on 6 October that year (and registered as Lena), suffering from diarrhoea, she was recorded as being a Catholic; she died on 22 October of mesenteric disease, a blockage of blood to the intestines.¹²

In mid-1859, when aged 45, Charles, still working as a labourer at Onehunga, was admitted to Auckland Hospital because of an ulcerated leg.¹³ It had been hit by a falling cask, which may have caused the ulcers to develop. His 'constitution' was recorded as 'probably scrofulous' and he was 'addicted to drinking'.¹⁴ (Scrofula is a 'morbid constitutional condition with glandular swellings and tendency to consumption'.¹⁵) His wife chose this moment to charge him with desertion, but the case was dismissed,¹⁶ presumably because he had returned home. Readmitted to hospital on 19 May 1863, he died there on 22 June, of dyspepsia according to the hospital, of cancer of the gullet and stomach according to his death certificate.¹⁷

Charles had five children.¹⁸ Ellen would have one more, Alfred, born in 1861 but not registered as McAleer but as Lynch, for she had bigamously married Dennis Lynch.¹⁹ When aged 9, Alfred was admitted to the Wallis Family Children's Home in Motueka on 6 December 1870 as McAleer, not Lynch.²⁰ This home, subsidized by the government, 'often took children that

¹² Death Certificate of Helena McAleer, 22 October 1860, 1860/173, BDM; Auckland Hospital, Admission and Discharge Book 1859-1869, folio 11, no. 289, ZAAP 15287/1a; Samuel McLearn to W.J. McClear, October [1912], Te Aroha Warden's Court, General Correspondence 1913, BBAV 11584/7a, ANZ-A.

¹³ Auckland Hospital, Admission and Discharge Book 1859-1869, folio 1, no. 4, ZAAP 15287/1a, ANZ-A; Magistrate's Court, *Daily Southern Cross*, 23 December 1859, p. 3.

¹⁴ Auckland Hospital, Case Book 1859, folio 5, ZAAP 15291/1a, ANZ-A.

¹⁵ *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Current English*, 5 ed. (Oxford, 1964), p. 1135.

¹⁶ Magistrate's Court, *Daily Southern Cross*, 5 July 1859, p. 3.

¹⁷ Auckland Hospital, Admission and Discharge Book 1859-1869, folio 46, no. 150, ZAAP 15287/1a, ANZ-A; Death Certificate of Charles McAleer, 22 June 1863, 1863/7126, BDM.

¹⁸ Magistrate's Court, *Daily Southern Cross*, 5 July 1859, p. 3; Samuel McLearn to 'My Dear Brother' [W.J. McClear], October [1912], Te Aroha Warden's Court, General Correspondence 1912, BBAV 11584/7a, ANZ-A.

¹⁹ Birth Certificate of Alfred Lynch, 1861/7312, BDM; Bradshaw, p. 240.

²⁰ Wallis Family Children's Home Admittance Book, entry for 6 December 1870; information provided by Kath Woodley [a descendant] to Philip Hart, 23, 24 February 2020, emails.

no one else would and looked after them in a family-oriented environment'.²¹ Other children were sent to it from Auckland, for it took neglected, disabled, and part-Maori children whom other institutions would not accept.²² After McAleer's death, Ellen assaulted all her children, and the two boys were taken from her and sent to the children's home at Motueka, where they were reunited with their half-brother Alfred; Joseph would die there.²³

Ironically, Ellen, who had accused her husband of deserting her, then deserted him three years before his death and entered bigamous relationships. She led a disreputable life, as detailed by Julia Bradshaw, who described her as a 'tough survivor' whose only constant was her height of five feet two inches (150 centimetres). Her first names were recorded as Ellen Mary Josephine, Louisa, Ellen Louisa and Margaret and her surnames as McAleer, Swords, Lynch and Cameron; the only two men she had married legally were the first and last.²⁴

