

AN OVERVIEW OF MINING IN THE TE AROHA MINING
DISTRICT IN THE 1890s

Philip Hart

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Historical Research Unit
Faculty of Arts & Social Sciences
The University of Waikato
Private Bag 3105
Hamilton, New Zealand

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Contact: prhart1940@gmail.com



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Abstract: *For most of the decade, only a small amount of mining was undertaken, despite the efforts of some prospectors and miners (who were always handicapped by lack of capital). The only mine to produce a steady profit for its small syndicate was the Loyalty Palace. Prospecting, either by individuals or by specially organized parties, continued throughout most of the decade, with little success, despite investigating new areas such as the Mangakino Valley. The mining boom of 1895 prompted those owning apparently promising ground to attempt to sell it to overseas investors; all potentially auriferous ground was pegged out, but most of the new claims were not worked or, if worked, few produced much gold.*

Exaggerated hopes were even more exaggerated during the brief boom, but the introduction of some (but never sufficient) foreign capital raised hopes for some permanent benefits being produced. The problem of how to treat the complex ore had not been solved, although late in the decade Joseph Campbell would promote his new system. Edwin Hardy, who arrived in the district in 1899, would subsequently develop part of the field more methodically.

As always, both local and central governments were asked to provide financial assistance, resulting in some prospectors being subsidized and some prospecting tracks constructed. And at the very end of the decade, a new proposal for large-scale mining was floated.

1890

As at 31 March 1890, 27 mining leases were registered, covering 749 acres.¹ The only mining was in the New Era and Werahiko; the Te Aroha Silver and Gold Mining Company's ground² was protected and a resumption of work was not expected.³ Nevertheless, the warden, Henry William Northcroft, considered mining had been 'fairly prosperous' during the past 12 months, at least for this company, but did admit his earlier hopes had 'not altogether been borne out, and we have suffered from serious

¹ *AJHR*, 1890, C-3, p. 190.

² See paper on this company.

³ H.W. Northcroft to Under-Secretary, Mines Department, 26 April 1890, *AJHR*, 1890, C-3, Appendix 1, p. 141.

disappointments, too often the result of the want of care, foresight, and local knowledge so essential in all mining undertakings'.⁴ Henry Andrew Gordon, inspecting engineer for the Mines Department, wrote that only 'very limited' prospecting had been done since 1881; although gold had been found 'on both sides of the main lode', there had been scarcely any prospecting of its western side.⁵ The *Te Aroha News* wanted the industry kept alive by forfeiting unworked claims: when regulations concerning manning were 'systematically and continuously avoided' it was clear that ground was held 'solely with a view of making a rise from the unearned increment, that no mineral worth exists, or that the lessees are unable to obtain that which does exist'.⁶

Although the Te Aroha Silver and Gold Mining Company did not abandon Waiorongomai until October,⁷ until that month no work was done in its mines or battery. In April, the *Te Aroha News* wrote that this created 'an impression that the industry upon which the welfare of this community mainly depended, had received so severe a blow' that it was 'doubtful whether it would ever again' become important for the district. Determined to put on a brave face to counter fears of the field's collapse, it argued that 'very much remains to be done' before it could be asserted that the mines were exhausted. Lodes proven to be payable should 'be opened up at lower levels', and 'a very large area of virgin ground' remained 'to be thoroughly prospected'. It pointed to 'less pretentious undertakings' such as the Champion⁸ and New Era⁹ companies to prove a great potential remained.¹⁰ Miners, less optimistic, continued to seek work elsewhere.¹¹ In June a poetically minded visitor to the hot springs expressed the local gloom:

O wrong are you, O wrong am I

⁴ H.W. Northcroft to Under-Secretary, Mines Department, 26 April 1890, *AJHR*, 1890, C-3, Appendix 1, pp. 136, 138.

⁵ H.A. Gordon to Under-Secretary, Mines Department, 24 February 1890, Mines Department, MD 1, 90/119, ANZ-W.

⁶ Editorial, *Te Aroha News*, 1 March 1890, p. 2.

⁷ *Thames Star*, 31 October 1890, p. 2.

⁸ See paper on the Tui district.

⁹ See paper on Peter Ferguson and his New Era.

¹⁰ *Te Aroha News*, 5 April 1890, p. 2.

¹¹ *Waikato Times*, 20 February 1890, p. 2, 20 December 1890, p. 2; *Te Aroha News*, 22 March 1890, p. 2, 12 April 1890, p. 2.

O wrong are all of us
 We all are sold, there is no gold,
 The claim's not worth a cuss.¹²
 We came O why? It's all my eye.¹³
 So sing O Wai-o-rongo-mai
 Here comes the blooming bus
 Let's all get in, it is a sin
 The claim's not worth a cuss.
 Singing O Wai-orongo-mai
 O wrong are all of us.¹⁴

This poet had been informed of rumours that the Te Aroha Silver and Gold Mining Company was 'about to cease operations. Altogether things do not look very bright'.¹⁵ A month later, the *Te Aroha News* admitted little prospecting was being done, and that, apart from Peter Ferguson's syndicate,¹⁶ work had been 'practically suspended'. Everyone was waiting to see what the 'big Company' was going to do, which was 'not a healthy state of affairs' and was 'decidedly injurious to the best interests of the goldfield'.¹⁷ A week later, a tender from two local miners to work the battery was accepted, enabling gold won by tributers to be crushed.¹⁸ This provided little stimulus, and in October mining was 'almost at a stand-still', most mines 'having had protection for many months past'.¹⁹

In December, residents 'anxiously' hoped that whoever bought the battery would not remove it.²⁰ The *Te Aroha News* was delighted when

¹² 'This expression may appear vulgar but only to the illiterate. *Cuss* is equivalent to *kerse*.

A worthless thing is said to be 'not worth a kersse', i.e. a water cress - Vision of Piers Powman - soepe' [annotation by Guy Scholefield].

¹³ 'From the Latin prayer to St Martin - O mihi beate Martine "All my eye and Betty Martin" ' [annotation by Guy Scholefield].

¹⁴ Verse by C.W. Richmond, on letter of E.T. Richmond to C.W. Richmond, 10 June 1890, in *The Richmond-Atkinson Papers*, ed. Guy H. Scholefield, vol. 2 (Wellington, 1960), p. 556.

¹⁵ C.W. Richmond to Emily E. Richmond, 22 June 1890, *Richmond-Atkinson Papers*, p. 557.

¹⁶ See paper on Peter Ferguson and his New Era.

¹⁷ *Te Aroha News*, 12 July 1890, p. 2.

¹⁸ *Thames Star*, 24 July 1890, p. 2.

¹⁹ 'Te Aroha', *Observer*, 18 October 1890, p. 17.

²⁰ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 6 December 1890, p. 23.

Henry Hopper Adams bought it,²¹ and ‘confidently’ expected ‘to see operations resumed almost immediately. This will be good news, we feel sure, to all our readers’.²² It called for assistance for Adams’ syndicate because on its success depended ‘the prosperity and progress of the district’. The ‘new work’ it proposed along with the letting of tributes would provide employment to ‘many’ unemployed miners and could ‘bring back some of our miners who have been driven away to seek work elsewhere’.²³

1891

The year commenced with tributes let in Adams’ mines, his syndicate being ‘willing to crush and treat the ore at very low rates, so as to give the tributers every chance of testing the reef’. This prospect of ‘cheap crushing’ was ‘sufficient to send a few parties out prospecting’.²⁴ By the beginning of February work was ‘steadily progressing’, extra men were employed, and the battery was crushing again.²⁵ But then mining stopped for two months because the tramway ceased working, first because of an argument over its transfer to the syndicate and then the latter’s inability to complete the purchase.²⁶ Despite this, a mining columnist considered that, as the main mines had ‘fallen into local hands, who ought to know something of the mines’, there was ‘hope for better returns at an early date’.²⁷

In his report on the year to 31 March, Gordon noted there had been little mining because almost all the ground was held in ‘large claims, on which very little work has been done’. Only 30 men had been employed, eight of these in the tailings plant. 280 tons had produced 75oz 17dwt, and 1,000 tons of tailings 441oz 9dwt. Since the field opened, 40,320 tons had produced 26,830oz of gold and 20,416oz of bullion, ‘and the mines may be said to be only scratched on the surface. Very little money’ had been spent in prospecting ‘since the early days’, but he had ‘not the slightest doubt that

²¹ See paper on his life.

²² *Te Aroha News*, n.d., reprinted in *Auckland Weekly News*, 13 December 1890, p. 21.

²³ *Te Aroha News*, n.d., reprinted in *Waikato Times*, 20 December 1890, p. 2.

²⁴ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 24 January 1891, p. 21.

²⁵ *Thames Advertiser*, 5 February 1891, p. 2.

²⁶ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Thames Advertiser*, 12 February 1891, p. 2; ‘Obadiah’, ‘Shares and Mining’, *Observer*, 21 February 1891, p. 18; *Thames Star*, 12 February 1891, p. 2, 20 April 1891, p. 2.

²⁷ ‘Obadiah’, ‘Shares and Mining’, *Observer*, 21 February 1891, p. 18.

this will yet become a good gold-producing district when it gets developed'.²⁸ Sixteen mining leases covered just over 491 acres.²⁹

When the Te Aroha Silver and Gold Mining Company's plant and mines were sold in April, the *Te Aroha News* hoped this sale would not fall through, as had happened previously. 'The injury which has been caused by the non-working of the battery, tramway, etc, and by the locking-up of so much valuable mining property', had been 'a very serious calamity' for the whole district. If the sale fell through, it hoped the warden would 'either throw open the ground to any who may be prepared to take it up or insist that it at once be properly manned'. If work was not resumed, a meeting would be called to consider 'the propriety of bringing the matter before the Warden'.³⁰ As Adams' syndicate was struggling to raise funds, at the beginning of May a meeting discussed 'the present unsatisfactory condition of mining affairs ... with the view of taking such measures as may be deemed advisable to secure the future working of the mines'.³¹ Adams explained the state of the mines and tramway, and offered to transfer any part of his ground to any applicant, apart from the New Find and Silver King.³² When the meeting discussed complaints about the tramway, the council was asked for support.³³ With the loss of copies of the local newspaper (in a fire) and the general lack of interest by other newspapers in an apparently failed goldfield, it is not possible to discover what, if anything, resulted from this meeting.

One prominent mine manager and mining reporter, John McCombie,³⁴ wrote in early May that 'everything in the shape of mining' was 'at a complete standstill'.³⁵ When Richard Seddon, the Minister of Mines, visited shortly afterwards, he found 11 miners working in the New Find and Colonist, the battery was crushing ore from the New Find and its berdans were treating tailings.³⁶ Seddon had no doubts about what had gone wrong, having seen the same circumstances elsewhere. 'This field, in some respects

²⁸ H.A. Gordon to Minister of Mines, 8 June 1891, *AJHR*, 1891, C-4, p. 42.

²⁹ *AJHR*, 1891, C-4, p. 203.

³⁰ *Te Aroha News*, n.d., reprinted in *Thames Star*, 20 April 1891, p. 2.

³¹ *Thames Star*, 2 May 1891, p. 3.

³² See papers on these mines.

³³ Te Aroha Correspondent, *New Zealand Herald*, 6 May 1891, p. 6.

³⁴ See paper on Billy Nicholl.

³⁵ 'Aboriginal', 'General Notes', *Thames Advertiser*, 8 May 1891, p. 2.

³⁶ *Thames Advertiser*, 11 May 1891, p. 2, 14 May 1891, p. 2.

presented a lamentable and heartbreaking state of affairs. Large and expensive works shut up, capital misdirected, shareholders ruined, and the district depopulated'. He criticised the Te Aroha Silver and Gold Mining Company for not having tested the quartz adequately before erecting an unsuitable plant. Only a few trucks were being sent down each day but had a twentieth of the sum spent on the battery been spent on prospecting and assaying, there might have been 'a fine goldfield'.

Generally, from Coromandel to Waiorongomai - and it was the same in all parts of the colony - there were monopolies held by middlemen, parasites, who had no intention of working the ground, but were holding to sell to capitalists or otherwise for speculative purposes. He was more and more impressed with the necessity of the State resuming such claims and dealing with them as Crown lands.³⁷

By late May, the *Colonist*, now known as the *Warrior*, was turning out good stone that was 'supposed to be payable'. Once this mine was further developed, the number of miners would be increased from the current ten. Adams was considering abandoning all the ground he did not intend working, which would 'give great satisfaction', as many of those wishing to prospect were prevented by so much ground being 'locked up and unworked'.³⁸ Another positive announcement was that a good and hitherto unknown reef had been discovered in the Diamond Gully section of the New Find.³⁹

An indication of the decline was that in June, George Wilson,⁴⁰ for some years chairman of the domain board, felt obliged to resign this position because his duties as mining inspector were 'now seldom required at Te Aroha'.⁴¹ Small-scale mining did continue, ore coming down the tramway each day in August from the Hero and from William Morris Newsham⁴² and party's tribute in the Ferguson Syndicate's mine. The *Te*

³⁷ *Auckland Weekly News*, 16 May 1891, p. 30.

³⁸ Waiorongomai Correspondent, *Thames Advertiser*, 27 May 1891, p. 2.

³⁹ Waiorongomai Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 13 May 1891, p. 2; *Thames Star*, 25 May 1891, p. 4.

⁴⁰ See paper on his life.

⁴¹ George Wilson to Under-Secretary, Lands and Survey Department, 15 June 1891, Tourist Department, TO 1, 1891/198, ANZ-W.

⁴² See paper on his life.

Aroha News rejoiced that the field was looking better than ‘for some time past’.⁴³ Reviewing the year’s mining, another newspaper noted that, although it had been ‘very quiet’ because most ground’ was locked up in large areas’, late in the year these were ‘divided into smaller holdings, and consequently more work’ was ‘in progress’.⁴⁴

1892

At the start of 1892, an almanac stated that ‘mining matters in this district continue at a standstill, but we look forward to improvements shortly’.⁴⁵ In early February, the *Te Aroha News* tried to rebut the impression that the field was ‘played out’, arguing that ‘although it certainly presents a very deserted appearance’ and the industry was ‘at a very low ebb’, there was ‘still some life yet left’. Henry Hopper Adams was ‘perseveringly endeavouring to make his venture eventually pay. The battery is working night and day on 100 truck loads of ore’ obtained by Newsham’s tributing party in the Ferguson Syndicate claim, and another party had obtained ‘the payable return of 20oz of gold’ from 20 trucks from the Hero. One party had taken up ground, two other tributing parties were at work, and ‘some 30 berdans and 7 pans have been working day and night for some months’ on tailings, ‘with payable results’.⁴⁶

In the 12 months to 31 March, four claims worked by 21 owners and wages men plus eight tributers produced 1,597 tons containing 670oz 7dwt.⁴⁷ When Wilson visited in March, about 12 miners were working.⁴⁸ By the end of that month, although several parties had taken up claims ‘recently’, only five leases covering 144 acres were registered.⁴⁹ Northcroft considered there was ‘little doubt that a few small parties will be able to make a good living for a considerable time’, but feared that mining on anything but a small scale was over.⁵⁰ Seddon noted that most miners had

⁴³ *Te Aroha News*, n.d., reprinted in *Thames Advertiser*, 31 August 1891, p. 2.

⁴⁴ *Auckland Weekly News*, 9 January 1892, p. 30.

⁴⁵ *Bond’s Waikato, Te Aroha and Rotorua Almanac and Diary for 1892* (Hamilton, 1892), p. 163.

⁴⁶ *Te Aroha News*, n.d., reprinted in *Thames Star*, 8 February 1892, p. 4.

⁴⁷ *AJHR*, 1892, C-3, p. 47.

⁴⁸ *Thames Advertiser*, 24 March 1892, p. 2.

⁴⁹ *AJHR*, 1892, C-3A, pp. 15, 65.

⁵⁰ H.W. Northcroft to Under-Secretary, 19 May 1892, *AJHR*, 1892, C-3A, p. 6.

left.⁵¹ As an Auckland almanac commented, although much of the ground was now available for mining, it was ‘difficult to get men to return to a district when once they leave it in search of employment elsewhere. When once a general exodus from a field occurs, it takes some years before men can again be induced to return’.⁵²

In May even the ever-hopeful *Te Aroha News* published an article under the headline ‘A Gloomy Outlook’:

Mining matters at Waiorongomai have been in a very unsatisfactory condition for some considerable time past. Owing to the long-continued drought the battery could not be worked for about five weeks, during which time the different parties working on the Hill had accumulated a good supply of ore. The first lot to be put through was that of [Thomas] Scott⁵³ and party, which, to all appearances, looked as good as that which had recently given them a very good crushing - at all events it was considered payable stuff. This time they put through some 30 trucks. We understand that Mr Adams, or his manager, after completing a crushing of refuse, etc, lying about the battery, in which were various scraps of zinc, iron, nails, lead, &c, did not clean out the stamper boxes (as is done in other batteries) before going on with another crushing, particularly after such scrapings-up had been put through. Scott and party therefore commenced their crushing in dirty boxes, to which they attribute the poor result, which we learn was only 3oz of gold from 30 trucks of ore. Of course, this result has been a very serious disappointment to the party, who had been working for so many weeks, to find themselves at last left with such a poor yield as 3oz of gold for a good two months’ work. The want of fine gratings is also complained of as being another cause why the gold is not saved, as it passes away into the tailings. The next party have 80 to 90 trucks of payable looking ore ready to be treated, but in the fact of the result of Scott and party’s crushing, they declined to have it done until the stamper boxes were cleaned out and fine gratings provided.

⁵¹ R.J. Seddon, ‘Mines Statement’, *AJHR*, 1892, C-5, p. 5.

⁵² *Brett’s Auckland Almanac, Provincial Handbook, and Strangers’ Vade Mecum for 1892* (Auckland, 1892), p. 179.

