

JOHN WATSON WALKER: A LEADING MINE MANAGER

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Abstract: *After successfully mining in Victoria, in 1869 John Watson Walker was invited to report on Thames mines, and subsequently was asked to stay on as a mine manager. Despite his high reputation as both a manager and company director, in 1881 some shareholders in one company sought his dismissal because he had failed to find rich gold (!). From the 1880s onwards, he envisaged obtaining English capital to enable the development of much larger areas than those traditionally worked.*

Involved in most Hauraki fields (and beyond) as an investor if not a miner, in the 1880s he was for a time a publican at Te Aroha, and in the following decade acquired a farm nearby. He struggled financially in both decades, and moved from goldfield to goldfield trying to develop his 'gigantic' schemes, making several trips to London over more than 20 years in usually fruitless attempts to raise capital. As the first supervisor for the Waihi Company, he investigated new treatment processes, but resigned his position shortly before cyanide was proved to be the ideal one. At Thames, his 'gigantic' scheme was to work the low levels, and at Te Aroha he attempted to develop a large area of unpayable ground. All his schemes depended not only on attracting overseas capital but on obtaining concessions from both government and union. His last efforts to develop mining on a massive scale were at Waihi, in the early twentieth century.

Walker was seen as being a skilled and practical miner, whose opinions were taken seriously. On behalf of investors, he investigated some new areas, and achieved fame for exposing an attempted fraud near Wellington. He attempted to assist the interests of the industry, and urged the need for capital and labour to work together harmoniously. He was outspokenly critical of the Liberal Government's mining legislation, which he claimed scared capital away.

He could be arrogant, as illustrated on several occasions, notably when participating in shooting matches in the early 1870s. And a question must be raised about his treatment of his first wife. But as a mine manager, he excelled, even if his schemes to work large areas were over-sanguine and lacked credibility both because he did not understand the geology and because he over-estimated his ability to raise capital and to get his way with both government and the union.

BEFORE NEW ZEALAND

According to the entry in the *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, John Watson Walker¹ ‘was born in Aberdeen, Scotland, in 1827’.² An obituary gave his date of birth as 27 November and his place of birth as being ‘near Aberdeen. After serving a short term in a merchant’s office’, he arrived in Melbourne, in the new colony of Victoria, in 1849.

The first employment he got was on a sheep station 280 miles inland. The discovery of gold in New South Wales in 1851 fired him with the mining fever, and from that he never recovered, the whole of his subsequent lengthy life having been devoted to following the gold. As soon as the news came of the discovery in New South Wales Mr Walker, with eight or ten young fellows, bought a horse and cart, loaded it with their goods, and went overland to the new goldfields. They soon got to work on an alluvial flat, and were able to make about a pound per day from the first, but hearing of another discovery left for the fresh location, which, however, proved a duffer, as they never got a colour of gold.³

His first mining experience was at Bathurst, and the second, unsuccessful rush, was to nearby Sofala.⁴ He next ‘tried his luck’ at the new discovery at Ballarat, in Victoria. This rich goldfield was, as he

used to say ruefully, “almost at the back door of the place I left to go to the find in New South Wales.” Of course he had to get to that field without delay. Being then in funds he purchased a schooner, fitted her up with a cargo of food and other goods likely to be wanted on the new goldfields. He had as many passengers at £5 per head as could be crowded on the vessel. The voyage was safely accomplished, Mr Walker being on the Melbourne diggings by Christmas, 1851. He followed mining for some time, being in the vicinity of Castlemaine, where he got knowledge of reefing that was to stand him in good stead later on. In one of his

¹ For photograph, see Google under his name.

² *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 2, p. 833.

³ *Auckland Star*, 24 March 1916, p. 7.

⁴ *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 2, p. 833; James Jervis, ‘Early Discoveries in New South Wales’, in *Gold in Australia*, ed. Charles Barrett (Melbourne, 1951), pp. 4-10, 12, 19, 20; Paul A. Pickering, ‘“The Finger of God”: Gold’s Impact on New South Wales’, in *Gold: Forgotten histories and lost objects of Australia*, ed. Iain McCalman, Alexander Cook, Andrew Reeves (Cambridge, 2001), p. 38.

exploring expeditions the party were nearly stranded for food, but they knew a place was not far off where supplies could be got. Mr Walker, being a strong man, tramped on ahead, and, reaching the store, got as much flour as he could carry for the gold dust with which he paid. He then marched back to the relief of his comrades, who were about done when he got there. Describing the incident, Mr Walker said: "There was only the muddy water in the ruts of the track, but we soon had some dampers made, and that put new life into the party. We were often short of food, and I had learned just how little flour was required to hold bran together in order that it could be baked into damper. It was wonderful how well such a mixture went down when food was scarce."⁵

He was living at Maldon, in the Castlemaine mining district, in 1859.⁶ In 1864 and 1866, when still living there, he had 24 shares in the Northern Quartz Mining Company and 80 in the Royal Standard, in both of which he was the legal manager. When living in Melbourne in 1869, he held 1,598 in the Royal Standard United, which also mined at Maldon, and in 1870, when living at Thames, he had 30 in the Independent Quartz Mining Company, again at Maldon.⁷

In 1881 he commented, in passing, that his 'Australian success' was 'a matter beyond question'.⁸ He once referred to having been 'connected' with tributing 'as a business, in Victoria for many years'.⁹ In May 1882, with his son Walter he marked out four Waiorongomai claims named after Victorian goldfields: Creswick, Ballarat, Bendigo, and Castlemaine.¹⁰ He may have been on all of these fields. In 1893, he stated that he was still in touch with

⁵ *Auckland Star*, 24 March 1916, p. 7.