When living in Onehunga, in July 1852 Ellen was charged by William Leather with using 'obscene and demoralizing language towards Complainant'. After she pleaded not guilty, the evidence revealed that she along with one of her sons had chased Leather's calf on the road; when Leather threatened to knock the dog's head, Ellen thought he meant her son and swore at him. A witness heard both using 'a great deal of indecent language'. Ellen, who said she was getting some potatoes when her son set the dog on the calf, was ordered to pay the costs of the case.²⁵ Three years later, she was charged with using threatening and abusive language against Hannah Wykes, again pleading not guilty. The complainant deposed that she 'came opposite my door dancing and singing and then called to me and said "Mother Wykes you are a dirty factory Whore" – She said she would sacrifice me and "By G— I will have your life'. She claimed Ellen was 'often abusing me'. Ellen in admitting the abuse, claimed that she 'had been

²¹ Kath Woodley to Philip Hart, 22 February 2020, email.

²² Kath Woodley to Philip Hart, 24 February 2020, email; for the only newspaper report on the home, see *Colonist*, 14 November 1871, p. 3.

²³ Bradshaw, pp. 240-241.

²⁴ Julia Bradshaw, *Digging Deep: Women on New Zealand Goldfields* (Christchurch, 2026), p. 240.

²⁵ Onehunga Magistrate's Court, Notebook of Criminal Cases 1850-1854, folios 166-167, BADW 10585/1a, ANZ-A.

provoked to do so by Complainant's husband – frequently abusing her'. She was cautioned to keep the peace and once more ordered to pay costs.²⁶

After abandoning McAleer, his widow-of-many-names was in trouble with the law for (chronologically, and not including the assaults on her children) keeping houses of ill repute, selling liquor from an unlicensed hotel, vagrancy, 'using bad language and getting drunk', sly-grog selling, prostitution, violence against her last husband, larceny, sly-grogging once more, begging and vagrancy.²⁷ She would die from epilepsy in 1882.²⁸ As she was described by a neighbour in 1868 as being a 'human Vesuvius, belching forth from her crater the lava of infamy',²⁹ it was fortunate for her eldest child that he was not brought up by his birth parents.

AN ABANDONED CHILD

Soon after arriving in New Zealand, Charles McAleer abandoned his eldest son. When a correspondent for the *Waikato Times* visited the Te Aroha district in February 1877, at a Waitoa farm he met 'Pakeha William':

This man's history is somewhat a mystery. All he knows of himself and his relations is that, when an infant, his father, in a semi-drunken state, brought him to natives, and sold him for half-a-crown. His purchasers took great care of him, reared him, sent him to native school, &c. Three years ago William could not talk English, but now he speaks it fluently. He can read and write the native language, but not the English.³⁰

Whether his mother attempted to prevent her husband so callously disposing of her eldest child cannot now be ascertained, but she took no known action in later years to trace him.

In October 1873, William John McLearn or McClear (both spellings were used) was charged with removing a double-barrelled gun from Thames

²⁶ Onehunga Magistrate's Court, Criminal Record Book 1854-1857, p. 107 (hearing of 10 October 1855), BADW 10585/3b, ANZ-A.

²⁷ Bradshaw, pp. 241-242.

²⁸ Bradshaw, p. 242.

²⁹ *Grey River Argus*, 18 April 1868, p. 2..

³⁰ 'A Trip from Hamilton through Piako to the Thames Valley and Back Again', *Waikato Times*, 27 February 1877, p. 2.

without a license, an offence under the Arms Act of 1860,³¹ devised to prevent Maori obtaining weapons., but was discharged after no evidence was produced. Despite a correspondent's 1877 report, he could speak English. Then living in the Piako district, he 'had lived with Hoanui [Te Heikei] since he (the witness) was a little bit of a boy. Hoanui brought him up'. He also said that Whakahu had also brought him up 'since he was a child and would speak of him as such'.³² (These Maori, living on the flat lands of the Piako swamp, were not members of Ngati Tumutumu, the hapu occupying Te Aroha.³³) The *Thames Advertiser* reported that McClear was living amongst Hauhau, who had reared him, at an undisclosed location.³⁴ (Whakahu has not been traced, and there was only one newspaper report about Hoanui Heikei, as his name was recorded. In October 1873, when visiting Thames, Heikei shared a tent with Hone, surname not recorded, and on one evening Witikoria, the very drunk wife of the senior Ngati Maru rangatira, Hoterene Taipari, went into their tent either willingly or unwillingly and was seen to be wrapped up in a blanket with Heikei. Whereas the latter's wife accepted the situation, Hoterene was enraged, and as utu seized Hoanui's canoe. Hoanui accepted this punishment as being appropriate, as did the magistrate.³⁵)