⁵³ See Te Aroha Warden’s Court, Register of Te Aroha Claims 1880-1888, folio 338, BBAV 11567/1a; Mining Applications 1892, 19/1892, BBAV 11582/3a, ANZ-A; *Thames Advertiser*, 3 May 1883, p. 2, 23 May 1884, p. 2; *Te Aroha News*, 10 October 1885, p. 2, 1 October 1887, p. 2; *New Zealand Gazette*, 11 February 1892, p. 298.

Adams had instructed that this be done, but in the meantime the battery was ‘at a standstill’. It was ‘a matter of deep regret that such a very unsatisfactory state of affairs’ existed, ‘and affecting as it does the prospects of an industry on which the prosperity of Te Aroha depends so largely, we trust that there may be some immediate change for the better’.⁵⁴

There was the possibility of such a change when Adams decided to erect an experimental cyanide plant.⁵⁵ In October, while this was being erected, mining continued ‘on a moderate scale’; ‘a number of men are always at home on the hill’. A correspondent considered that ‘in all probability’ the cyanide plant would ‘give a fresh impetus’ to mining ‘and cause the return of prosperity’.⁵⁶

Late in the year, a committee of two mine managers, two miners, and one publican was appointed to organize prospecting on the ground between Te Aroha and the New Find, to canvass for support, and to apply for a government subsidy.⁵⁷ The *Te Aroha News* warned that this prospecting association ‘must be constituted on a thorough business basis, so as to gain the confidence of those whose experience in the past of such Associations has been anything but pleasant or profitable’.⁵⁸ At a subsequent meeting to report on the most suitable places to prospect near the old Prospectors’ Claim at Te Aroha and at Stoney Creek, ‘a good number’ of men attended, and another committee was formed to direct its work. Apart from a publican, all its members were new: two storekeepers, two hotelkeepers, one butcher, and one boardinghouse keeper. A local correspondent expected the association to revive mining.⁵⁹ It did do ‘some prospecting’ but ‘without success’.⁶⁰

In October, as three parties were sending down small quantities, the tramway was being ‘worked steadily’, an average of ‘about 10 trucks a day’

⁵⁴ *Te Aroha News*, n.d., reprinted in *Thames Star*, 30 May 1892, p. 4.

⁵⁵ *Ohinemuri Gazette*, 2 July 1892, p. 4.

⁵⁶ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 22 October 1892, p. 22.

⁵⁷ *Te Aroha News*, n.d., reprinted in *Thames Advertiser*, 19 September 1892, p. 2; Te Aroha Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 5 November 1892, p. 23.

⁵⁸ *Te Aroha News*, n.d., reprinted in *Thames Star*, 19 September 1892, p. 2.

⁵⁹ *Thames Star*, 21 November 1892, p. 4; Te Aroha Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 26 November 1892, p. 23.

⁶⁰ H.W. Northcroft to Under-Secretary, Mines Department, 19 May 1893, *AJHR*, 1893, C-3, Appendix 1, p. v.

being sent down.⁶¹ A party of miners from Ohinemuri, where mining was also declining, set out to prospect the range between Karangahake and Te Aroha. As always, good results were anticipated, this time by a Paeroa newspaper. 'The richness of these ranges in gold-bearing quartz has been fairly proven, and we believe the discovery of a valuable reef is a matter of a few weeks'.⁶² Despite this typical optimism, no such reef was found. At the end of the year, Adams, Newsham, and another party were extracting 'promising' ore.⁶³

1893

When visiting Waiorongomai in January 1893, Josiah Clifton Firth⁶⁴ made another of his over-optimistic prophecies. As usual, being 'very hopeful' about its prospects, he expected the Cassel cyanide process would be 'very successful'. In reporting these views, a local correspondent added that mining was 'certainly improving' and 'a good many men', unquantified, were at work.⁶⁵ But by 31 March only three claims covering 36 acres were working: the Silver King and New Find, both owned by Adams' syndicate, and the Premier.⁶⁶ In these three months, 19 owners and wages men plus four tributers worked these mines.⁶⁷ And the new cyanide plant was unsuccessful.⁶⁸

In January, a preliminary meeting of the Waiorongomai Prospecting Association, convened by publican Martin Murphy,⁶⁹ was held in his Waiorongomai Hotel. Not then a claim owner, two years later he would apply for two.⁷⁰ The attendance of only 12 men 'would have been much larger but for counter attractions in Te Aroha, coupled with its being pay

⁶¹ *Te Aroha News*, n.d., reprinted in *Thames Star*, 13 October 1892, p. 4.

⁶² *Ohinemuri Gazette*, 8 October 1892, p. 4.

⁶³ *Thames Star*, 5 December 1892, p. 4, 15 December 1892, p. 4.

⁶⁴ See paper on the Battery Company.

⁶⁵ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 14 January 1893, p. 23.

⁶⁶ *AJHR*, 1893, C-3, p. 71.

⁶⁷ *AJHR*, 1893, C-3, Appendix 1, p. vi.

⁶⁸ 'Obadiah', 'Shares and Mining', *Observer*, 8 April 1893, p. 13.

⁶⁹ See *Te Aroha News*, 16 May 1888, p. 2, 23 June 1888, p. 2, 29 March 1898, p. 2, 7 June 1910, p. 2, 30 June 1932, p. 5.

⁷⁰ Te Aroha Warden's Court, Mining Applications 1895, 34/1895, BBAV 11582/4a; *Plaint Book 1880-1898*, 23/1895, BBAV 11547/1a, ANZ-A.

night', which did not suggest great enthusiasm. Two subscriptions of £10 and one of £5 had been promised, and Murphy 'had received promises of assistance from various settlers in the district, and others when the matter was once put in train'. A committee comprising a butcher, a hotelkeeper, two miners, and a mine owner (Adams) was formed to organize work to start shortly on 'very promising' ground, unspecified. It planned 'to employ two men for at least three months' of 'the best months of the year, at something like £2 per week, and a quarter share' in any claim taken up after a discovery.⁷¹ Nothing was found.

Also in January, 'a fair attendance' at a preliminary meeting of the Te Aroha Prospecting Association was told that £146 had been promised in monthly payments ranging from 5s to £1. It was agreed that each subscriber's interest would be in proportion to the amount he paid in advance each month and would lose it immediately subscriptions went unpaid. A meeting to be held in a fortnight's time would decide where to commence work, if sufficient subscriptions had been received. It was hoped that as local residents had shown their faith by subscribing, 'residents of other districts who would likely benefit from any success' would also assist.⁷² As only a modest amount was raised, not until late March did a meeting decide to employ two men to prospect, for just one month, on the 100 acres near Stoney Creek granted to the association.⁷³ These men were 'busy at work' at the beginning of May,⁷⁴ and late in the year had the usual 'encouraging' results.⁷⁵

A rumour that a British syndicate had taken up some ground 'to thoroughly prospect'⁷⁶ was premature by two years. Adams continued to mine, but by July the battery was working 'about half-time' and miners were being discharged because of difficulties with the battery process, which was being modified.⁷⁷ In October the tramway ceased operating

⁷¹ *Thames Advertiser*, 25 January 1893, p. 2; *Auckland Weekly News*, 28 January 1893, p. 18.

⁷² *Te Aroha News*, n.d., reprinted in *Thames Advertiser*, 30 January 1893, p. 2.

⁷³ *Thames Advertiser*, 23 March 1893, p. 2; see also 'Te Aroha', *Observer*, 1 April 1893, p. 17.

⁷⁴ 'Te Aroha', *Observer*, 6 May 1893, p. 17.

⁷⁵ *Te Aroha News*, n.d., reprinted in *Thames Star*, 18 December 1893, p. 3, 4 January 1894, p. 4.

⁷⁶ 'Obadiah', 'Shares and Mining', *Observer*, 6 May 1893, p. 17.

⁷⁷ *Thames Star*, 10 July 1893, p. 2, 31 July 1893, p. 3, 21 August 1893, p. 3.

because all mining had ended, although a small amount of prospecting continued.⁷⁸ By early December, mining had improved ‘greatly’ because some of the ‘old identities’ had stuck to the district ‘through thick and thin’. The battery was working ‘continuously’ for Newsham, a tributing party had ‘very good stone’, yet to be treated, and there was even a (false) rumour that the government would provide £3,000 a drive a low-level tunnel.⁷⁹

THE LOYALTY-PALACE MINES, 1893-1897

In July 1893 yet another Te Aroha prospecting association was formed, some of those involved in it having participated in the earlier, abortive, attempt to form one at Waiorongomai. The subscribers were a hotelkeeper, a draper, a storekeeper, and a mine manager from Te Aroha, and a hotelkeeper, a butcher, a storekeeper, and a miner from Waiorongomai. Thomas Gavin, a prominent mine manager,⁸⁰ and Newsham started driving near the former Inverness ground at Waiorongomai and cut a reef giving ‘fair dish prospects’. Late in the year, the government paid them £20 12s 6d after they had driven 165 feet.⁸¹ At the very end of the year, 12 trucks of quartz from the association’s newly acquired ground were crushed ‘for the splendid return of 5oz of gold to the truck’ worth £3 3s 9d per ounce, a result that did not include tailings.⁸² Another report gave the output as being 57 ounces worth £3 4s 9d; it also noted that the stone had been carefully picked.⁸³ Thus the rich ore of the Loyalty was first revealed. The ground included parts of several forfeited claims: the Inverness, Lucky Hit, and Phoenix.⁸⁴

In February 1894 a trial parcel of nine loads yielded 4oz 10dwt, valued at £3 1s 6d per ounce, which was ‘considered payable’.⁸⁵ Shortly afterwards, when 33oz 3dwt were obtained from 22 loads of unpicked stone, the prospects were described as being ‘exceptionally good’ and were ‘restoring

⁷⁸ Piako County Council, *Waikato Times*, 5 October 1893, p. 6.

⁷⁹ *Te Aroha News*, n.d., reprinted in *Thames Star*, 18 December 1893, p. 3.

⁸⁰ See paper on his life.

⁸¹ Correspondence and memoranda, 20 October 1893 to 20 November 1893, Mines Department, MD 1, 93/1281, ANZ-W.

⁸² *Thames Advertiser*, 4 January 1894, p. 2.

⁸³ H.A. Gordon to Minister of Mines, 24 July 1894, *AJHR*, 1894, C-3, p. 48.

⁸⁴ *Te Aroha News*, n.d., reprinted in *Thames Star*, 14 May 1894, p. 4.

⁸⁵ *Te Aroha News*, n.d., reprinted in *Thames Star*, 8 February 1894, p. 3.

confidence' in the district.⁸⁶ A week later, the prospecting association, under Gavin's 'able guidance', was 'turning out very successful', and since Christmas shareholders have received 'several good divs [dividends] which have been greatly appreciated'.⁸⁷ By the end of March, a 'considerable amount of work had been done', a crosscut having hit the reef, which was then driven on for 60 feet; 55 tons had produced 93 ounces.⁸⁸ The miners were able to use the Inverness level and hopper.⁸⁹ In late April, 40 truckloads were crushed. 'The stuff looks well and should yield a payable return. Shareholders are expecting a good dividend'.⁹⁰ For once they were right to expect one, a correspondent writing that 'the return of 83oz retorted gold from 50 loads of dirt' would be 'a great encouragement', for they had 'persevered in working the ground in the face of the greatest discouragement'. In early May they were 'tapping the reef at a lower level', expected a much better return from the next crushing, and even contemplated acquiring their own battery.⁹¹ (What this discouragement consisted of was not stated, but was probably a lack of capital.) Other reports gave the figures as 81oz 10dwt melted gold from 52 trucks, valued at £3 4s 9d per ounce.⁹²

The *Te Aroha News* inspected the mine in early May. 'For some time past' it had been 'steadily working on good ore', and the fourth dividend within six months was 'considered very satisfactory indeed'. There were 'three well-defined reefs running through the ground', the Lucky Hit, Vermont, and Waiorongomai,

all of which have been worked at various times with different success. The gold was originally found about 90ft above the Inverness working, and a prospecting drive of 30ft was put in to cut the reef; when the reef was reached, they drove east and west on it for about 30ft, when it was found the richest quartz lay on the bottom of the drive. So a winze was sunk on the reef to a

⁸⁶ *Te Aroha News*, n.d., reprinted in *Thames Advertiser*, 26 February 1894, p. 3.

⁸⁷ *Te Aroha News*, n.d., reprinted in *Thames Advertiser*, 5 March 1894, p. 2.

⁸⁸ George Wilson to Under-Secretary, Mines Department, 7 May 1894, *AJHR*, 1894, C-3A, p. 14.

⁸⁹ H.A. Gordon to Minister of Mines, 24 July 1894, *AJHR*, 1894, C-3, p. 48.

⁹⁰ *Te Aroha News*, n.d., reprinted in *Thames Star*, 26 April 1894, p. 2.

⁹¹ *Te Aroha* Correspondent, *New Zealand Herald*, 11 May 1894, p. 6.

⁹² *Te Aroha News*, n.d. reprinted in *Thames Star*, 14 May 1894, p. 4; *New Zealand Herald*, 18 May 1894, Supplement, p. 2.

depth of 23ft, and it was out of this that most of the last crushing was obtained but owing to the water they were unable to continue working at the top level. On Monday last they commenced a drive about 35ft lower down in order to cut the reef at a lower level and get the water off. They will have to drive about 90ft, and are already in about 30ft, and expect to cut the reef in about a fortnight. They will only have about 7ft to rise to connect with the winze from the upper level.

The method of getting the quartz to the tramway has been to bag it and let it roll down the hill, entailing considerable labor and costing about 3s 3d per truck to handle. This will now be saved by constructing a small tramway to run the stuff to the mouth of the Inverness drive, erecting a small hopper, and then running the quartz into the larger hopper. Mr Gavin, who has been working on the field since its opening, is of opinion that the reef where they have been working has the finest show of gold that has ever been seen on the field except, perhaps, the New Find and the Colonist in their best days....

The developments of this important discovery will be closely watched, and the next crushing anxiously waited for.⁹³

Several prospecting parties were seeking 'the same reef higher up the hill'.⁹⁴ When the reef was struck in the intermediate level in early June it was two feet thick but 'not so good as it was higher up. The reef is full of mineral, but very little gold is seen'. Gavin believed they would have 'to drive about 20ft on the line of the reef before the rich run of gold is again picked up. A large amount of work' had been done laying a tramway, 'erecting a shoot, and other necessary works' which would save labour and 'greatly facilitate work'.⁹⁵ By early September, the owners were 'most prosperous', having crushed 53 trucks 'a few days ago for the very profitable return of 138oz 9dwt of gold, valued at £3 4s 9d per ounce, and they have a good-sized block opened up on the reef, which they believe will turn out equally as well'.⁹⁶ In November they were 'constantly getting very good stone. On Saturday they had a big boulder showing gold at every stroke of the drill, but whether the average will pay much is a question'.⁹⁷

By February 1895, after 'some six months dead work' the mine had 'returned the shareholders over a hundred per cent in dividends'. Gavin had

⁹³ *Te Aroha News*, n.d., reprinted in *Thames Star*, 14 May 1894, p. 4.

⁹⁴ *New Zealand Herald*, 18 May 1894, Supplement, p. 2.

⁹⁵ *Te Aroha News*, n.d., reprinted in *Thames Star*, 7 June 1894, p. 4.

⁹⁶ *New Zealand Herald*, 7 September 1894, p. 6.

⁹⁷ *Te Aroha News*, n.d., reprinted in *Thames Star*, 22 November 1894, p. 4.

just discovered gold in the adjoining Palace ground, which promised ‘twice as good returns’.⁹⁸ The Palace had two men working in it,⁹⁹ who by early February had sunk 20 feet, made a 20-foot drive, and obtained seven pounds of specimens, ‘literally clogged with gold. You can hardly put a pin’s point between the precious metal in some, and it was all sizes up to a duck shot. As all the stone from the leader though not showing gold in the solid shows it when pounded’, the shareholders were ‘evidently in for a good thing’, deservedly, ‘as they have been working for about twelve months for nothing, bar the fifteen pounds or so they got at Christmas’.¹⁰⁰ Later that February they found ‘some really excellent stuff’, with 20 pounds of specimens ‘which should yield close on 20oz of gold’, and the outlook appeared ‘very promising’.¹⁰¹ On behalf of the syndicate, Gavin successfully applied for the Loyalty Palace Licensed Holding, comprising 30 acres surrounded by unoccupied ground.¹⁰² By then, the Loyalty drive was in 130 feet and each truckload was producing from two-and-a-half to five ounces. The mine had been ‘very remunerative to the shareholders - paying all expenses and also dividends during the last twelve months’.¹⁰³ As the dividends were ‘good’, shareholders had ‘every reason to be satisfied’;¹⁰⁴ one correspondent reported ‘a div. of £15 for several months’.¹⁰⁵

In February, the *Te Aroha News* rejoiced that the efforts of the ‘few individuals’ who had started the prospecting syndicate had produced the Loyalty’s ‘really brilliant success’, which, along with the recent discoveries in the Palace, was ‘responsible for a new glimpse of sunshine’.¹⁰⁶ These mines continued working with good results,¹⁰⁷ and for the remainder of the

⁹⁸ Editorial, *Te Aroha News*, 9 February 1895, p. 2.

⁹⁹ *Te Aroha News*, 28 January 1895, p. 2.

¹⁰⁰ *Te Aroha News*, 6 February 1895, p. 2, reprinted in *Thames Star*, 11 February 1895, p. 2.

¹⁰¹ *Te Aroha News*, 20 February 1895, p. 2; see also Te Aroha Correspondent, *New Zealand Herald*, 22 February 1895, p. 6.

¹⁰² Te Aroha Warden’s Court, Mining Applications 1895, 3/1895, BBAV 11582/4a, ANZ-A.

¹⁰³ *Te Aroha News*, 20 February 1895, p. 2.

¹⁰⁴ Te Aroha Correspondent, *New Zealand Herald*, 22 February 1895, p. 6.

¹⁰⁵ ‘Te Aroha’, *Observer*, 2 February 1895, p. 21.

¹⁰⁶ Editorial, *Te Aroha News*, 23 February 1895, p. 2.

¹⁰⁷ *Te Aroha News*, 2 March 1895, p. 2, 30 March 1895, p. 2, 3 April 1895, p. 2, 10 April 1895, p. 2, 8 June 1895, p. 2; H.A. Gordon to Minister of Mines, 24 July 1895, *AJHR*,

year reports emphasized how well the mines were being developed, the high quality of the ore, and that the profitable crushings meant regular dividends.¹⁰⁸ In August driving and stoping continued in the Loyalty on a lode which varied in width from three to seven feet, the drive being 'carried along on the strike of the reef for a distance of about 100 feet, while a leading stope' had 'also been carried along a considerable distance'. The quartz was 'of a most kindly description', gold being 'frequently seen distributed through the stone, so that the proprietors should be handsomely rewarded for their pluck and perseverance'.¹⁰⁹ Especially because, one Te Aroha correspondent wrote, they had all been 'poor men' before developing the Loyalty.¹¹⁰ Four men had been continuously employed since work had started in November 1894, producing by October 1895 'something like 338 tons of ore for the payable yield of 551 ounces of gold, valued at £1800 10s 6d, so that each man has earned about £5 3s 6d per week for the time worked'. In addition, their 'stack of tailings' assayed at 30s per ton.¹¹¹

As it was believed that less than half the gold was being saved, the owners decided in September to cease crushing until a cyanide plant was available.¹¹² By then, the four men working the Loyalty continuously since November 1893 had produced 551 ounces of gold from 338 tons, a return of £1,800 10s 6d, and 300 tons of tailings with an assay value of £1 10s per ton remained to be treated, producing a combined total of £2,250. When the Palace had 14 tons crushed from its newly discovered reef, 39 ounces were obtained, being 2oz 18dwt per ton; the value was £124 6s 3d. The *Te Aroha News* for once was not exaggerating when writing that 'for a bulk test' this result 'would be difficult to beat in any part of this peninsula'.¹¹³

In December Gavin had 'a few men working on a lode' producing 'fairly good results'.¹¹⁴

1895, C-3, p. 67; George Wilson to Under-Secretary, Mines Department, 21 May 1895, *AJHR*, 1895, C-3A, p. 14.

¹⁰⁸ *Te Aroha News*, 6 July 1895, p. 2, 4 September 1895, p. 2, 14 September 1895, p. 2, 25 September 1895, p. 2; *New Zealand Herald*, 29 October 1896, p. 6.

¹⁰⁹ Waiorongomai Correspondent, *New Zealand Herald*, 28 August 1895, p. 6.

¹¹⁰ Te Aroha Correspondent, *New Zealand Herald*, 30 September 1895, p. 6.

¹¹¹ Waiorongomai Correspondent, *New Zealand Herald*, 4 October 1895, Supplement, p. 1.

¹¹² *Waikato Times*, 14 September 1895, p. 6.

¹¹³ *Te Aroha News*, 25 September 1895, p. 2.

¹¹⁴ Own Reporter, 'The Upper Thames Gold Mines: A Tour of Inspection', *New Zealand Herald*, 25 December 1895, p. 5.

In July, a *Te Aroha News* editorial responded to the Loyalty shareholders claiming that the New Zealand Exploration Company,¹¹⁵ which had taken over most of the main mines but had yet to start work, was starving out young miners. 'For the past two years or nearly so the Loyalty has given excellent returns, far exceeding the average percentage of 99 mines out of a hundred'. Although the area was seven men's ground, only four men worked, protection being granted 'time after time' because it was claimed 'only four men could profitably work the ground'. As these miners 'made only two shifts, and often worked in one', it was obvious that from six to 12 men could have been employed in three shifts. When the warden insisted on proper manning levels, 'the managers preferred forfeiting the extra ground', but when other mines were acquired for the New Zealand Exploration Company 'a sudden change took place in their views. In place of forfeiting three acres they have taken up some 165', and therefore talk of monopoly came badly from them, for they had 'practically monopolized the bulk of proved gold-bearing country outside the main reef'.¹¹⁶

Like the owners of promising (and unpromising) claims throughout Hauraki, in 1895 the owners wished to make a quick profit by selling to overseas capitalists, whose interest in New Zealand had been prompted by the highly profitable Waihi mine, and in June the ground was under offer to an English company.¹¹⁷ To make the property more attractive, in September it was combined with the Extended Special Claim to create a total area of 100 acres. The shareholders wanted any company formed to have a working capital of no less than £20,000; their own reward for selling the ground was to be £1,500 in cash plus one-sixth of the shares, fully paid up.¹¹⁸ After two mining experts made a thorough inspection in late September, floating an English company was expected within three months.¹¹⁹ Gavin informed the warden that 'it was originally intended to float the Loyalty mine on the English market, but capitalists who had visited the ground were of the opinion that the area was too small'. Hence the larger claim, 'to be floated with the Loyalty ground'. The Extended was 'old, abandoned ground, which was repeatedly tried, but it was found necessary that capital was required to carry on operations successfully'. With the working capital they insisted

¹¹⁵ See paper on this company.

¹¹⁶ Editorial, *Te Aroha News*, 20 July 1895, p. 2.

¹¹⁷ *Te Aroha News*, 22 June 1895, p. 2.

¹¹⁸ *Te Aroha News*, 25 September 1895, p. 2.

¹¹⁹ Te Aroha Correspondent, *New Zealand Herald*, 30 September 1895, p. 6.

upon receiving, they would ‘erect more modern machinery, put in low level tunnels, and otherwise prove the value of the claim’.¹²⁰

Edward Mann Corbett, an experienced Waitekauri mine manager,¹²¹ who had held an interest in one Waiorongomai claim in 1881,¹²² in February 1896 inspected what was now called the Loyalty United on behalf of an English syndicate. Being ‘greatly impressed with what he saw, and the appearance of the country generally’, he verified Gavin’s earlier report.¹²³ ‘As the larger portion of the shares’ was held locally, the prospect of selling the Loyalty United was ‘viewed with lively satisfaction’ by the local shareholders.¹²⁴ Although Corbett had verified the claims made about the quality of the ore,¹²⁵ Gordon noted that, although the assay value was one ounce per ton, the ore contained so much copper that little gold was saved; the cyanide process also gave a very poor result.¹²⁶ In May, it was ‘just about floated in London’,¹²⁷ but as the flotation never got beyond this stage, by September prospecting had resumed, with mostly discouraging results: of the second batch of samples taken, nine out of the 11 gave a nil result.¹²⁸

In October, two Paeroa mining engineers obtained a six-month option.¹²⁹ As the property was ‘looked upon by many competent authorities as being one of, if not, the very choicest in the locality’, the flotation was expected to succeed.¹³⁰ After it did not, by August 1897 work in the Loyalty had declined to mainly prospecting some newly exposed reefs.¹³¹ ‘First-class’

¹²⁰ Warden’s Court, *Te Aroha News*, 30 November 1895, p. 2.

¹²¹ See *Ohinemuri Gazette*, 22 January 1898, p. 3; *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 2, p. 501.

¹²² Te Aroha Warden’s Court, Register of Licensed Holdings 1881-1887, folio 30, BBAV 11500/9a, ANZ-A.

¹²³ Te Aroha Correspondent, *New Zealand Herald*, 22 February 1896, p. 5.

¹²⁴ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 15 February 1896, p. 30.

¹²⁵ *Ohinemuri Gazette*, 20 February 1896, p. 7.

¹²⁶ H.A. Gordon to Minister of Mines, 17 June 1896, *AJHR*, 1896, C-3, p. 78.

¹²⁷ *Ohinemuri Gazette*, 16 May 1896, p.5, 30 May 1896, p. 5.

¹²⁸ Thames School of Mines, Assay Book 1895-1897, two batches of samples tested on 14 September 1896, School of Mines Archives, Thames.

¹²⁹ *New Zealand Herald*, 29 October 1896, p. 6.

¹³⁰ *Waikato Argus*, 22 October 1896, p. 2.

¹³¹ *Ohinemuri Gazette*, 21 August 1897, p. 4; *Thames Advertiser*, 28 August 1897, p. 3.

ore was reportedly uncovered, with an occasional 'handsome yield', but these only produced trial crushings.¹³²

1894

In February 1894, the battery was 'constantly employed in conveying quartz to the battery', which was working two shifts on ore provided by several parties.¹³³ In assessing the 12 months to 31 March, Gordon recorded 'still a few men working', with 'only partial success', the patches of good ore occasionally struck being exhausted after a few months. The field might 'linger on for years without anything great being discovered, especially when no prospecting work of any consequence' was being carried out. As an experiment, some ore had been sent to Maryborough in Queensland for treatment, with good results, but deducting the cost of transport and smelting left insufficient to work the lodes profitably. There were 29 contractors, wages men, working owners, and tributers.¹³⁴ Six mining leases covered 114 acres, but little mining was being done apart from Adams' mine, Newsham's small claim, and the Loyalty.¹³⁵ 1,929 tons were crushed and 592 tons of tailings treated for a return of 2,515 ounces of gold.¹³⁶ Using somewhat different figures, the *Te Aroha News* analyzed the returns to show that the 'about twenty men' who had stuck to Waiorongomai were 'getting nearly nine times as much gold per man as miners working in the Ohinemuri Country'. In the latter, 380 men had treated about 22,771 tons for a return of 1,722 ounces, whereas Waiorongomai's 23 men had crushed 1,519 tons for 880 ounces and 1,650 tons of tailings for 297 ounces. 'Or to put it in another way, Ohinemuri has crushed about 60 tons of quartz per man, for a return of 2dwt per ton or 4oz 18dwt per man for the year. Waiorongomai has treated about 65 tons per man, which has yielded 13 1/4dwt per ton or 37oz 12dwt per man'. It described the 'spurt just given' to

¹³² *New Zealand Graphic*, 28 August 1897, p. 299.

¹³³ *Te Aroha News*, n.d., reprinted in *Thames Star*, 8 February 1894, p. 3.

¹³⁴ H.A. Gordon to Minister of Mines, 24 July 1894, *AJHR*, 1894, C-3, pp. 47-48; *AJHR*, 1895, C-3, p. 68.

¹³⁵ H.W. Northcroft to Under-Secretary, Mines Department, 4 April 1894, *AJHR*, 1894, C-3A, p. 3.

¹³⁶ *AJHR*, 1895, C-3, p. 67.

local mining as 'a very important one, and not altogether unexpected by the men who know the ground'.¹³⁷

A Te Aroha correspondent wrote in early March that 'it would be a great thing for the district if a small company' would take over the battery. It was

thought by those who are supposed to know that good returns could be obtained if the ground were systematically prospected and worked. At present very little work is being done on the hill, and only small quantities of gold are being got, but there seems no reason why larger quantities should not be obtained if a larger number of men were seeking for it. If one-third of the proposed capital could be raised here, and two-thirds in Auckland, a good local interest would be maintained, combined with outside help, to work the mine. It is highly probable that a good return for the outlay would result if the affair were properly managed.¹³⁸

These hopes were premature. In May, after Adams abandoned all his ground apart from the New Find and Colonist mines, the same correspondent expected 'a few parties to take up small holdings'.¹³⁹ Small parties continued working in several parts of the field, with results considered promising or satisfactory.¹⁴⁰ In July several parties were doing 'a good deal of useful prospecting', and in the following month 'a little gold' was being produced.¹⁴¹ John Hawkins¹⁴² had 'just finished crushing a parcel of 11 trucks for 12dwt per truck', his party being 'able to make wages' from this small return. The battery was treating 'some forty trucks of ore from the Premier' which were anticipated to give 'a fair return'.¹⁴³ Not very exciting news, but then mining in other parts of the peninsula was equally unproductive, with younger miners leaving for the new goldfield of

¹³⁷ *Te Aroha News*, n.d., reprinted in *Thames Star*, 14 May 1894, p. 4.

¹³⁸ Te Aroha Correspondent, *New Zealand Herald*, 7 March 1894, p. 6.

¹³⁹ Te Aroha Correspondent, *New Zealand Herald*, 16 May 1894, p. 6.

¹⁴⁰ *Te Aroha News*, n.d., reprinted in *Thames Star*, 7 June 1894, p. 4.

¹⁴¹ *New Zealand Herald*, 16 June 1894, Supplement, p. 2; *Thames Advertiser*, 2 August 1894, p. 2.

¹⁴² See *Te Aroha News*, 26 March 1890, p. 2, Waiorongomai Correspondent, 16 February 1895, p. 2, 3 August 1895, p. 2; *Thames Advertiser*, 5 November 1894, p. 2.

¹⁴³ *Thames Advertiser*, 2 August 1894, p. 2.

Coolgardie in Western Australia.¹⁴⁴ In November, the Premier crushing was ‘unfortunately too crushing, only 24oz 37dwt of melted gold from 88 trucks. After paying expenses this does not give the lucky owners – workers – one-third wages’.¹⁴⁵

1895, UNTIL THE START OF THE BOOM

In his annual report, Gordon noted that by March 1895 the battery now had only ten stamps, Adams having sold most of the machinery, and that the mining population was ‘very limited’. Mining was confined mainly to the New Find, Loyalty Palace, and New Premier, with a total of 16 wages men, owners, and tributers at work, 15 less than in the previous year. Only 840 tons were crushed for the wages men and owners, resulting in 552oz 11dwt of gold being produced, while tributers had 31 tons crushed for 19oz 15dwt.¹⁴⁶ Nevertheless, he argued that, despite the failure of many companies, in time ‘the lodes will be opened out and rich returns obtained from them. The oftener one examines this country the more he becomes impressed with the certainty that rich auriferous lodes exist’. Returns lessened each year ‘due to the want of capital’ required ‘to enable the lodes to be tested at a greater depth’, where ‘a better class of country’ was expected. Until attention was ‘especially directed’ to the field it was ‘likely to dwindle to a condition in which only a few men will be employed’.¹⁴⁷

The *Te Aroha News* continued to see signs that justified its eternal optimism. Early in February, it believed the prospects were improving,¹⁴⁸ and three days later its editorial, in noting new discoveries at Coromandel and Karangahake and ‘remarkable’ returns at Waihi, argued that Waiorongomai could be ‘as good as any of them’, using the Loyalty and Palace as an example of the field’s ‘long spell of ill luck’ being broken. These excellent discoveries in just over 12 months ‘would make the fortune of any place but Waiorongomai’, which had ‘so long been looked on as the Cinderella of goldfields. Perhaps like that despised little girl we shall yet see that as a gold-producing field she is second to none of her sisters’. And

¹⁴⁴ For example, *Observer*, 21 April 1894, p. 5, ‘Obadiah’, ‘Shares and Mining’, 30 June 1894, p. 14, ‘Paeroa’, 3 November 1894, p. 21.

¹⁴⁵ *Te Aroha News*, n.d., reprinted in *Thames Star*, 22 November 1894, p. 4.

¹⁴⁶ H.A. Gordon to Minister of Mines, 24 July 1895, *AJHR*, 1895, C-3, pp. 66-67.

¹⁴⁷ H.A. Gordon to Minister of Mines, 24 July 1895, *AJHR*, 1895, C-3, pp. 65, 67.

¹⁴⁸ *Te Aroha News*, 6 February 1895, p. 2.

‘perhaps after all it might be best that local men should pick up the plums, if it were not that any thorough testing of the field would demand large capital’.¹⁴⁹ A local correspondent believed that ‘quite a revival in mining’ was taking place, and ‘hoped prospects will continue to be good, so that those who have stuck to the place for many years past’ would be ‘repaid for their patience’.¹⁵⁰ But later he noted ‘the great want’ of a cyanide plant.¹⁵¹

In most cases, prospectors working during the remainder of the year in the old Lucky Hit, Werahiko, Navy, Welcome, and Success and at Stoney Creek discovered some traces of gold, but nothing payable.¹⁵² Half a dozen ‘little syndicates’ were formed, whose members usually paid five shillings weekly towards the prospectors’ wages. The *Te Aroha News* believed that ‘this self-reliant policy’ would ‘eventually be rewarded we feel sure’.¹⁵³ It noted that there was nothing ‘to prevent people of all classes in the district forming prospecting associations, which will earn help from the government’,¹⁵⁴ but few took the hint.

DEVELOPING STONEY CREEK

By the end of 1890, a syndicate comprising residents of Te Aroha and Tauranga had driven 60 feet towards a reef in the Stoney Creek district, without hitting it. ‘They have had to drive through some queer country’ which was ‘just a mass of huge boulders’, but they expected ‘to be in good solid country in a few days. Good stone was got from the reef they were driving for some time ago, but the drive falling in, the reef was lost’.¹⁵⁵ Nothing further was heard from this syndicate, nor was any discovery made after the Te Aroha Prospecting Association employed two men for one month to prospect 100 acres near Stoney Creek in March 1893.¹⁵⁶ One year later, another prospecting party was formed at Waiorongomai to rework

¹⁴⁹ Editorial, *Te Aroha News*, 9 February 1895, p. 2.

¹⁵⁰ Te Aroha Correspondent, *New Zealand Herald*, 22 February 1895, p. 6.

¹⁵¹ Te Aroha Correspondent, *New Zealand Herald*, 30 September 1895, p. 6.

¹⁵² Letters from prospectors to James Mills and Thomas Gavin, March 1895 to September 1895, Mines Department, MD 1, 97/1072, ANZ-W.

¹⁵³ *Te Aroha News*, 23 March 1895, p. 2.

¹⁵⁴ Editorial, *Te Aroha News*, 9 February 1895, p. 2.