HIS LIFE FROM 1869 TO 1879

A man named William McLear was recorded as living in the Piako district in both 1873³⁶ and 1877. In the latter year, when a Hamilton party wanted to reach Te Aroha on foot by crossing the Piako swamp, its guide, 'to prevent our being delayed in consequence', provided another guide, 'Pakeha William', whom the party's members praised. 'We found William an obliging, respectful, and intelligent guide, free from the usual Pakeha Maori bounce and gas ['bombast, humbug']'.³⁷ He did not get drunk when he was with us, although he had abundance of opportunity. He was full of

³¹ *Thames Advertiser*, Police Court, 13 October 1873, p. 3, 15 October 1873, p. 3.

³² *Thames Advertiser*, 9 October 1873, p. 3.

³³ For list of Ngati Tumutumu, see signatories to its letter to Sir Donald McLean (Native Minister), an advertisement printed in *Thames Advertiser*, 13 January 1877, p. 3.

³⁴ *Thames Advertiser*, 16 October 1873, p. 3.

³⁵ Thames Correspondent, *Daily Southern Cross*, 11 October 1873, p. 3.

³⁶ *Thames Advertiser*, 9 October 1873, p. 3.

³⁷ Jonathon Green, *The Cassell Dictionary of Slang* (London, 1998), p. 468.

information regarding tracks, roads and routes'. When they reached Omahu pa, below the Te Aroha mountain, 'our guide appeared to be well known and respected by the natives here, for one and all greeted him with a hearty welcome'. That evening,

we asked several times for our guide, and were told each time, "William gone to the bluff," from which we concluded William was gone to some point down river. When we wished to retire, we were shown to our apartments, which were a little distance outside the pah. On entering, we found William busily engaged playing cards, with about fourteen or fifteen natives. To "the bluff" meant the name of the game they were playing.

This game went on all night. After crossing back over the Waihou River, the party found their horses had gone.

We were in a fix; at last, our guide kindly offered to ride on, and search the swamp, whilst my friend and I went back to the river for our saddles, which we found all right. On our return (the distance of about a mile), we were delighted to find William had also returned, bringing our missing steeds, which, it appears, had gone to the new road, and not being able to cross the ditch, had gone away into the swamp.³⁸

MINING

It is (just) possible that, when in his early twenties, McClear had been involved with Thames mining, for in May 1869 one William McCleary obtained a miner's right, and in August this same man (who was illiterate) sold a quarter share in a mine for £25.³⁹ In another spelling, William McClean was an owner of a claim in June that year.⁴⁰

In early 1880, William McLear (as his name was recorded) obtained a miner's right for Ohinemuri.⁴¹ His first right for the new Te Aroha field was

³⁸ 'A Trip from Hamilton through Piako to the Thames Valley and Back Again', *Waikato Times*, 8 March 1877, p. 2.

³⁹ Thames Warden's Court, Register of Miners' Rights, 1868, no. 5616, BACL 14358/2a; Register of Deeds 1869, folio 498, BACL 14417/3a, ANZ-A.

⁴⁰ Thames Warden's Court, Thames Claims Register 1869, no. 1602, BACL 14397/4a, ANZ-A.