¹⁵⁵ Te Aroha Correspondent, *New Zealand Herald*, 23 December 1890, p. 6.

¹⁵⁶ *Thames Advertiser*, 23 March 1893, p. 2.

some of the ground; two men would be employed once the council cleared the track.¹⁵⁷

In early 1895, the 20-man Stoney Creek Prospecting Syndicate commenced testing 100 acres, under Thomas Gavin's supervision. In April, the *Te Aroha News* noted that 'vigorous prospecting' had been going on for 'two or three months', with assays producing very variable results.¹⁵⁸ Two of the syndicate's members, Robert Michael, a miner and contractor,¹⁵⁹ who had been a member of the abortive Waiorongomai Prospecting Association,¹⁶⁰ and William Frederick Roycroft, a carter, miner, and contractor,¹⁶¹ drove on a leader reportedly carrying rich gold.¹⁶² Although the reef had not been cut and the men were driving through loose ground having 'every appearance of having been a slip at some remote period', requiring heavy timbering, Gavin told shareholders that indications were (as so often) 'very encouraging'.¹⁶³ In late April his miners found another reef carrying 'a little stone when broken down', and extracted several tons to be taken to the battery once the track was cleared.¹⁶⁴ Having received a government subsidy, they let a contract for sledging their quartz down.¹⁶⁵ A month later, 'good gold' was struck.¹⁶⁶ The assay value was 1 1/2oz to the ton, but only 17dwt were obtained when the ore was treated. As the reef showed good gold, a meeting of shareholders appointed a committee to replace Gavin (who had resigned) and called tenders to drive a low level. To meet the demand for shares, the four of these held in reserve were to be sold for not less than £10 each, the money gained to be spent on development. 'The meeting was very sanguine of success, and decided to push on the work in hand with all possible speed'.¹⁶⁷ All shareholders had kept paying their

¹⁵⁷ *Te Aroha News*, n.d., reprinted in *Thames Star*, 8 February 1894, p. 3.

¹⁵⁸ *Te Aroha News*, 10 April 1895, p. 2; see also William Roycroft and Robert Michael to Thomas Gavin, 4 February 1895, 4 March 1895, Mines Department, MD 1, 97/1072, ANZ-W; *New Zealand Herald*, 9 August 1895, Supplement, p. 2.

¹⁵⁹ See paper on his life.

¹⁶⁰ *Auckland Weekly News*, 5 November 1892, p. 23.

¹⁶¹ See paper on the Roycroft brothers.

¹⁶² *Te Aroha News*, 3 April 1895, p. 2.

¹⁶³ *Te Aroha News*, 10 April 1895, pp. 2, 7.

¹⁶⁴ *Te Aroha News*, 24 April 1895, p. 2; *Thames Advertiser*, 25 April 1895, p. 2.

¹⁶⁵ *Te Aroha News*, 8 May 1895, p. 2.

¹⁶⁶ *Te Aroha News*, 8 June 1895, p. 2.

¹⁶⁷ *Te Aroha News*, 15 June 1895, p. 2.

subscriptions.¹⁶⁸ By late July a new drive had been commenced, and 'systematic work on a large scale' would start once a battery was erected on the flat land below the mine.¹⁶⁹ By the beginning of August, the prospectors reported that their 'well-defined' reef had been 'opened out at a much lower level than where the last crushing was taken from', looked 'exceedingly well' and was increasing in size as it went down.¹⁷⁰

An Auckland syndicate owning the All Nations claim employed two men to take assays, giving from 1oz 4dwt to 6oz per ton, and in April their main drive was in 110 feet, with a small leader containing 'good gold' in the face. The main lode should be cut in another 40 feet; it was 'about' four feet thick 'at the outcrop, and looks fairly good'.¹⁷¹ The owners expected the New Find lode to pass through their ground.¹⁷² Their claim was formed into the All Nations Company in July, which immediately tried to sell the ground to English or French investors for £2,000. A mining expert inspecting on behalf of a French syndicate sent an ore sample to be tested;¹⁷³ either the report or the test cannot have been favourable, for no sale resulted. In March 1896, the syndicate's legal manager successfully requested six month's protection while attempting sell the property. He stated that 'the required number of men had been employed, and that a considerable amount of money had been spent in opening up the property'. Negotiations had 'every prospect of success, and it was believed that before the term of protection applied for had expired, everything would be completed, and the new machinery on the ground'.¹⁷⁴

Not till mid-1896 did an English company purchase the All Nations, the owners receiving £1,750 in cash as well as 35,000 paid up shares out of a total shareholding of £120,000.¹⁷⁵ This company, Ethel Reefs, owned

¹⁶⁸ *Te Aroha News*, 6 July 1895, p. 2.

¹⁶⁹ Te Aroha Correspondent, *New Zealand Herald*, 1 August 1895, p. 6.

¹⁷⁰ *Te Aroha News*, 3 August 1895, p. 2.

¹⁷¹ *Te Aroha News*, 10 April 1895, p. 2.

¹⁷² H.A. Gordon to Minister of Mines, 17 June 1896, *AJHR*, 1896, C-3, p. 78.

¹⁷³ *Te Aroha News*, 3 July 1895, p. 2, 24 July 1895, p. 2, 3 August 1895, p. 2, 28 September 1895, p. 2.

¹⁷⁴ Te Aroha Correspondent, *New Zealand Herald*, 4 March 1896, p. 6.

¹⁷⁵ *Ohinemuri Gazette*, 3 June 1896, p. 2; Te Aroha Warden's Court, Mining Applications 1896, 4, 98, 142/1896, BBAV 11582/4a, ANZ-A; *Thames Advertiser*, 15 August 1896, p. 3; *Auckland Weekly News*, 12 September 1896, p. 20, 17 October 1896, p. 22.

mining property elsewhere in Hauraki.¹⁷⁶ The warden discovered that the 'parent Syndicate' was 'cut up into several small companies in which the same shareholders are more or less interested'; the properties were not worked from the one fund, 'each division' having its own finances.¹⁷⁷ In November that year nine men were working, some cutting roads to the ground, and it was expected 'a large number' would be employed.¹⁷⁸ Prospecting continued early in the following year whilst experts considered the best ways of developing the ground, probably by amalgamating with an adjacent claim.¹⁷⁹ Machinery valued at £4,000 was conveyed to the battery site near the mine, but 16 months later was removed to the company's Tapu mine.¹⁸⁰ As a 'considerable amount' of prospecting did not produce 'any encouraging results' and the ore, worth only 13s to the ton, could not be treated profitably, the company abandoned the property after spending only £2,000 or £3,000.¹⁸¹

THE BOOM OF 1895

In February 1895, the *Te Aroha News* hoped that Waiorongomai, 'the Cinderella of the goldfields', would no longer be ignored but instead become prosperous. 'Perhaps after all it might be best that local men should pick up the plums, if it were not that any thorough testing of the field would demand large capital which is not available locally'. It urged the formation of prospecting associations.¹⁸² Several prospecting parties were indeed

¹⁷⁶ *Thames Advertiser*, 15 January 1898, p. 4; 'Obadiah', 'Shares and Mining', *Observer*, 22 January 1898, p. 9; *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 2, p. 474.

¹⁷⁷ Warden to Minister of Mines, 14 March 1899, Te Aroha Warden's Court, Letterbook 1883-1900, pp. 525-526, BBAV 11534/1a, ANZ-A.

¹⁷⁸ *Thames Advertiser*, 30 November 1896, p. 2; *New Zealand Herald*, 12 December 1896, p. 5.

¹⁷⁹ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Argus*, 6 May 1897, p. 2; *Thames Advertiser*, 20 May 1897, p. 3.

¹⁸⁰ *Ohinemuri Gazette*, 9 January 1897, p. 4; 'Obadiah', 'Shares and Mining', *Observer*, 2 April 1898, p. 9; R.S. Bush (Warden) to Minister of Mines, 20 December 1898, Mines Department, MD 1, 01/1180, ANZ-W.

¹⁸¹ Edward Thornton, declarations of 18 August 1898, 13 March 1899, Mines Department, MD 1, 01/1180, ANZ-W; *Thames Advertiser*, 11 February 1899, p. 3; *New Zealand Mines Record*, 16 May 1899, p. 411.

¹⁸² Editorial, *Te Aroha News*, 9 February 1895, p. 2.

organized in April.¹⁸³ Throughout this year, although reports suggested much activity was taking place, no important finds were made.¹⁸⁴ In April the *Te Aroha News* commented that the Thursday half-holiday was

likely to prove a boon to this district. On that day many of our businessmen are likely to be seen skirmishing in all directions with pick and dish in search of the “unknown reef.” Some very good specimens are the result of these fossicking expeditions, and we hope ere long to record the unearthing of a rich bonanza.

With what it described as ‘gold fever’ breaking out locally, some prospectors arrived from elsewhere.¹⁸⁵ This ‘fever’ led to extravagant boasts: a Waiorongomai correspondent rightly considered a claim to have traced gold from Waihi to the Wairere Falls to be ‘a tolerably large order on our credulity’.¹⁸⁶ In February, the *Te Aroha News* published the briefest of reports: ‘mining booming’.¹⁸⁷ Three days later, an editorial was pleased to note the ‘new life infused into’ Waiorongomai, for since the collapse of the Te Aroha Silver and Gold Mining Company mining had been ‘confined to intermittent spurts’ until the Loyalty was found. ‘That there is gold in the Hill has been proved, its extraction requires only systematic and thorough working’, but those who had ‘retained their faith’ had ‘been too poor to do work not presently remunerative, and unable, consequently, to deal with the large quantities necessary to make small returns payable’. It welcomed a new syndicate, which had taken over Adams’ mines and battery,¹⁸⁸ and would soon bring English capital in the form of the New Zealand Exploration Company.¹⁸⁹ The newspaper looked forward to having new battery owners because existing arrangements were ‘by no means satisfactory’, with terms being ‘constantly altered from crushing to crushing, when in all business matters one of the main essentials to success’

¹⁸³ *Thames Advertiser*, 25 April 1895, p. 2.

¹⁸⁴ *Te Aroha News*, Waiorongomai Correspondent, 16 February 1895, p. 2, 20 March 1895, p. 2, 24 April 1895, p. 2, 22 May 1895, p. 2, 4 September 1895, p. 2, 21 September 1895, p. 2, 16 October 1895, p. 2, 16 November 1895, p. 2.

¹⁸⁵ *Te Aroha News*, 3 April 1895, p. 2.

¹⁸⁶ Waiorongomai Correspondent, *Te Aroha News*, 23 January 1895, p. 2.

¹⁸⁷ *Te Aroha News*, 20 February 1895, p. 2.

¹⁸⁸ Editorial, *Te Aroha News*, 23 February 1895, p. 2.

¹⁸⁹ See paper on this company and its offshoot, Aroha Gold Mines.

was ‘a reasonable prospect of calculating expenses on a steady basis’.¹⁹⁰ A Te Aroha correspondent believed there was ‘a likelihood’ of mining ‘looking up’ again, for several companies were sending out prospectors.¹⁹¹ A month later, typically mistaking rumours for substance, he reported mining ‘going ahead by leaps and bounds, with ‘marvellous returns’ obtained.¹⁹² A week later, he wrote that mining was ‘booming along splendidly, grand stone ... still being got out. One share changed hands for £40’. Pegging out was ‘going on rapidly, and outside speculators’ were ‘commencing to drop in. Several meetings have been held, and a few prospectors have been sent out’.¹⁹³

By early April, 250 acres had been pegged out.¹⁹⁴ One correspondent, reporting a long list of mining cases being heard at the warden’s court on 5 April, noted that ‘quite a mania for pegging out special claims’ (larger areas than the usual claims) had developed. Although ‘exceedingly’ pleased with a revival, he noted that it ‘consisted mainly in the “pegging out” of land’. There would be ‘no real revival’ until ‘a large amount of dead work’ was done, and at present ‘very little work’ was being done. He wanted ‘some company with plenty of capital to undertake to thoroughly prospect the hill by putting in a drive of a thousand feet’. He was ‘quite certain’ that Waiorongomai had ‘never yet been properly prospected, and the mere scratching of the ground going on now will never bring permanent prosperity’.¹⁹⁵

Pegging out continued,¹⁹⁶ prompting Gavin to complain in June that Waiorongomai was ‘now pegged out down to the river, and as a consequence miners were being driven from the place’ because ground applied for as special claims was closed to prospectors.¹⁹⁷ As always, exaggerated claims were made for the value of the ore found.¹⁹⁸ Although in July a

¹⁹⁰ Editorial, *Te Aroha News*, 23 February 1895, p.2.

¹⁹¹ ‘Te Aroha’, *Observer*, 2 February 1895, p. 21.

¹⁹² ‘Te Aroha’, *Observer*, 2 March 1895, p. 21.

¹⁹³ ‘Te Aroha’, *Observer*, 9 March 1895, p. 21.

¹⁹⁴ *Te Aroha News*, 30 March 1895, p. 2, 13 April 1895, p. 2.

¹⁹⁵ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 13 April 1895, p. 23.

¹⁹⁶ *Te Aroha News*, 22 May 1895, p. 2, 8 June 1895, p. 2, 31 July 1895, p. 2, 3 August 1895, p. 2, 24 August 1895, p. 2, 11 September 1895, p. 2.

¹⁹⁷ Warden’s Court, *Auckland Weekly News*, 8 June 1895, p. 29.

¹⁹⁸ For example, *Te Aroha News*, 31 July 1895, p. 2.

correspondent wrote that people were ‘waiting on the mining boom’,¹⁹⁹ by the end of August all the ground running from Karangahake to the Te Aroha trig had been pegged out in new claims.²⁰⁰ A syndicate of ‘25 of Te Aroha’s principal businessmen’ took over the Golden Crown claim near Te Aroha,²⁰¹ but one local correspondent mocked their enthusiasm:

The ball having been set rolling, numerous small fry are banding together to collar the ground in hopes that there will be no end of English speculators who will swallow every 12-foot reef yarn presented to them. The latest I hear of is the old Morning Star ground, which is reputed to be worth an ounce to the ton, in fact, old Gall [‘impudence, effrontery’]²⁰² says the gold can be found on the trees up that way, so it will pay them to burn off the bush and sluice the ashes.²⁰³

Late in August the newly revived local sharemarket did ‘a considerable amount of business’. After several Cadman shares changed hands at £40, interest switched to Stoney Creek, where ‘a small syndicate of Auckland and local gentlemen’ was ‘determined to secure as much ground as possible on the line of reef’. The list of shareholders was full and ‘a great many applicants’ had been refused.²⁰⁴ The new sharemarket was meeting a ‘long felt want’, and at least one mining agent had set up a local business because of the apparent boom.²⁰⁵ At the beginning of September, the *Thames Star*, under the heading ‘The Boom at Te Aroha’, reported ‘a considerable amount of business’ on the Te Aroha sharemarket, with its notice board giving the latest quotations being ‘eagerly watched by speculators and others’. In one mine, several shares ‘changed hands at £40 each’.²⁰⁶ The *Te Aroha News* noted all the talk ‘about a boom which is a-coming which is going to work miracles and make us all rich. Not confined to grey-heads and leading citizens alone, but the boys are ever speculating like their fathers’.²⁰⁷ Two

¹⁹⁹ ‘Te Aroha’, *Observer*, 27 July 1895, p. 21.

²⁰⁰ *Te Aroha News*, 31 August 1895, p. 2; *Thames Star*, 2 September 1895, p. 2.

²⁰¹ *Te Aroha News*, 3 August 1895, p. 2.

²⁰² Dictionary.com: Google.

²⁰³ ‘Te Aroha’, *Observer*, 3 August 1895, p. 21.

²⁰⁴ *Te Aroha News*, 31 August 1895, p. 2.

²⁰⁵ *Te Aroha News*, 31 August 1895, p. 2, 25 September 1895, p. 2.

²⁰⁶ *Thames Star*, 2 September 1895, p. 2.

²⁰⁷ Editorial, *Te Aroha News*, 28 September 1895, p. 2.

months later it commented that 'two out of every three men we meet are holders of shares'.²⁰⁸

Late in August, the *Te Aroha News* wrote that it had 'for a long time past been anxiously looking forward to a mining boom in this district', which had now commenced, and 'before long we will be in the midst of a vigorous mining population'.²⁰⁹ A 'large' but unspecified number of miners were employed.²¹⁰ In September, it referred to an 'unusual amount of activity', with more pegging out and many claims 'preparing to commence operations in real earnest'.²¹¹ However, later that month, it took a harder look at all the excitement:

Our Mines

Matters in connection with local mining are not exactly in a forward state, despite the fact that the country is auriferous. The citizens of Te Aroha and district are not by any means accustomed to running the pace fast, they get out of breath too early. The spirit, and spunk, of folks is dormant rather than lively and unless some newcomer with plenty of go comes along the goldfield hereabouts stands a chance of getting left behind to perish. We certainly have had a little spurt - a spasmodic spurt - and we have had a little flatness now and again. This is the feature of local goldmining business all along. As we have any amount of gold-bearing reefs and syndicates to father them, do not let us be so inert and spiritless as to stand a chance of losing the lot when the boom subsides. We have some excellent properties, but we need the introduction of outside capital to develop their hidden treasure.

No More Delay.

The time is now right for some action on the part of local syndicates. Action immediate and decisive. For many months now our citizens have been doling out monthly calls to keep the mine in trim and the interest of shareholders from flagging. All this goes merrily on while claims by the gross are floated by our neighbours 'tother side of the hill. While they in many instances float on the four pegs, or float in anticipation of getting a reef somewhere beneath the surface, here we are with magnificent reefs, working like Trojans to open up the mine. We have done the prospecting, the discovery has been made, tunnelling has been undertaken at large expense, the ground secured, the survey

²⁰⁸ *Te Aroha News*, 23 November 1895, p. 2.

²⁰⁹ *Te Aroha News*, 24 August 1895, p. 2.

²¹⁰ *Te Aroha News*, 31 August 1895, p. 2.

²¹¹ *Te Aroha News*, 7 September 1895, p. 2.

and all the et cetera completed, and yet we are pegging away getting all the dirty work finished for the capitalist to pay us a visit. This is not the usual procedure of up-to-date mining, and we reiterate now that we have bona fide mines and the time for “floating” has arrived.

What Mines to Float.

Perhaps we are not too late to float our local mines. There are some which would go off with a hum if in expert hands, and we are sanguine that mines like the Loyalty, Cadman, Golden Crown, Hot Springs, and Starlit Dell [the first two at Waiorongomai, the others near the Te Aroha township] are well worth the consideration of investors. These mines have been well opened up, contain good gold-bearing reefs, and are second to none of the dozens of others floated in Auckland recently. The immediate flotation of two of these mines has been decided upon, and we are glad a start is made, but it must be followed up to the end. Given the successful floating of local mines, then they will be worked, and our prosperity so anxiously looked for will be assured.²¹²

Ten days later, in commenting on the boom which was ‘going to work miracles, and make us all rich’, it argued that ‘the boom as they call it’ was ‘a misnomer. If you put money into the mountain range you get it back again with a thousand per cent’ once the miners got ‘old king cyanide on the job’. New capital would in a ‘short time’ produce both gold and dividends.²¹³ In mid-September, it reported that Loyalty, Palace, and Cadman shares were popular and that the Golden Crown and Starlit Dell claims would be floated after doing some preliminary work. The public was ‘not very anxious at present to buy up promoters’ shares. Mining generally will settle down to a firm, steady, but not sensational condition’, it expected and hoped, for it regretted the ‘sensational features’ seen only ‘too prominent recently’.²¹⁴ Four days later, it noted ‘considerable interest’, with experts inspecting some of the best mines and, in particular, investigating whether the Loyalty reef continued into other claims.²¹⁵ It reported more encouraging mining,²¹⁶

²¹² Editorial, *Te Aroha News*, 18 September 1895, p. 2.

²¹³ Editorial, *Te Aroha News*, 28 September 1895, p. 2.

²¹⁴ *Te Aroha News*, 21 September 1895, p. 2.

²¹⁵ *Te Aroha News*, 25 September 1895, p. 2.

²¹⁶ For example, *Te Aroha News*, 23 November 1895, p. 2, 5 December 1895, p. 2.

which was confirmed by other correspondents,²¹⁷ but admitted that the boom appeared likely to be brief. In September this had ‘slackened off somewhat’ and then was ‘easing off’,²¹⁸ and by December was ‘on the wane’.²¹⁹

Much of the pegging out was done in the expectation of selling ground to overseas investors. For example, the Cadman Prospecting Association, a 25-member syndicate, was formed to ‘thoroughly trying the ground lying between the Loyalty and Palace claims’ by employing two prospectors.²²⁰ By July, they had pegged out 30 acres, comprising the former Werahiko, Silver King, Success, Waitoki, and part of the Success Extended. Two men would be employed to take ten trucks from a 20-foot-wide reef in the Werahiko; ‘the stone already got out should, to all appearance, be good payable ore’.²²¹ When its works committee visited in early July, they ‘were greatly pleased with the prospects’. The account of the work done illustrates of how old workings were being reused:

On the lower level, which is some 300 feet long, and enters through the old Waitoki ground, everything was found intact and ready for the tram rails to be laid down by which it is proposed to bring the stone to the hopper, and thence to the trucks. The tramway goes right on to the property. In the intermediate level (230 feet in) everything was found ready for breaking out the first crushing, which will be taken from the main reef, and should prove the value of the mine. Good dish prospects were got from every portion of the outcrop, which had been stripped, and disclosed a fine body of quartz about 18 feet in width. Very little outlay will be required to put the mine in first-class working order. The upper level (200 feet in) was visited and contains three reefs ranging from four to six feet in width, each giving indications of gold. This level will evidently pay well for working, but it is only intended to work the intermediate level at present, as there is such a quantity of quartz ready to be broken out.²²²

²¹⁷ For example, Te Aroha Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 14 December 1894, p. 45.

²¹⁸ *Te Aroha News*, 4 September 1895, p. 2, 18 September 1895, p. 2.

²¹⁹ *Te Aroha News*, 4 December 1895, p. 2.

²²⁰ Te Aroha Correspondent, *New Zealand Herald*, 22 February 1895, p. 6.

²²¹ Te Aroha Correspondent, *New Zealand Herald*, 3 July 1895, p. 6.

²²² Te Aroha Correspondent, *New Zealand Herald*, 11 July 1895, p. 6.

At the end of this month, a 'largely attended' meeting of the association was told that 'a splendid reef two feet thick, showing gold', had been 'opened out'. Members were 'naturally in good spirits, and very anxious to thoroughly prospect their property'. It was rumoured an offer for it had been received.²²³ In mid-August, when 'some splendid stone' was obtained from a recently discovered reef, the value of shares rose to £10 and the property was 'under offer to an English syndicate for a large amount'.²²⁴ When the Cadman and Seddon were amalgamated later that month so they could be offered to an English syndicate, shares were sold at £40 each.²²⁵ A mine manager inspected the property on behalf of the potential purchasers, samples from the four principal reefs were tested, and it was expected the ground would be floated before November.²²⁶ Work was suspended in this and other mines 'pending negotiations for floating the properties in England'.²²⁷

One cynical observer wrote that, 'the ball having been set rolling, numerous small fry are banding together to collar the ground in the hopes that there will be no end of English speculators who will swallow every 12-foot reef presented to them'. The latest example was the old Morning Star ground near Te Aroha, 'reported to be worth an ounce to the ton, in fact, old Gall' [not a person but meaning 'impudence'] claimed 'gold can be found on the trees up that way, so it will pay to burn off the bush and sluice the ashes'.²²⁸

Early in September, the *Te Aroha News* wrote that, although there had not been any serious attempts to float any claims, it was 'confident' that once floated they would be 'good ones', for the syndicates operating the dozen or so local claims did 'not intend putting any indifferent stuff forward'. (This number was far smaller than the reports of pegging off implied: clearly most claims had not been registered.) It described the visiting speculators and how they were received:

²²³ Te Aroha Correspondent, *New Zealand Herald*, 1 August 1895, p. 6.

²²⁴ Waiorongomai Correspondent, *New Zealand Herald*, 19 August 1895, p. 6.

²²⁵ *New Zealand Herald*, 27 August 1895, p. 6.

²²⁶ Te Aroha Correspondent, *New Zealand Herald*, 30 September 1895, p. 5.

²²⁷ Own Reporter, 'The Upper Thames Gold Mines: A Tour of Inspection', *New Zealand Herald*, 25 December 1895, p. 5.

²²⁸ 'Te Aroha', *Observer*, 3 August 1895, p. 21.

The English speculator is the kind of visitor who turns up occasionally and meditatively walks our streets. He generally hears much and says little. We are always happy in receiving visitors of all sorts and conditions, but in case of a “foreign capitalist,” we simply indulge in more frantic speculations as to his intentions and so forth, than we do in promoters’ shares. The latter article is getting rather numerous at present, and the former - the gentleman with the £1 a day for looking around - well, we imagine any new visitor with a high hat and stick to be another capitalist gent, and still the genuine ones come! In the case of treating with the touring foreign capitalist the Te Aroha syndicates are not eager to deal. Nor are Te Aroha goldmine owners at all anxious to pop off their claims in the proverbial “quarter of an hour.” We believe in doing legitimate business - even goldmine business - in a steady happy-go-lucky *sang-froid* kind of way and we are going to come out trumps in the case of all our mine flotations while the English capitalist is looking on.... This field and this mountain of ours must be looked after, and our syndicates are doing the thing properly.²²⁹

This unwillingness or inability to exploit the boom flourishing elsewhere meant that in mid-October 1895, when the bubble was about to burst, a correspondent could only report that the boom was ‘gradually working its way in this direction’ and that shares were ‘rising in consequence’.²³⁰ Te Aroha only really benefited from one major injection of overseas capital provided by the New Zealand Exploration Company, and throughout 1895 it was generally agreed the boom was based largely on fraud and gambling, with worthless or at best unproven claims being sold to English speculators who in turn often intended to make money by selling shares rather than working them.²³¹

1896

²²⁹ *Te Aroha News*, 4 September 1895, p. 2.

²³⁰ ‘Te Aroha’, *Observer*, 19 October 1895, p. 21.

²³¹ For example, *Observer*, 30 March 1895, p. 2, 11 May 1895, pp. 3, 9, 24 August 1895, p. 16; editorial, *Thames Advertiser*, 19 June 1895, p. 2; editorial, *Thames Star*, 21 October 1895, p. 2; editorials, *Te Aroha News*, 22 June 1895, p. 2, 20 July 1895, p. 2; *Mining Standard*, 29 November 1895, p. 3.

The year 1896 commenced with mining being 'rather quiet', although there was 'some talk' of employing 40 men 'after the holidays'.²³² Apart from some prospecting on the ground owned by the Te Aroha Syndicate, forerunner of the New Zealand Exploration Company, and a few men mining in the Loyalty, there was 'very little doing', for claims on offer in England had been granted protection.²³³ In February, 'most people' thought mining was 'still quiet'.²³⁴ So did the mining inspector, who, when he visited at the end of January, found mining restricted to the Loyalty and Palace and Newsham's tribute in the Premier. The Cadman was protected, being under offer to an English syndicate, as was the All Nations at the head of Stoney Creek. Indeed, 'all ground' was taken up where there was 'the slightest prospect of a lode going through it', and 'large sums' were being asked from syndicates and companies.²³⁵

The battery's water race was repaired in readiness for testing 'several small crushings' which had been 'delayed for some time'.²³⁶ Some miners working on their own believed they had good mines. Richard Burke, for instance, owner since the previous October of the Welcome, in February was 'working on a nice looking lead' giving 'every promise of opening out something good'.²³⁷ His claim adjoined the Loyalty, in which he had worked for wages; it never produced much ore, and was abandoned in 1898.²³⁸ Newsham was also hard at work, with (as always) encouraging prospects.²³⁹

When shown the Silver King reef in the Cadman ground, a visiting mine manager 'expressed astonishment at the magnitude and quality of the lode'. His visit had 'led to his forming a high opinion of its capabilities as a gold-producing field' and predicted 'a prosperous future for it with the

²³² 'Te Aroha', *Observer*, 4 January 1896, p. 21.

²³³ Waiorongomai Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 4 January 1896, p. 35; Te Aroha Correspondent, *New Zealand Herald*, 4 March 1896, p. 6.

²³⁴ 'Te Aroha', *Observer*, 8 February 1896, p. 21.

²³⁵ H.A. Gordon to Minister of Mines, 17 June 1896, *AJHR*, 1896, C-3, p. 78.

²³⁶ Te Aroha Correspondent, *New Zealand Herald*, 27 February 1896, p. 6.

²³⁷ Te Aroha Correspondent, *New Zealand Herald*, 27 February 1896, p. 6.

²³⁸ Te Aroha Warden's Court, Applications 1895, 1, 2, 9, 80/1895; Applications 1896, 21/1896; Applications 1897, 26, 123/1897; Applications 1898, 30/1898, BBAV 11582/4a; Register of Licensed Holdings and Special Holdings 1887-1909, folio 64, BBAV 11500/8b, ANZ-A.

²³⁹ See paper on his life.

introduction of English capital'.²⁴⁰ When asked to protect properties potentially under offer in England, the warden, Henry Eyre Kenny, warned speculators to do more than hold ground without working it:

He was strongly opposed to giving protection in cases where people who owned a property simply got protection and waited for "something to turn up." If they were not prepared to do something, then they must make way for those who would. In all cases applicants must show that certain work had been done, or that genuine efforts were being made to procure additional capital for the better development of the property. He fully recognised the fact that these low-grade ores required a large amount of capital to work them, and he was willing to give every concession as regards time, but applicants must satisfy him as to their bona fides in this respect.²⁴¹

Reflecting popular attitudes to the boom, a local poet, apparently Scottish and wisely hiding under the pseudonym of 'Toop', mocked the ambitions of local prospectors-cum-speculators:

Haud up yer head, Te Aroha,
Your time is coming noo;
The hills we'll force to gie their gowd,
If blethering will do.

Why ocht we spend our bawbees?
We've done our share, na doot;
Let ithers spend the money
On the hillocks we've pegged out.

Nae gowd? Man, that's a' havers;
I've seen it there mysel',
And talked aboot it this ten years,
As ony ane can tell.

Nae pay? What's that to you or me?
We want "the siller" here,
And then forgather at the "pub,"
An' talk, an' drink our beer.

We risked our lives upon the hills
When pegging out our claim;
Noo, we but want our well-earned rest,

²⁴⁰ Te Aroha Correspondent, *New Zealand Herald*, 27 February 1896, p. 6.

²⁴¹ Te Aroha Correspondent, *New Zealand Herald*, 4 March 1896, p. 6.

With wife and weans at hame.

Yes, hame, sweet hame; send on your cash,
 Land of the brave and free;
 We'll prove there's siller in the hills,
 If nae for baith – for me.²⁴²

Only 36 owners and wages men had been working during the 12 months to 31 March, and only 120 tons were crushed, producing 153oz 3dwt; with the additional treatment of 54 tons of tailings, the value of bullion obtained for the year was £470 10s 7d.²⁴³ The 1,526 acres occupied had produced this miniscule result.²⁴⁴ Claimholders still aimed to sell their ground to foreign investors. For instance, a correspondent informed (very incorrectly) that a good find in the Premier was 'equal to the Martha reef at Waihi' hoped that this would attract capitalists. 'In many cases the rich leads' had been developed by tributers who were 'forced to abandon them, owing to an inflow of water and a lack of sufficient capital to enable them to put in low levels'. It was 'satisfactory to know' that these 'rich spots' were mostly included in claims seeking English capital.²⁴⁵

The formation of the New Zealand Exploration Company was greeted with 'general satisfaction' in Te Aroha. 'As other properties in close proximity' were 'likely to be taken upon the London market at an early date, a permanent revival in mining' seemed assured.²⁴⁶ This company's introduction of capital created confidence, and 'several claims that would have been abandoned' had been occupied again, especially because of an expectation that another English company, the Anglo-Continental, would take up its option over the Cadman.²⁴⁷ 'Numerous inquiries' had been made 'for suitable properties', and it was expected that the sales of the main mines would 'give quite an impetus to other holdings' under offer.²⁴⁸ As the New Zealand Exploration Company employed more miners, it created 'an air of busyness about the place' that was 'in pleasing contrast to the dead

²⁴² 'Toop', 'Te Aroha', *Observer*, 29 February 1896, p. 21.

²⁴³ *AJHR*, 1896, C-3, p. 79.

²⁴⁴ *AJHR*, 1896, C-3, p. 90.

²⁴⁵ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 22 February 1896, p. 19.

²⁴⁶ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 4 April 1896, p. 20.

²⁴⁷ 'Obadiah', 'Shares and Mining', *Observer*, 23 May 1896, p. 6; Te Aroha Correspondent, *New Zealand Herald*, 28 May 1896, p. 6.

²⁴⁸ *New Zealand Herald*, 20 May 1896, p. 6.

and alive state of affairs' which had existed 'for the past few years'.²⁴⁹ Miners who had previously had 'to go miles away from home to obtain employment' were now able to find work where they lived.²⁵⁰ In May, Waiorongomai was full of enthusiasm:

We are just beginning to feel the effect of the great mining boom. I say great, for this is without doubt the greatest of booms that New Zealand has ever had. All other booms have come and gone, but there is no doubt that this boom has come here to stay.... We have been waiting and watching all other places having their turn of the boom and wondering if we would get a turn at all, but it has come at last. There is an old saying "give a dog a bad name and it will stick to him," and it has been so with our Waiorongomai goldfield. However, as I have just said, our day has come, the boom is here, and it has come to stay. Our King of reefs is going to get a fair trial which it has never had before.

This enthusiastic correspondent, who had 'always had confidence in the Buck Reef', traced this to Waitekauri (quite wrongly). He praised the plans of the Exploration Company, having 'not the slightest doubt that they will be well rewarded for their investment in this much neglected district'. He expected the Loyalty and Cadman to be floated, and that when that happened they could 'safely say that the boom has reached us, and I have not the slightest doubt that before many months pass we will give the sceptic and knowing ones proof that it has come to stay'.²⁵¹

In late May, a Paeroa newspaper referred to 'the coming revival in mining at Waiorongomai, and the wholesale pegging out that took place only last week'.²⁵² Pegging out continued into June, a state of affairs 'strongly reminiscent of the old days', with the warden's court having difficulty coping with the applications because a clerk was no longer stationed permanently at Te Aroha. As previously, ground was taken up for sale, not mining; half of the eight mining applications heard in that month involved actual or potential sales to local or English interests.²⁵³ Mining experts from New Zealand and abroad who visited occasionally were

²⁴⁹ Te Aroha Correspondent, *New Zealand Herald*, 28 May 1896, p. 6.

²⁵⁰ Captain J.A. Cochrane to Colonel Goring, 26 May 1896, Te Aroha Rifles, Nominal Roll, Army Department, ARM 41, 1911/66v, ANZ-W.

²⁵¹ A Correspondent, 'Waiorongomai Notes', *Ohinemuri Gazette*, 30 May 1896, p. 5.

²⁵² *Ohinemuri Gazette*, 27 May 1896, p. 2.