⁴¹ Thames Warden's Court, Register of Ohinemuri Miners' Rights 1876-1892, 488/1880, BACL 14441/2a, ANZ-A.

issued on 8 January 1881.⁴² In mid-January he assisted to peg out two claims at Waiorongomai, and in July was one of eight owners of a Te Aroha claim that they would abandon one month later.⁴³ During the Waiorongomai rush in December 1881, he applied for the forfeiture of one claim for non-working but then withdrew his suit.⁴⁴ At the same time, his Comstock was forfeited for the same reason.⁴⁵ In the following March he marked out three claims and another three in May: he was able to sign his name, as William McClear.⁴⁶ In mid-year he lost one of these claims for non-working, but retained the Last Find, as 'Non-working not proved'.⁴⁷ 'The complaint was practically admitted' by him in the first case, but in the second the plaint had been laid on the first day after protection had expired and two days before he applied for a license.⁴⁸ He held 16 of the 32 shares, selling one to his sole partner before abandoning the ground in May 1883.⁴⁹ He bought and sold shares in six claims during 1882 and 1883,⁵⁰ was the sole owner of two more,⁵¹ and held scrip shares in two companies, managing to sell most of these in one of them.⁵²

In February 1882 he was the manager of the Hero,⁵³ even though his mining experience appears to have been minimal. In November that year he

⁴² Te Aroha Warden's Court, Miner's Right no. 1703, issued 8 January 1881, Miners' Rights Butt Book 1881, BACL 11533/1h, ANZ-A.

⁴³ Te Aroha Warden's Court, Notices of Marking Out Claims, January 1881, nos. 159, 160, BBAV 11557/1b; Register of Te Aroha Claims 1880-1888, folio 224, BBAV 11567/1a, ANZ-A.

⁴⁴ Te Aroha Warden's Court, Plaint Book 1880-1898, 88/1881, BBAV 11547/1a, ANZ-A.

⁴⁵ Te Aroha Warden's Court, Plaint Book 1880-1898, 90/1881, BBAV 11547/1a, ANZ-A.

⁴⁶ Te Aroha Warden's Court, Notices of Marking Out Claims 1882, nos. 42-44, 103, 110, 111, BBAV 11557/2a, ANZ-A.

⁴⁷ Te Aroha Warden's Court, Plaint Book 1880-1898, 50, 51/1882, BBAV 11547/1a, ANZ-A.

⁴⁸ *Te Aroha Mail*, 10 June 1882, p. 2.

⁴⁹ Te Aroha Warden's Court, Register of Licensed Holdings 1881-1887, folio 84, BBAV 11500/9a, ANZ-A.

⁵⁰ Te Aroha Warden's Court, Register of Licensed Holdings 1882-1887, folios 1, 10, 25, 49, 56, 64, BBAV 11500/9a, ANZ-A.

⁵¹ Te Aroha Warden's Court, Register of Te Aroha Claims 1880-1888, folios 242, 243, BBAV 11567/1a, ANZ-A.

⁵² *New Zealand Gazette*, 1 June 1882, p. 800, 31 May 1883, p. 722; *Te Aroha News*, 20 December 1884, p. 7.

⁵³ *Waikato Times*, 28 February 1882, p. 2.

sued the Hero Company for £35, wages owing: after £38 16s was paid into court, the case was withdrawn.⁵⁴ At the beginning of 1884 he sued the Canterbury Company for wages, and when it failed to pay as ordered took a distress warrant to obtain £10 6s, only to discover that the company had no funds.⁵⁵ Accordingly, late in the year he successfully petitioned to wind it up.⁵⁶ In 1886 he sued a sleeping partner for wages owing amounting to £9 16s 3d. Although giving his occupation as a labourer, he had been employed to manage a claim⁵⁷ and had worked on it from 22 January to 28 February, for which he had received only £8; judgment was given in his favour.⁵⁸

In mid-1889, with three other Te Aroha residents he applied for the Sailor's Home claim at Tararu, the northern portion of Thames, and a month later, with four other Te Aroha men, was granted the Imperial Treasury at Upper Tararu.⁵⁹ In December a valuable find in the latter was reported, but this proved disappointing, for in June 1890 he obtained protection to work it with two men and within a month forfeited it (clearly he was in charge of the party).⁶⁰

When Hauraki mining revived in 1896, he applied for the Gipsy King, 99 acres close to Te Aroha township,⁶¹ and for a tramway down Boundary

⁵⁴ Te Aroha Warden's Court, *Plaint Book* 1880-1898, 94/1882, BBAV 11547/1a, ANZ-A.