²⁵³ Te Aroha Correspondent, *New Zealand Herald*, 13 June 1896, p. 6.

reportedly impressed with the quality of the main lodes.²⁵⁴ The governors of the Thames High School were informed that the ‘great revival in mining’ was likely to increase their revenue greatly:

If the results prove as favourable as is generally expected, the goldfields revenue should each year show a decided improvement. Works are being vigorously prosecuted in some of the mining properties upon a large scale, and with so far the most satisfactory results, everything pointing to the conclusion that an era of permanent prosperity has commenced.²⁵⁵

Both the All Nations and the Tui were floated in London, and in July ‘the quest for vacant pieces of likely ground’ continued ‘as brisk as ever, and the supply of mining agents and experts’ showed ‘no sign of diminution’.²⁵⁶ By August, between Tui and Waiorongomai there was ‘hardly a patch of ground available’ for marking out.²⁵⁷ With the Exploration Company keeping the battery working full time, mining was ‘considerably improving, and ere long we will certainly have a boom of our own’.²⁵⁸ There was conflict over promising areas: for instance, two parties competed for ground containing the continuation of the Vulcan lode adjacent to the Exploration Company’s ground, near where it had obtained ‘splendid prospects’.²⁵⁹ Owners of unworked claims were sued for their forfeiture.²⁶⁰

At the beginning of July, the *Te Aroha Times and Waiorongomai Advocate* wrote that

signs of the times show distinctly that the days of depression have gone by, consequently, the feeling of distrust so long held by the capitalist is passing away. Without a doubt, Te Aroha will shortly become the main centre of a very extensive mining population, as several large mines will, at an early date, with the

²⁵⁴ *Ohinemuri Gazette*, 20 June 1896, p. 4; *Te Aroha Times and Waiorongomai Advocate*, 4 July 1896, p. 4; *Auckland Star*, 10 July 1896, p. 3; *Thames Advertiser*, 17 September 1896, p. 2.

²⁵⁵ Thames High School, *Thames Advertiser*, 2 June 1896, p. 2.

²⁵⁶ Te Aroha Correspondent, *New Zealand Herald*, 4 July 1896, p. 5.

²⁵⁷ *Mining Standard and Financial News*, 7 August 1896, p. 7.

²⁵⁸ *Thames Advertiser*, 10 August 1896, p. 2; *Waikato Argus*, 29 August 1896, p. 3.

²⁵⁹ Te Aroha Correspondent, *New Zealand Herald*, 4 July 1896, p. 5, 8 August 1896, p. 5, 3 October 1896, p. 5.

²⁶⁰ For example, Te Aroha Correspondent, *New Zealand Herald*, 16 November 1896, p. 5.

help of English capital, be in full swing. The town must extend, and will probably embrace Waiorongomai, the main street extending from one to the other.²⁶¹

It seemed that the potential boom was not dependent solely on the Exploration Company. A plant to use Joseph Campbell's method of treating refractory ore was proposed,²⁶² and was expected to be 'the means of developing, with profit to the respective shareholders, many good properties' then 'lying idle under the shield of protection and awaiting the aid of English capitalists'.²⁶³ In September, a Waitekauri syndicate employed two men to prospect to the east of Waiorongomai,²⁶⁴ and another prospecting party had 21 samples tested in Thames, mostly for unpayable results.²⁶⁵ 'Every day' brought 'something fresh, and numbers of applications' were 'regularly' received by the warden's court.²⁶⁶ By November, 90 claims were registered (compared with 140 at Waihi, 283 at Waitekauri and Owharoa, and 136 at Karangahake).²⁶⁷

In September, one correspondent found 'a very peculiar state of things' at Te Aroha:

Many of the old inhabitants have been waiting so long for "something to turn up," and have had so many hopes raised, only to see them shattered, that they seem to have lost heart to a great extent, and are very apt to deprecate the value of their own locality.... Certain influences have been brought to bear to retard progress here for the present. If a stranger comes in and pegs out ground he is treated with scant courtesy, and impediments of various kinds are thrown in his way. It appears to me that certain residents think they have a pre-emptive right to all the good things round about.... Only the other day I heard a man, a mine manager of some repute too, running down mining matters in a very wholesale manner. And yet I found on searching records that the gentleman himself has claims of his own pegged out and is doing prospecting work on one of them at least. Evidently, he

²⁶¹ *Te Aroha Times and Waiorongomai Advocate*, 4 July 1896, p. 4.

²⁶² See paper on Joseph Campbell.

²⁶³ *Thames Advertiser*, 15 September 1896, p. 3.

²⁶⁴ *Thames Advertiser*, 7 September 1896, p. 2.

²⁶⁵ Thames School of Mines, Assay Book 1895-1897, entry for 9 September 1896, School of Mines Archives, Thames.

²⁶⁶ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Argus*, 8 September 1896, p. 2.

²⁶⁷ *Observer*, 28 November 1896, p. 3.

does not want any neighbours just yet. Then again another, who never saw a mine at Te Aroha, went to Auckland and did his best to duffer the place.²⁶⁸

Two weeks later, another correspondent claimed there was an ‘ugly incubus’ preventing Waiorongomai’s progress:

Local jealousy carried to such extremes that A, B, and C, having interests in different goldmining properties, in their individual greediness to obtain the first haul of English capital will each run down their neighbour’s claim to likely purchasers, and at the same time, of course, laud up their own little Eldorados to the sky. This policy might answer say if B and C kept mum while A had his innings; but when they substantially go “on their own” in the heated race for “British gold,” then the “fat gets in the fire with a vengeance.” John Bull’s purse-strings are tightly drawn, to the consternation of Messrs A, B, and C, who, with well-affected surprise, exclaimed, “who would have thought it!”²⁶⁹

This desire to sell mines for a quick profit required more prospecting, and the development plans of the Exploration Company gave ‘owners of the other mines a little heart to push ahead’ and float their properties. Three or four prospecting parties were exploring ‘ground hitherto almost untouched, and some good shows have been obtained’.²⁷⁰ The capital required for prospecting and undertaking initial development had to be provided by the local community, but, as the manager of the Ohinemuri Branch of the Bank of New Zealand noted, at Te Aroha the businessmen were ‘all small traders, of limited capital’, having ‘no security to offer beyond goldfield properties’ with ‘uncertain values’.²⁷¹

AFTER THE BOOM

Newspaper reports continued to be relentlessly optimistic. A Paeroa newspaper decided in September that Te Aroha and Waiorongomai were

²⁶⁸ ‘Te Aroha: A Correspondent’, *New Zealand Herald*, 4 September 1896, p. 6.

²⁶⁹ ‘Trilby, Jr’, ‘Te Aroha Titbits’, *Thames Advertiser*, 15 September 1896, p. 3.

²⁷⁰ *Auckland Weekly News*, 12 September 1896, p. 36; see also *Ohinemuri Gazette*, 16 September 1896, p. 4.

²⁷¹ Bank of New Zealand, G.A. Burgess’ Report, in Balance Book of the Ohinemuri Branch for the half-Year to 30 September 1896, Bank of New Zealand Archives, Wellington.

‘the coming fields’,²⁷² and in October it announced that the boom had ‘at last’ reached this ‘long-neglected’ district. Mining was to be ‘vigorously commenced’ at Tui, and the All Nations would soon be at work ‘with an ample working capital’ (neither of these statements would be borne out). ‘Altogether, Te Aroha seems to be the coming place’.²⁷³ The *Te Aroha News*, inevitably, could not but agree, writing that the number of applications for claims pending at the warden’s court was ‘the first step of the “boom” that will shortly burst over our devoted heads. We are in possession of some important information on the subject which, however, we are not yet at liberty to divulge’.²⁷⁴ This mysterious information, if ever released in a now-lost edition, was not reprinted in any other newspaper. It also reported that

keen-eyed speculators haunt the precincts of the Palace and Hot Springs hotels and a spirit of restlessness and impending change is visible everywhere. Vague rumours of new finds and negotiations for flotation successfully carried out, fills the air and it really looks as if the steadily expanding boom has reached our district at last.²⁷⁵

In fact, the boom was contracting,²⁷⁶ and only its ripples had reached the district. At the time it seemed to be so near. Not only Auckland investors seemed interested, but overseas investment in the shape of the Exploration Company had come, Joseph Campbell arrived, the Tui Company took over the mines in that district, and other claims seemed likely to be floated. In February, the Cadman was still under offer on terms reportedly ‘extremely favourable to the vendors’; as most shares were held locally, its flotation would bring ‘a large amount of money’ into the district.²⁷⁷ In May, the Anglo-Continental Company took it on a five months’ trial, with two further months allowed to float it: failure to do so would

²⁷² *Ohinemuri Gazette*, 5 September 1896, p. 4.

²⁷³ *Ohinemuri Gazette*, 14 October 1896, p. 2.

²⁷⁴ *Te Aroha News*, n.d., reprinted in *Thames Advertiser*, 14 October 1896, p. 2.

²⁷⁵ *Te Aroha News*, n.d., reprinted in *Thames Advertiser*, 12 October 1896, p. 2.

²⁷⁶ For example, ‘Obadiah’, ‘Shares and Mining’, *Observer*, 18 January 1896, p. 9, ‘Our English Letter’, 18 January 1896, p. 10; *New Zealand Mining Standard*, 27 February 1897, p. 10; *Auckland Weekly News*, 6 June 1896, p. 20, 20 June 1896, p. 21, ‘A Tramp, Esq’, ‘Casual Ramblings’, 26 September 1896, p. 38; *Auckland Star*, 1 July 1896, p. 2, 31 August 1896, p. 2; *New Zealand Herald*, 27 October 1896, p. 5.

²⁷⁷ *New Zealand Herald*, 12 February 1896, p. 6.

mean the loss of their £1,000 deposit. Purchase would mean the vendors receiving £10,000 cash and £2,000 in paid-up shares in a company of 150,000 shares.²⁷⁸ It was not floated.²⁷⁹ Yet as late as August 1897 an overseas expert claimed the ‘most promising localities’ in the North Island were ‘Karangahake, Te Aroha, and, of course, Waihi’.²⁸⁰

1897

Specimen stone found in February 1897 created expectations that the Cadman would be ‘a dividend payer in the immediate future’.²⁸¹ Although the Anglo-Continental Company had decided not to float this claim, another English company, the London and New Zealand Finance Corporation, took up a six-month option that was later extended until the end of the year.²⁸² Intending to spend from £3,000 to £4,000 in development and testing, it employed three shifts and also acquired additional ground.²⁸³ Having discovering that the gold earlier extracted had come from ‘chutes and pockets’ from which miners had ‘picked the eyes’, in October the option-holders shut down the mine, throwing ‘a considerable number of men out of work’.²⁸⁴ Although no future work, apart from prospecting, was to take place in it, this mine had been of some value to its vendors, who in March had met at a hotel to divide the £300 deposit paid for the option amongst themselves, ‘after which a convivial evening was spent, which terminated satisfactorily to everyone concerned’.²⁸⁵

On the evening of 14 September, ‘the eleven lucky shareholders in the Trident’ went to a hotel ‘to square up accounts and divide the purchase money’, unspecified, received from the Exploration Company for their mine.

²⁷⁸ *New Zealand Herald*, 20 May 1896, p. 6; *Auckland Weekly News*, 30 May 1896, p. 9.

²⁷⁹ See paper on companies and company financing in general and at Te Aroha in particular.

²⁸⁰ ‘Mining in Western Australia and New Zealand: A chat with Mr A. Spencer-Ellam, MIMM’, *British Australasian*, 26 August 1897, p. 1433.

²⁸¹ *Auckland Star*, 9 February 1897, p. 2; *New Zealand Mining Standard*, 27 February 1897, p. 5.

²⁸² *Ohinemuri Gazette*, 10 March 1897, p. 3, 31 July 1897, p. 5.

²⁸³ *Thames Advertiser*, 11 March 1897, p. 3, 14 July 1897, p. 3, 18 July 1895, p. 3; ‘Werahiko’, ‘Our Te Aroha Letter’, *New Zealand Mining Standard*, 6 May 1897, p. 3.

²⁸⁴ *New Zealand Herald*, 19 July 1897, p. 6; *Thames Advertiser*, 9 October 1897, p. 2.

²⁸⁵ *Waikato Argus*, 11 March 1897, p. 2.

After concluding this business, ‘the joint healths of the assembly were drunk in bumpers of (fourteen-year-old) champagne, which mine host solemnly declared had been kept for the occasion. Songs, Toasts, and speeches were given with great gusto, and it is hardly necessary to add that a convivial evening was spent’.²⁸⁶

To assist prospecting, in December the council was asked to construct a track into the Mangakino Valley, where 13 special claims had been marked out. One prospector told it that ‘miners experienced great difficulty in obtaining provisions which had to be carried on the back for about three miles’. With government assistance, this track was made as requested.²⁸⁷ One exception to the general encouragement of prospecting was the decision to protect the hot springs and the bush-clad hillsides close to Te Aroha from mining because of the tourist trade. Gavin, in his role as chairman of the domain board, was ‘sure that if Deep Mining is Carried on it will prove Disastrous to our baths and this would be a great loss to the Colony’.²⁸⁸ The warden agreed, and the area was excluded from the goldfield: he would have liked a larger area excluded, but some claims in this area had been granted already.²⁸⁹ Fortunately for lovers of scenery, prospecting did not find anything payable.

George Wilson’s first annual report in his new role of inspecting engineer for the Mines Department revealed that, despite all the talk of a boom in the latter part of 1896, in the 12 months to 31 March 1897 only 60 men had been employed and only 934 tons extracted. These had produced the discouraging result of 376 ounces of gold, worth £986 10s.²⁹⁰ Although 52 claims were registered, 13 of them between 13 January and 29 March, on most only prospecting was done. The most extensive work done was in the Aroha Gold Mines’ low-level tunnel.²⁹¹ The warden reported ‘very little definite work’ done, although recently there was ‘much promise of great things. All available land’ had been taken up, but ‘the highly refractory

²⁸⁶ *Te Aroha Times*, n.d., reprinted in *Thames Advertiser*, 21 September 1896, p. 1.

²⁸⁷ Piako County Council, *Waikato Argus*, 19 December 1896, p. 2, 16 January 1897, p. 2.

²⁸⁸ Thomas Gavin to Minister of Mines, 12 October 1896, Mines Department, MD 1, 97/520, ANZ-W.

²⁸⁹ Warden to Minister of Mines, 3 November 1896; Warden to Under-Secretary, Mines Department, 22 February 1897, and map of area excluded, Mines Department, MD 1, 97/520, ANZ-W.

²⁹⁰ *AJHR*, 1897, C-3, p. 99.

²⁹¹ George Wilson to Minister of Mines, 29 June 1897, *AJHR*, 1897, C-3, pp. 98-99.

nature of the ore' hindered progress. The only hopeful developments were the introduction of Joseph Campbell's new process and the Aroha Company's low level.²⁹² In March more representatives of English capital were still investigating, sending over-optimistic reports to their employers, and promising work would start shortly.²⁹³ These promises were to be unfulfilled, and in most claims very few miners were employed because protection had been granted while capital was sought.²⁹⁴

Yet again, the *Te Aroha News* in March 1897 predicted that 'the brave little community of Waiorongomai' was 'on the eve of experiencing a change from the monotony of undeserved neglect', pinning its hopes this time on the Cadman.²⁹⁵ In contrast, the manager of the local branch of the Bank of New Zealand, who had no vested interest in keeping morale high, in the same month assessed some of the problems facing both local and Ohinemuri mining after the market had collapsed. Local capital was becoming exhausted, and calls were unlikely to be paid. The Aroha Company had suspended all work apart from its big tunnel, and although Campbell was said to have floated a couple of companies the bank manager did not think he had 'prospects of doing any good with them'. Storekeepers who had supported prospectors and syndicates had given 'reckless credit' during the boom and were now 'beginning to feel the pinch and the want of more capital'.²⁹⁶ In September, he wrote that few mines were at work, and the companies still mining were 'working out the remainder of their small Capital, more to the benefit of the managers than the shareholders'.²⁹⁷ That his assessment was correct was revealed during this year.

In February, 'a large number of miners' had been discharged.²⁹⁸ Thomas Radford, a prominent Thames mine manager,²⁹⁹ commented in early March that there was 'not the same briskness' seen 'a month or two

²⁹² R.S. Bush to Under-Secretary, Mines Department, 7 July 1897, *AJHR*, 1897, C-3A, p. 6.

²⁹³ See *New Zealand Herald*, 19 March 1897, Supplement, p. 1.

²⁹⁴ For example, *New Zealand Herald*, 25 January 1897, p. 6, 13 April 1897, p. 5, 14 July 1897, p. 6, 15 September 1897, p. 6.

²⁹⁵ *Te Aroha News*, n.d., reprinted in *Thames Advertiser*, 17 March 1897, p. 1.

²⁹⁶ Bank of New Zealand, Ohinemuri Branch, General Remarks by Manager, Half-Yearly Balance Book to 31 March 1897, Bank of New Zealand Archives, Wellington.

²⁹⁷ Bank of New Zealand, Ohinemuri Branch, General Remarks by Manager, Half-Yearly Balance Book to 30 September 1897, Bank of New Zealand Archives, Wellington.

²⁹⁸ *Thames Advertiser*, 25 February 1897, p. 2.

²⁹⁹ See *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 2, p. 861; *Thames Star*, 15 August 1907, p. 2.

earlier'.³⁰⁰ Several areas at Waiorongomai, Tui, and the Mangakino Valley were being prospected, with high hopes and a claim that prospects were 'certainly brighter' than at the start of the year.³⁰¹ Straws were eagerly grasped: when two claims were taken up at Tui, hope was 'reviving in mining circles'.³⁰² Visits during the first half of the year by mining experts with links to English capitalists were eagerly noted,³⁰³ but nothing came of these. When Campbell announced that he would erect a plant, investors were reported to be, 'figuratively-speaking, on the tip toe of hopeful expectation'.³⁰⁴ A local mining correspondent hoped that 'another opportunity will be given by the English capitalist to thoroughly develop our mines', but he recognised the difficulties:

The careful examination the hill at Waiorongomai is at present undergoing will furnish one more proof of the fact that assays, in ascertaining the value of local properties, are misleading, beyond satisfactorily determining the question of the existence or absence of gold in the class of stone submitted to chemical analysis. Fresh facts brought to light from day to day more and more persuade one to the belief that what is required is a process by which the ore may be chemically treated in bulk.