⁵⁵ Te Aroha Magistrate's Court, *Home Warrant Book* 1883-1928, 202/1884, BBAV 11498/1a; *Criminal Record Book* 1881-1896, 12/1884, BBAV 11220/1a, ANZ-A.

⁵⁶ District Court of Waikato and Thames, *Plaint Book* 1884-1887, hearings of 4 October 1884, 4 December 1884, BCDG 11282/1a; *Company Files*, BBAE 10286/13k, ANZ-A; District Court, *Thames Star*, 4 November 1884, p. 2.

⁵⁷ Name unreadable because of Warden Harry Kenrick's handwriting.

⁵⁸ Te Aroha Magistrate's Court, *Plaint Book* 1881-1893, 6/1886, BCDG 11224/1a; *Civil Record Book* 1884-1889, 6/1886, BCDG 11221/1b; Te Aroha Warden's Court, *Register of Applications* 1888-1892, folio 31, BBAV 11505/7a, ANZ-A.

⁵⁹ Thames Warden's Court, *Register of Licensed Holdings* 1888-1892, folio 24, BACL 14355/2a, ANZ-A; *Thames Advertiser*, 2 May 1889, p. 2, Warden's Court, 14 June 1889, p. 2.

⁶⁰ *Waikato Times*, 10 December 1889, p. 2; *Te Aroha News*, 14 December 1889, p. 2; Warden's Court, *Thames Advertiser*, 13 June 1890, p. 2; Warden's Court, *Thames Star*, 10 July 1890, p. 2.

⁶¹ Te Aroha Warden's Court, *Applications for Licensed Holdings and Special Claims* 1895-1897, 14/1896, BBAV 11582/4a, ANZ-A.

Street to a machine site on the riverbank.⁶² As the battery was on a public street and he intended to stack quartz alongside it, the town board objected to his application because it would block the entrance to its pound and the saleyards. He withdrew this application a month after transferring the claim to Arthur Edward Langley,⁶³ a Kawhia storekeeper and grazier who at that time was a mining agent.⁶⁴ Four days after this transfer, McClean declared that the claim was in rough country and contained low-grade ore. As 'low level tunnels of very great length will have to be put in for the purpose of systematically working the claim', he was arranging, presumably with Langley, to expend 'a large amount of capital'.⁶⁵ (As so often this did not happen.) In November that year he gave evidence in another man's case seeking the forfeiture of another claim near Te Aroha. 'He knew the ground thoroughly, passed it morning and night', and knew that it was unoccupied and had not been worked for 12 months. Under cross-examination, he admitted only having passed it when going to and fro from his work in another mine and that 'prospecting work might possibly be done without his actually seeing it being carried on'.⁶⁶ This was the last record of his doing any mining.

OTHER WAYS OF EARNING A LIVING

Usually earning his living as a labourer,⁶⁷ when there was no mining available, he took whatever work was available. In April 1886 he successfully sued a farmer for £9 16s 3d, being wages owed.⁶⁸ In 1887 he

⁶² 'Plan of Machine Site and Tramway Reserve, Town to Te Aroha, 1 August 1896', Te Aroha Museum.

⁶³ Te Aroha Warden's Court, Transfers and Assignments 1896-1899, 86, 97/1896, BBAV 11581/15a; Applications for Licensed Holdings and Special Claims 1895-1897, 14/1896, BBAV 11582/4a, ANZ-A.

⁶⁴ See *Waikato Times*, 9 January 1890, p. 2, 1 December 1891, p. 2, 13 October 1892, p. 2, 24 March 1894, p. 10, 2 July 1924, p. 7; *New Zealand Gazette*, 19 September 1895, p. 1487, 17 October 1895, p. 1665, 31 October 1895, p. 1741, 7 November 1895, p. 1770; *Mercantile and Bankruptcy Gazette of New Zealand*, 11 March 1897, p. 132.

⁶⁵ Declaration of William McLear, 7 September 1896, Mines Department, MD 1, 98/1897, ANZ-W.

⁶⁶ *Auckland Weekly News*, 21 November 1896, p. 20.

⁶⁷ For example, *Cleave's Auckland Directory, 1893* (Auckland, 1893), p. 274.