Once that was provided, ore could be treated successfully.³⁰⁵ 'The enormous variety and complexity' of the ore was 'a strong argument' for 'the establishment of a school of mines in every mining district in the peninsula'.³⁰⁶

A Thames newspaper wrote in July that mining was 'very healthy', with tunnels being driven in the Cadman and the Aroha Company's ground and steady if small-scale mining continuing in other claims.³⁰⁷ Development in the Cadman was being 'pushed rapidly ahead', the option-holders driving

³⁰⁰ *Thames Advertiser*, 10 March 1897, p. 1.

³⁰¹ Special Reporter, *Thames Star*, 1 May 1897, p. 4.

³⁰² *Thames Advertiser*, 17 May 1897, p. 2.

³⁰³ *Ohinemuri Gazette*, 27 January 1897, p. 3, 30 January 1897, p. 4, 15 May 1897, p. 4, 22 May 1897, p. 4, 9 June 1897, p. 3; *Thames Advertiser*, 1 March 1897, p. 2, 9 March 1897, p. 3, 1 May 1897, p. 3.

³⁰⁴ *Thames Advertiser*, 3 June 1897, p. 2.

³⁰⁵ 'Werahiko', 'Our Te Aroha Letter', *New Zealand Mining Standard*, 24 June 1897, p. 4.

³⁰⁶ 'Werahiko', 'Our Te Aroha Letter', *New Zealand Mining Standard*, 13 May 1897, p. 4.

³⁰⁷ *Thames Advertiser*, 24 July 1897, p. 3.

to crosscut 'several of the famous lodes traversing this claim', and the *Te Aroha News* had 'not the slightest doubt that the ultimate results of the investigations' would be 'of a favorable character'.³⁰⁸ A journalist who visited at the beginning of August detected 'indications of a revival in mining, caused principally by the confidence which many had that the quartz from the numerous lodes ... would eventually prove payable'. But he noted that the cost of extracting the gold from the refractory ore was too high for mining to be payable and estimated that only 40 per cent was being saved. He could point to only two mines being developed significantly, the Aroha Company in its low level drive and the Great Western Company, about which there were all the usual assurances (unfulfilled) of promising prospects.³⁰⁹ A mining columnist claimed, later that month, that 'even dull, prosy old Te Aroha' was 'kicking up its heels and importing champagne in preparation for the good time to come', which, with the champagne as a gloss, was meant seriously, for he claimed that there was 'confidence and activity throughout' the Upper Thames district.³¹⁰ The reality was reflected in the absence of any reference to the Te Aroha district in the *Auckland Weekly News's* review of mining during 1897.³¹¹

1898

In January 1898, the *Te Aroha News* reported that several prospectors 'scouring the country at the back of Te Aroha' had found a few good 'dish prospects' but nothing substantial. One abandoned drive was being reworked, and 'some excellent colours were met with' after a few days.³¹² Nothing further would be heard of these explorations. In February interest switched to claims pegged out 'at the confluence of the Waitawheta and Mangakino Creeks', which were 'the centre of so much attention in the local mining world'. There were the usual 'great hopes' that a reef recently cut would be part of the lode that this party had sought for 'so long'.³¹³ This was to be yet another area that never produced anything remotely payable. Late

³⁰⁸ *Te Aroha News*, n.d., reprinted in *Thames Advertiser*, 14 July 1897, p. 3.

³⁰⁹ *New Zealand Herald*, 3 August 1897, p. 6; see also *New Zealand Graphic*, 28 August 1897, p. 299.

³¹⁰ 'Obadiah', 'Shares and Mining', *Observer*, 21 August 1897, p. 9.

³¹¹ *Auckland Weekly News*, 1 January 1898, pp. 26-27.

³¹² *Te Aroha News*, 27 January 1898, p. 2.

³¹³ *Te Aroha News*, 12 February 1898, p. 2.

in March the newspaper admitted that mining was 'still in a somewhat dormant state just now', but it expected a revival 'in the near future' because the Aroha Company's low level was still being driven, Campbell was soon to treat Tui ore, and 'a few prospectors' were at work.³¹⁴

At the beginning of March, the Thames newspapers assessed the past and present condition of the field. Reports had not revealed much that was 'brilliantly progressive', but reputedly 'the little preliminary work' being done was 'of a promising nature'. Near Te Aroha, two claims were being worked, their success depending on Campbell's process being successful.

Coming to Waiorongomai, that district seems in like manner to be hanging back waiting for the advent of the process which can adapt itself to the refractory peculiarities of Waiorongomai ores. One great drawback is that Waiorongomai, like the up-to-date stage woman, has a past. Time was when quite a boom occurred up that way, and now the mention of the locality amongst Auckland investors arouses feelings not altogether pleasant, for the amount of gold in the shape of coin which Waiorongomai absorbed and never returned, much less with interest, was very considerable.

Some people still considered the quartz was payable, should 'a process simple and effective' be introduced. At the moment, only three mines were at work.³¹⁵ In his annual report, the warden noted that by 31 March mining was 'pretty well at a standstill'.³¹⁶ Of 41 leases, covering 2,773 acres,³¹⁷ the only ones at work were the Aroha Gold Mines, Great Western, Loyalty, Grand Result, and Montezuma, the last-named being near Te Aroha.³¹⁸ As a Waiorongomai correspondent wrote in early April, 'mining here as in many other gold-mining districts' was 'very dull'.³¹⁹ This reference to other districts was apposite; miners were leaving the peninsula for mines in the

³¹⁴ *Te Aroha News*, 22 March 1898, p. 2.

³¹⁵ Editorial, *Thames Advertiser*, 2 March 1898, p. 2; *Thames Star*, 2 March 1898, p. 4.

³¹⁶ R.S. Bush to Under-Secretary, Mines Department, 1 June 1898, *AJHR*, 1898, C-3A, p. 9.

³¹⁷ *AJHR*, 1898, C-3A, p. 85.

³¹⁸ James Coutts (Inspector of Mines) to Under-Secretary, Mines Department, 18 April 1898, *AJHR*, 1898, C-3A, pp. 52-53.

³¹⁹ Waiorongomai Correspondent, *Te Aroha News*, 7 April 1898, p. 2.

South Island or Australia,³²⁰ for only Waihi had a boom, and that only in some of its mines. The Loyalty, previously so well thought of, was now being worked with only two men, in between periods of protection, and though some ore was being extracted there was no suitable plant to treat it.³²¹ Ignoring such realities, the *Te Aroha News*, still hoping that every mine would be successful, insisted that the outlook was ‘distinctly favourable’.³²² Two months later, when the Aroha Company ceased work in its low level and its miners were dismissed, ‘quite a damper’ was placed on Waiorongomai.³²³ By November, Newsham was ‘Waiorongomai’s sole prospector’.³²⁴

Around this time, an anonymous balladeer, noting Joseph Campbell coming to the rescue, sang of the warden insisting on claims being manned:

When Campbell was comin
 Te-a-ro-ha
 The miners were hummin
 Te-a-ro-ha
 Protection was wanted
 Te-a-ro-ha
 And sometimes was granted
 Te-a-ro-ha.

The Warden is getting
 Almighty fly
 His knife he is whetting
 So mind your eye.
 The rent must be paid
 And the mines fully manned
 Or else he will see you
 Teetotally Damned
 ho-ho-ho.³²⁵

³²⁰ For example, *Observer*, 23 July 1898, p. 4; *Coromandel County News*, 28 January 1899, p. 3.

³²¹ James Coutts to Under-Secretary, Mines Department, 18 April 1898, *AJHR*, 1898, C-3A, p. 53; *Te Aroha News*, 7 April 1898, p. 2, Warden’s Court, 14 May 1898, p. 2.

³²² Editorial, *Te Aroha News*, 28 April 1898, p. 2.

³²³ *Thames Advertiser*, 25 June 1898, p. 4.

³²⁴ *Auckland Weekly News*, 11 November 1898, p. 22.

³²⁵ Anonymous poem, undated, Te Aroha Warden’s Court, General Correspondence, undated, BBAV 11584/7f, ANZ-A.

The year 1899 started with news of the discovery of good gold behind the Te Aroha domain,³²⁶ and wa visit from representatives of an English syndicate that revived hopes of new capital being introduced.³²⁷ Newsham, when applying for a subsidy was, naturally, hoping for good results.³²⁸ In mid-March, a correspondent noted ‘very little work being done on any of the mines’. He ‘anticipated that should satisfactory arrangements be made by the proprietors of some of the largest and most promising properties operations on a fairly large scale will probably be conducted’.³²⁹ (There were sufficient qualifications in that sentence to indicate, correctly, that this was not going to happen.) The mining inspector’s report on mining to 31 March stated that it was ‘very quiet’ at Tui and that little work had been done at Waiorongomai before Edwin Henry Hardy³³⁰ took up some of the ground.³³¹ The warden had ‘little progress’ to report. ‘Several claims have been given up, while some have again been acquired by those who have studied the district for many years past’ and were ‘confident in its ultimate prosperity’. He concluded that, ‘from the present indications on the field, I have little doubt but that the current year will be more prosperous than the last one was’.³³² It would certainly reverse a clear trend if this prophecy proved to be correct, for in the year to 31 March, only 15 men had been employed, compared with 184 during the previous 12 months.³³³

Hopes were revived for the prospects of the Loyalty United when Gavin, who was tributing in it, discovered a good reef in a newly driven intermediate level.³³⁴ This find prompted a decision to form a ‘small

³²⁶ *Thames Advertiser*, 9 January 1899, p. 4.

³²⁷ *Auckland Weekly News*, 27 January 1899, p. 34.

³²⁸ *New Zealand Mines Record*, 16 February 1899, p. 285.

³²⁹ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Thames Advertiser*, 15 March 1899, p. 2.

³³⁰ See paper on his life.

³³¹ James Coutts to Under-Secretary, Mines Department, 29 April 1899, *AJHR*, 1899, C-3A, p. 53.

³³² R.S. Bush to Under-Secretary, Mines Department, 3 July 1899, *AJHR*, 1899, C-3A, pp. 8-9.

³³³ *New Zealand Mines Record*, 16 August 1899, p. 9.

³³⁴ *AJHR*, 1899, C-3A, p. 8; *Thames Star*, 6 February 1899, p. 1; *Thames Advertiser*, 25 March 1899, p. 3; *Ohinemuri Gazette*, 29 March 1899, p. 2; *New Zealand Herald*, 14 April 1899, Supplement, p. 1.

syndicate' to work it, the option from a Paeroa syndicate having lapsed; but reports that the ore was refractory would discourage investors.³³⁵ After two tributes were let in May, the tributers met 'with very fair prospects'.³³⁶ Then silence fell.

Occasional reports were printed of 'exceptionally rich stone' being discovered and of 'encouraging prospects',³³⁷ but in general mining had another quiet year. In August, 'a few hands' were employed in the battery and the principal mines. 'As long as the noise of the stamps is heard, the residents in the neighbourhood appear quite satisfied, as they are confident of something rich being struck ere long'.³³⁸ Rumours continued to circulate that some abandoned claims would be worked once more, although it was admitted that a suitable treatment process had yet to be discovered.³³⁹ Typical of the hopes was a highly qualified report of possibilities, published in late September:

It is stated that an Auckland syndicate propose taking up some properties at Te Aroha for development. The syndicate will probably spend a substantial sum in developing what are believed to be rich, though refractory lodes, that have been found on the properties and may approach the Rev. J[oseph] Campbell with the object of ascertaining whether the thermo-hyperphoric process will successfully deal with the refractory quartz. There is also a probability that Southern capital will be introduced into the district, if satisfactory reports are received.³⁴⁰

All the hopes depended on Hardy's successfully developing his ground, with people still dreaming that Waiorongomai would 'eventually prove one of the richest mining districts in New Zealand'.³⁴¹ As ever, capital was required. Wilson wanted the deep levels 'further explored' and new

³³⁵ *Auckland Weekly News*, 31 March 1899, p. 35.

³³⁶ *Thames Advertiser*, 22 May 1899, p. 3.

³³⁷ *Ohinemuri Gazette*, 22 April 1899, p. 3; *Thames Advertiser*, 4 September 1899, p. 3, 13 September 1899, p. 2.

³³⁸ *Thames Advertiser*, 16 August 1899, p. 3.

³³⁹ *Auckland Weekly News*, 11 August 1899, p. 10.

³⁴⁰ *New Zealand Herald*, 29 September 1899, Supplement, p. 1.

³⁴¹ *Auckland Weekly News*, 27 October 1899, p. 20.

treatment methods discovered but admitted that ‘only by the introduction of capital on a large scale’ could the reefs be profitably worked.³⁴²

SEEKING LOCAL AND CENTRAL GOVERNMENT ASSISTANCE

As always, when mining was at a particularly low ebb in 1892, government subsidies were seen as a way of reviving the industry. In June, a Te Aroha meeting asked for assistance to drive a low-level tunnel.³⁴³ After this was declined there was an attempt to form a prospecting association to prospect between Te Aroha township and the New Find. When asked what assistance he might give, the Minister of Mines explained that aid would be given for an association formed under the auspices of the town board. The *Te Aroha News* considered the subsidy was

small, but perhaps the Government might be induced to grant more liberal assistance. A prospecting association, however, to be favourably received must be constituted on a thorough business basis, so as to gain the confidence of those whose experience in the past of such associations has been anything but pleasant or profitable. We hope the matter will not be allowed to drop, for unless prospecting is carried on, there can be little hope of new discoveries being made, or of the mining industry in the district progressing.³⁴⁴

It was not dropped, and at the end of October a meeting, ‘convened by the chairman of the Town Board at the request of miners and others’, decided to form such an association, which failed either to obtain a subsidy or to find any gold.³⁴⁵

When visiting Te Aroha in January 1895, the new Minister of Mines, Alfred Jerome Cadman, promised to grant the board £50 to enable it to assist prospecting.³⁴⁶ Gavin, the board’s chairman, later informed Cadman that he had organized small syndicates that had sent out four prospecting

³⁴² George Wilson to Under-Secretary, Mines Department, 19 October 1899, Mines Department, MD 1, 99/1750, ANZ-W.

³⁴³ *Thames Advertiser*, 14 June 1892, p. 2.

³⁴⁴ *Te Aroha News*, n.d., reprinted in *Thames Advertiser*, 19 September 1892, p. 2.

³⁴⁵ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 5 November 1892, p. 23; H.A. Northcroft to Under-Secretary, Mines Department, 19 May 1893, *AJHR*, 1893, C-3, Appendix 1, p. v.

³⁴⁶ *Te Aroha News*, 23 January 1895, p. 2.

parties, two of which found payable gold, adding that without subsidies, there could be no prospecting.³⁴⁷ Wilson was less enthusiastic about these parties, for several had not discovered anything.³⁴⁸ Despite this, Cadman continued to support subsidizing prospectors. When in Te Aroha in April 1896, he wanted 'to see more applications for assistance to prospectors' because 'foreign capitalists seemed to want large reefs of low-grade ore rather than rich specimens'. They wanted large quantities of ore to justify 'erecting a large plant and extensive machinery'.³⁴⁹

The 1895 boom meant that the main goldfield tracks needed repairing,³⁵⁰ and prompted calls to construct prospecting ones. In June that year, Gavin told Cadman that one should be formed from the end of the Waiorongomai tramway to Waihi to enable prospectors to explore the ranges in between.³⁵¹ This was not agreed to, but tenders were called to extend the track earlier partly cut between Tui and Karangahake. There were hopes that the government could be convinced to assist making a prospecting track from the eastern side of the ranges and through the Waitawheta district to open up the country between Katikati, Waiorongomai, Tui, and Karangahake;³⁵² it would not be made.

Immediately the Aroha Company ceased work in 1898, it was suggested that the government should acquire its tunnel 'for future

³⁴⁷ Thomas Gavin to A.J. Cadman, 4 March 1895, Mines Department, MD 1, 97/1072, ANZ-W.

³⁴⁸ George Wilson to Under-Secretary, Mines Department, 21 May 1895, *AJHR*, 1895, C-3A, p. 14.

³⁴⁹ *New Zealand Herald*, 8 April 1896, p. 5.

³⁵⁰ For repairs to the main tracks at Waiorongomai, see Piako County Council, Minutes of Meetings of 14 February 1895, 8 August 1895, 12 September 1895, Matamata-Piako District Council Archives, Te Aroha; *Te Aroha News*, 23 January 1895, p. 2, 16 March 1895, p. 2, Piako County Council, 10 August 1895, p. 2, 16 November 1895, p. 2; Piako County Council, *Waikato Times*, 13 August 1895, p. 2.

³⁵¹ Thomas Gavin to Minister of Mines, 10 June 1895, Mines Department, MD 1, 95/950, ANZ-W.