⁶⁸ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 15 April 1886, p. 2.

worked on a grass seed contract at Waitoa for a nurseryman and greengrocer who went bankrupt, owing him £9 15s 3d.⁶⁹ Two years later, he published an advertisement:

FERRY FOR THE RACES.
WANTED KNOWN – W. McCLEAR
(better known as Pakeha Bill)
will RUN a FERRY BOAT across to the
Races THIS DAY, SATURDAY.⁷⁰

Between 1890 and early 1894 he was paid 9s, £1 19s, 14s, £3 11s, 18s for working on the county council's roads.⁷¹ For similar work, the town board paid him 6s in 1890 and the Waitoa Road Board two payments of 12s in the following year.⁷² In January 1891, he successfully sued Henry Hopper Adams⁷³ for £1 12s, being wages owing for working in the latter's flax mill.⁷⁴ In 1894, he offered his allotment on the corner of Bridge and Whitaker streets, a 'grand building site', for sale.⁷⁵ In the following year, he applied for half an acre in the Morgantown portion of Te Aroha 'for grazing purposes'.⁷⁶ Three years later, with another man he unsuccessfully tendered to move the domain's boundary fence.⁷⁷ In 1907 he was given a temporary appointment as 'Attendant in Charge of the Swimming Bath' on the domain, but the doctor in charge of the baths then reported that, although

⁶⁹ *Te Aroha News*, 4 December 1886, p. 2, 12 February 1887, p. 2, 19 February 1887, p. 2; Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 10 February 1887, p. 2.

⁷⁰ Advertisement, *Te Aroha News*, 9 March 1889, p. 7.

⁷¹ Piako County Council, Minutes of Meeting held on 14 June 1890, Matamata-Piako District Council Archives, Te Aroha; Piako County Council, *Waikato Times*, 17 April 1890, p. 2, 17 June 1890, p. 2, 8 October 1891, p. 2, 5 May 1892, p. 2, 8 February 1894, p. 2.

⁷² *Waikato Times*, 1 April 1890, p. 2, 2 April 1891, p. 2, 5 November 1891, p. 2.

⁷³ See paper on his life.

⁷⁴ Te Aroha Magistrate's Court, Complaint Book 1881-1893, 2/1891, BCDG 11224/1a; Civil Record Book 1889-1896, 2/1891, BCDG 11221/1c, ANZ-A.

⁷⁵ Advertisement, *Waikato Times*, 6 December 1894, p. 10.

⁷⁶ Te Aroha Warden's Court, Transfers and Assignments 1893-1895, 45/1895, BBAV 11581/14a, ANZ-A; Warden's Court, *Te Aroha News*, 30 November 1895, p. 2.

⁷⁷ *Te Aroha News*, 22 January 1898, p. 2.

‘at first’ he had considered him ‘suitable for the position’, he was not, ‘being unable to either read or write’.⁷⁸

FINANCES

At first, McClear lived in Te Aroha in a one-roomed house on an eighth of an acre, with a ratable value of £5, but by 1906 had a possibly larger dwelling on another section, ratable value £6.⁷⁹ He had sold the first house and allotment for £120 in 1897.⁸⁰ An indication of its nature was given in an 1896 case over a theft of money from an unlocked box beside his ‘bunk’ in his ‘whare’ or ‘hut’.⁸¹ This case also revealed that he had been looking after another man’s money and that he had given the thief a shilling ‘at the Railway station & another on the road’ because he ‘told me he had no money’.⁸²

This was generous, for McClear was never financially comfortable. In 1897 he was sued by a storekeeper for £6 16s 6d, but the £3 10s 11d he paid into court was accepted in settlement.⁸³ When he spent four months in the Thames hospital in the year before his death he was unable to pay the fees, £18 6s, which were paid by his brother Samuel, who had somehow managed to trace him.⁸⁴ At that time Samuel was a miner in Western Australia; possibly because he paid McClear’s hospital fees, Samue received all of his estate, which consisted of ‘a small property’ worth £19 13s 10d.⁸⁵

⁷⁸ George Kenny to General Manager, Tourist and Health Resorts Department, Wellington, 1 February 1907, Tourist Department, TO 1, 1903/28/1, ANZ-W.