³⁵² Thomas Gavin to Minister of Mines, 10 June 1895; Minister of Mines to Under-Secretary, Mines Department, 22 June 1895, Mines Department, MD 1, 95/950; Town Clerk to Minister of Mines, 15 July 1895; Under-Secretary, Mines Department, to Town Clerk, 23 July 1895, Mines Department, MD 1, 95/1159, ANZ-W; *New Zealand Herald*, 6 June 1895, p. 3; *Te Aroha News*, 4 September 1895, p. 2.

speculators to finish when capital' was 'more plentiful'.³⁵³ Local residents also urged it to buy the battery to prevent its being sold and then removed. One man argued that, if it crushed for the public, 'numbers of men would avail themselves of it and go in for tributing'; at present nobody was mining and assistance was 'badly needed'.³⁵⁴ James Mills, the first mayor of Te Aroha,³⁵⁵ wanted the government not only to purchase purchasing the battery but to appoint a manager to experiment with new methods of treatment, for 'we' knew there were 'many other payable reefs on the Waiorongomai side of the Hill if only the stuff could be treated'.³⁵⁶ The government immediately rejected these reauests,³⁵⁷ as it continued to ignore prompts to complete the abandoned low level tunnel.³⁵⁸

A LARGE-SCALE SOLUTION PROPOSED

John Watson Walker (commonly known as Long Drive Walker from an important mine he had managed in the early days of the Thames goldfield), and who had become a mining agent in the 1890s,³⁵⁹ produced his own solution to the decline of the field. According to the *Observer*, he had

always been one of the optimists whose buoyant spirits have kept hope alive through the dull times on our gold fields. He generally has some project on hand that is going to regenerate the mining industry, if only the canny capitalists could be induced to put up the money to try it. "Long Drive" has probably been more fruitful of "schemes" than any other of the old Thames identities.³⁶⁰

³⁵³ *New Zealand Herald*, n.d., reprinted in *Thames Advertiser*, 25 June 1898, p. 4.

³⁵⁴ J.W. Rennick to A.J. Cadman, 27 July 1898, Mines Department, MD 1A, 8/50, No. 1, ANZ-W.

³⁵⁵ See paper on his life.

³⁵⁶ James Mills to A.J. Cadman, 25 July 1898, Mines Department, MD 1A, 9/50, No. 1, ANZ-W.

³⁵⁷ *New Zealand Mines Record*, 16 September 1898, p. 73.

³⁵⁸ *Te Aroha News*, n.d., reprinted in *Thames Advertiser*, 31 January 1899, p. 2.

³⁵⁹ See paper on his life.

³⁶⁰ *Observer*, 26 December 1903, p. 5.

By early 1897 he had become the owner of four special claims both at Tui and close to Te Aroha with a total area of almost 400 acres.³⁶¹ When applying for these he had informed the warden that, as the ore was complex and low grade, a large amount of capital would be needed, and he planned to go to England to raise at least £25,000.³⁶² However, his failure to pay rent on time meant that he forfeited all his ground in May 1897.³⁶³

At a Te Aroha meeting held in May 1898, Walker took the opportunity provided by Cadman's presence to urge special legislation for the district because of the difficulties in treating its ore. 'A uniform system of mining laws would not suit all districts', and 'the restrictions needful for other parts of the field, such as Thames, were simply oppressive when applied to Te Aroha'.³⁶⁴ In October 1899 he told Cadman that the only way to mine in this district was with 'very large Capital, applied in scientific and practical principles', which could make it 'as prolific, and as promising', as Waihi. He proposed raising 'sufficient capital for its proper development, say from £150,000 to £250,000'. Miners, their trade union, the local bodies, and residents all supported his application for from 400 to 500 acres of unoccupied ground. Using electric power and the latest rock-drills, he would drive at least three large tunnels, 'entering towards the several ore bodies from different starting points'.³⁶⁵ He had George Wilson's support, but regulations forbade such a large grant.³⁶⁶ Walker then sought an interview with Cadman, explaining that he wanted the ground held in his name for one year while he tried to float it in London. They did meet in Te Aroha;³⁶⁷ but their discussions were not reported; the outcome was that he did not

³⁶¹ *AJHR*, 1897, C-3, p. 98; Te Aroha Warden's Court, Mining Applications 1896, 6, 7, 11, 17, 25/1896, BBAV 11582/4a, ANZ-A.

³⁶² Te Aroha Warden's Court, Mining Applications 1896, 6/1896, BBAV 11582/4a, ANZ-A; Declaration by J.W. Walker, 30 September 1896, Mines Department, MD 1, 97/402, ANZ-W.

³⁶³ Te Aroha Warden's Court, Letterbook 1883-1900, pp. 413, 422, BBAV 11534/1a, ANZ-A.

³⁶⁴ *Te Aroha News*, 26 May 1898, p. 2; *Auckland Weekly News*, 28 May 1898, p. 10.

³⁶⁵ J.W. Walker to A.J. Cadman, 6 October 1899, Mines Department, MD 1, 99/1750, ANZ-W.

³⁶⁶ Under-Secretary, Mines Department, to J.W. Walker, 16 October 1899; George Wilson to Under-Secretary, Mines Department, 19 October 1899, Mines Department, MD 1, 99/1750, ANZ-W.

³⁶⁷ J.W. Walker to A.J. Cadman, 30 October 1899; Under-Secretary, Mines Department, to J.W. Walker, 6 November 1899, Mines Department, MD 1, 99/1750, ANZ-W.

gain approval, despite his attempts to gain support by getting the endorsement of the county council and publicizing his plans.³⁶⁸

Walker made one last attempt, in December 1900, to obtain Walker's First, Second, and Third Special Quartz Claims, totalling 300 acres, located between the Tui and Waitawheta Streams, but withdrew his application for unspecified reasons.³⁶⁹ After this failure, he tried to obtain several hundred acres, first at Thames and then at Waihi, but in both cases failed to interest English investors.³⁷⁰ In 1903 he obtained almost 700 acres at Waihi.³⁷¹ His last involvement with Waiorongomai was in 1910, when he made an unsuccessful attempt to float a company to work a large area at the northern end of the field.³⁷²

CONCLUSION

In 1899 an Auckland newspaper complained that British newspapers were unfairly critical of Hauraki mines. 'Te Aroha has been described as a worthless district, containing only properties containing quartz so refractory as to defy all attempts at successful treatment'.³⁷³ In the previous year, the *Te Aroha News*, in assessing the collapse of so many Hauraki mines, stressed that, 'as Te Aroha and Waiorongomai learnt to their bitter cost, when they woke up after their delirium' during the boom, mining had collapsed because cyanide had failed as a 'universal application in the recovery of gold'. Consequently, new processes were needed for their 'ultra-refractory' ore which was not amenable to existing treatments.³⁷⁴ Joseph

³⁶⁸ See *Thames Advertiser*, 24 October 1899, p. 2; Piako County Council, *Waikato Argus*, 24 October 1899, p. 4; *New Zealand Mines Record*, 16 October 1899, p. 119, 16 November 1899, p. 161.

³⁶⁹ Te Aroha Warden's Court, Mining Applications 1901, 10-12/1901, BBAV 11582/4b, ANZ-A.

³⁷⁰ For Thames, see *Thames Star*, 23 May 1901, p. 4, 22 June 1901, p. 4, 26 May 1901, p. 3, 25 July 1901, p. 2, 9 August 1901, p. 2, 30 October 1901, p. 3, 17 June 1902, p. 2; for Waihi, see *Observer*, 8 August 1903, p. 20, 26 December 1903, p. 5, 12 November 1904, p. 4, 27 May 1905, p. 5, 13 October 1906, p. 20.

³⁷¹ 'Obadiah', 'Shares and Mining', *Observer*, 8 August 1903, p. 20; *Thames Star*, 22 October 1903, p. 4; *New Zealand Mines Record*, 16 October 1903, p. 115.

³⁷² Warden's Court, *Te Aroha News*, 24 March 1910, p. 2.

³⁷³ *Auckland Weekly News*, 6 October 1899, p. 19.

³⁷⁴ Editorial, *Te Aroha News*, 10 May 1898, p. 2.

Campbell had made his appearance by the end of the decade, and Edwin Henry Hardy and John Watson Walker were producing their large-scale plans. But the quality of the ore was to blame for the failures, and after a decade of hopes being dashed the field would continue to decline in the following century, ending in its final abandonment.

Appendix

Figure 1: F.G. Ince, 'Blk X Aroha S.D.', 4 August 1896, Mines Department, MD 1, 99/1750, ANZ-W [Archives New Zealand The Department of Internal Affairs Te Tari Taiwhenua]; used with permission.

Figure 2:

C.P. Winklemann, "The Waiorongomai Mine.

1. General View of Waiorongomai Battery. 2. Interior of Battery House, Waiorongomai: View of the Stampers for crushing the quartz as it arrives from the mines. 3. No. 1 incline [Fern Spur] down which the quartz is brought to the battery. As a full truck descends an empty one is drawn up. 4. Looking at No. 2 incline [Butler's Spur]. 5. Level on top of No. 2 incline. A third incline [May Queen] rises up from this level. 6. Terminus of water race – from here a 20-inch pipe conveys the water to the Battery, driving a large Pelton water wheel connected with the stampers'.

‘WAIORONGOMAI MINES.

This week we give an admirable series of views of the works proceeding at the Waiorongomai mines, which have recently been acquired by an English Company. No. 1 is a general view of the Waiorongomai battery, which is a very complete plant, while No. 2 shows the stampers used for crushing the ore as it arrives by the various tramways from the mines. The Waiorongomai tramway is one of the features of the district, having been constructed at a great expense some years ago. In No. 3 view a good idea may be got of the natural difficulties that have been overcome by good engineering. The incline is so steep that at first sight it appears almost perpendicular. Down this the truck loaded with ore runs down to the battery, and in doing so pulls up the returning empty one, a loop line being, of course, provided where the cars meet. No. 4 is another view looking upwards at No. 2 incline. Here are seen the trucks passing each other. In No. 5 view is shown the level on the top of the range above No. 2 incline. From this level still a third incline rises still higher up the ranges. Of course for a large crushing plant like that at Waiorongomai a copious water supply is a necessity. That at Waiorongomai has been brought a considerable distance. In No. 6

view is shown the terminus of the water race from which a 20-inch pipe conveys the water to the battery, where it is used to drive a large Pelton wheel which supplies the power to keep the stampers going.”

(*New Zealand Graphic*, 20 June 1896, pp. 718, 728, Sir George Grey Special Collection, Auckland Libraries; used with permission.)

Figure 3: ‘Land to be withdrawn from Mining District, Block IX, Aroha S.D.’, c. February 1897, showing location of Just in Time, Mount Morgan, Taranaki, and Te Aroha Reefs claims, Mines Department, MD 1, 97/520, ANZ-W [Archives New Zealand The Department of Internal Affairs Te Tari Taiwhenua]; used with permission.



Figure 1: F.G. Ince, 'Blk X Aroha S.D.', 4 August 1896, Mines Department, MD 1, 99/1750, ANZ-W [Archives New Zealand The Department of Internal Affairs Te Tari Taiwhenua]; used with permission.

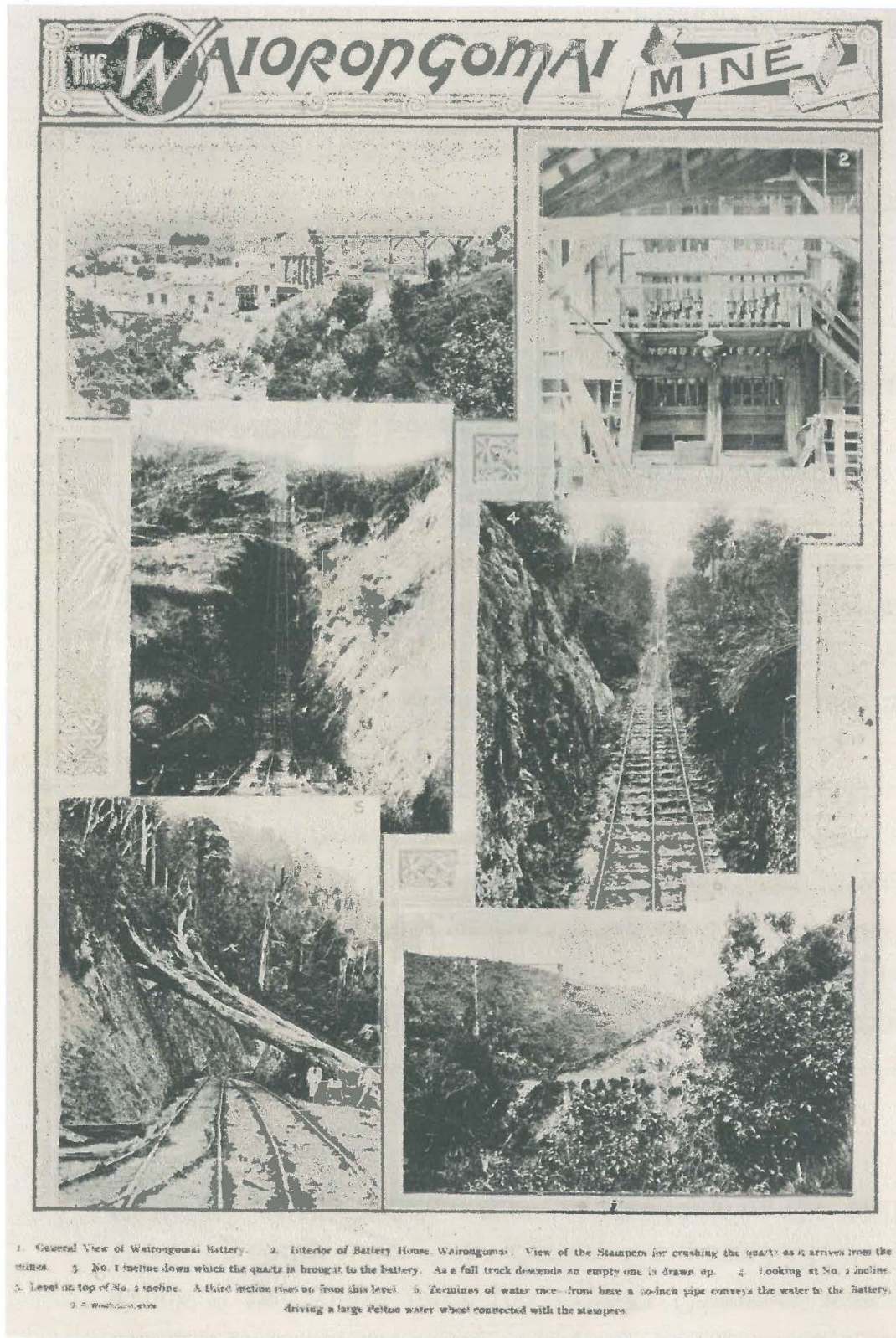


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Figure 2.2 WAIRONGOMAI MINES.

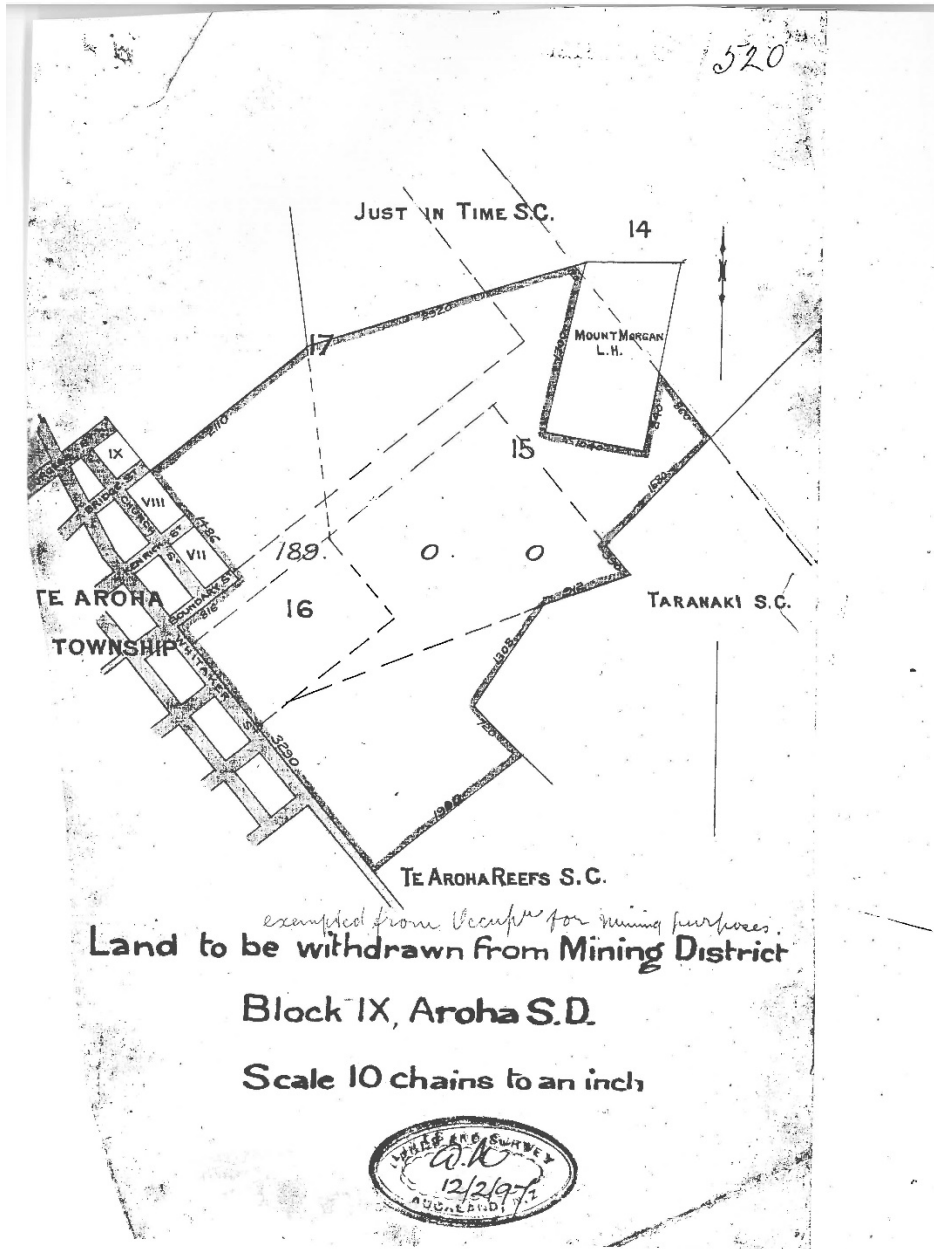


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