⁷⁹ Te Aroha Borough Council, Rate Books, 1888, 1893-1894, 1906-1907 [no pagination], Matamata-Piako District Council Archives, Te Aroha.

⁸⁰ Te Aroha Warden’s Court, Assignment from William McClear to Patrick and Ellen Fogarty, 9 April 1897, Transfers and Assignments 1896-1899, BBAV 11581/15a, ANZ-A.

⁸¹ Conolly J, Criminal Notebook 1895-1897, pp. 78, 79, Supreme Court, Judges’ Notebooks, BBAE A304/124, ANZ-A; Supreme Court, *New Zealand Herald*, 2 June 1896, p. 3.

⁸² Conolly J, Criminal Notebook 1895-1897, p. 78, Supreme Court, Judges’ Notebooks, BBAE A304/124, ANZ-A.

⁸³ Te Aroha Magistrate’s Court, Civil Record Book 1896-1907, 45/1897, BCDG 1221/2a, ANZ-A.

⁸⁴ Thames Hospital, Fees Register 1912-1914, entries for 28 March 1913, 21 July 1913, YCAH A431/75, ANZ-A.

⁸⁵ Declaration of Peter Gilchrist, 24 August 1917, Hamilton Probates, BCDG 4420/772; Testamentary Registers 1917-1918, folio 227, BBCB 4208/11, ANZ-A.

DRINK

One possible reason for leaving such a small estate was that, for a time at least, he had a drink problem. In both January 1889 and 1890 he was placed in the Te Aroha lock-up for being drunk and then convicted and cautioned.⁸⁶ In 1892 he accused another man of insulting behaviour, but the case was dismissed.⁸⁷ As the local newspaper for that year is no longer in existence, this petty squabble cannot be explained, but drink may have played a part.

Apart from his final illness, the only other indication of his state of health was that in 1885 he spent three months in the Thames hospital suffering from acute rheumatism.⁸⁸ When he could not prove his age to support his application for an old age pension,⁸⁹ in October 1912 his brother Samuel McLear wrote to him providing both his age and the names of all his siblings (perhaps unknown to him?). Samuel was 'sorry to hear you are still unwell', and recommended that balsam, 'better known as the poison weed', would cure him, although Samuel was unable to send any more because of the long drought.⁹⁰

CONCLUSION

Once Te Aroha was established, McClear, who had been abandoned by his Scottish father and brought up by Maori, re-integrated himself into Pakeha ways and ceased to be a Pakeha Maori. There is no evidence for any continued contact with Maori after 1880 but judging by his earlier close association with those living at Omahu pa, this was likely. He never learnt to read and write in English, which meant that he remained a labourer and

⁸⁶ Armed Constabulary Force, Return of Charges taken at Te Aroha Lock-Up 1880-1903, 3/1889, no. 3 of 1890, in private possession; Te Aroha Magistrate's Court, Criminal Record Book 1881-1896, 3/1889, BCDG 11220/1a, ANZ-A.

⁸⁷ Te Aroha Magistrate's Court, Criminal Record Book 1881-1896, 11/1892, BCDG 11220/1a, ANZ-A.

⁸⁸ Thames Hospital, Register of Patients 1884-1901, folio 8, YCAH 14075/1a, ANZ-A.

⁸⁹ Registrar of Old Age Pensions, Paeroa, to Registrar of Births, Onehunga, 13 March 1913, Te Aroha Warden's Court, General Correspondence 1913, BBAV 11584/7a, ANZ-A.

⁹⁰ Samuel McLear to 'My Dear Brother' [W.J. McClear], October [1912], Te Aroha Warden's Court, General Correspondence 1913, BBAV 11584/7a, ANZ-A.

an occasional miner, unable to earn more than a basic standard of living. Unlike other Pakeha Maori living in the district, he had not profited financially from his association with Maori; but then the others had married women with interests in land.

Although what has been uncovered is mostly a skeleton of his life, with few indications of his personality, it is an illustration of how much can sometimes be discovered about a very obscure person.