⁶ Marriage Certificate of Walter Ferguson Walker, 12 December 1892, 1892/2903, BDM; Suzanne R. Hunt, 'Vegetable Plots and Pleasure Gardens of the Victorian Goldfields', in *Gold*, p. 274; G. Blackman and J. Larkin, *Maldon: Australia's first notable town* (Sydney, 1978).

⁷ *The Ashley Mining Index 1864-1871*, microfische index produced by Robert W.A. Ashley, Wendouree, Victoria, Australia.

⁸ J.W. Walker, 'Notice to Shareholders' of the Kuranui Hill United Goldmining Company, *Thames Advertiser*, 8 April 1881, p. 2.

⁹ Letter from J.W. Walker, *Thames Advertiser*, 23 June 1898, p. 4.

¹⁰ Te Aroha Warden's Court, Notices of Marking Out Claims 1882, nos. 71, 113-116, BBAV 11557/2a, ANZ-A.

former mining associates in Victoria and during the previous year had inspected a mine there.¹¹

MINING AT THAMES UNTIL 1881

Walker first arrived in Thames in late December 1869;¹² as one of his sons died in Melbourne in the following year,¹³ his family followed him once he had decided to settle. An obituary recalled that

he was recommended by Ned Perkins (who will be remembered by many old Aucklanders as mine host of the Occidental Hotel),¹⁴ when on a visit to Australia, as a suitable man to visit Thames and report regarding the prospects of the field on behalf of certain capitalists. One thing about Mr Walker was promptitude in everything he undertook. The offer was made to him on a Friday, and on Monday he was on the way to Auckland. Mr Walker inspected the mines at Thames and had forwarded his report, when he was asked ... to undertake the management of a claim at Thames. This offer was accepted, and he soon came to the conclusion that the then system of small holdings was not suitable to quartz reefing propositions. He therefore managed to arrange a consolidation of a number of them into the Kuranui Hills United Company, where he put in the Moanataiari tunnel, the longest at Thames for a long period.¹⁵

In the words of the *Cyclopedia*, he was ‘induced to take charge of the Long Drive mine; hence his soubriquet of “Long Drive Walker”’.¹⁶ According to a local historian, he was such a success as the manager of the Long Drive Company that ‘his name of “Long Drive Walker” stuck to him for the rest of his life, and earned for him a celebrity beyond that of almost any other

¹¹ Letter from J.W. Walker, *Auckland Weekly News*, 11 March 1893, p. 15.

¹² *New Zealand Herald*, 20 December 1869, p. 8.

¹³ ‘Life lines – A Genealogy Blog: John Watson “Long Drive” Walker’, p. 4.

¹⁴ See *New Zealand Herald*, advertisement, 11 July 1870, p. 3, Police Court, 3 December 1877, p. 3; *Auckland Star*, advertisement, 9 October 1877, p. 3, Police Court, 3 May 1878, p. 3, 14 May 1879, p. 2, advertisement, 12 July 1905, p. 4; Sydney Correspondent, *Otago Witness*, 29 November 1879, p. 6; *Observer*, 14 January 1882, p. 276, advertisement, 3 June 1882, p. 190, 10 June 1882, p. 198, 8 July 1905, p. 16.

¹⁵ *Auckland Star*, 24 March 1916, p. 7.

¹⁶ *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 2, p. 834.

manager who ever directed mining schemes' there.¹⁷ By 1875 he was regarded as being 'without doubt the highest authority on the Thames goldfield'.¹⁸ In 1894, the Sydney *Bulletin* included him in its list of the great men of early Thames.¹⁹

In March 1870, Walker presented his first report to the Long Drive Company's directors.²⁰ His August report provided very detailed accounts of the work being done, the prospects of the various lodes, the desirability of having its own battery, and the need to amalgamate this claim 'of such small dimensions' with adjoining ones 'with the view of dealing with the deep ground'. In answer to a question about the value of a 'long tunnel', he explained that it would facilitate extracting the ore and 'no doubt facilitate the amalgamation of a number of mines in that neighborhood', but left the decision to drive it to the directors. As the workings were getting into 'deep ground', pumping and mining machinery would be needed soon. Over the past two years, £72,532 had been paid in dividends.²¹ Early the following month, it was reported that Walker had adopted a 'vigorous system of work'.²² In August 1871, being 'obliged by urgent private business to visit Victoria', while there he would investigate acquiring the most suitable plant.²³ In November 1874, when the company merged with the All Nations, which Walker had also managed for over two years, it was announced he would continue managing both.²⁴

Walker acquired interests in other mines. In November 1870, he had 20 shares in the Pretty Mary Company, working on Collarbone Spur.²⁵ The following year, he acquired interests in three companies, the Great Consolidated at Punga Flat, the Port Phillip at Tararu, and the Poverty Tribute at Kuranui Hill, and applied for 16 acres of auriferous land near

¹⁷ F.W. Weston, *Thames Goldfields: A history from pre-proclamation times to 1927* (Thames, 1927, p. 141.

¹⁸ Thames Correspondent, *New Zealand Herald*, n.d. [original no longer in existence], cited in *Thames Advertiser*, 28 September 1875, p. 2.

¹⁹ *Observer*, 7 April 1894, p. 5.

²⁰ *Auckland Weekly News*, 21 May 1870, p. 4; *New Zealand Herald*, 30 August 1870, p. 3.

²¹ *New Zealand Herald*, 30 August 1870, p. 3.

²² *Auckland Weekly News*, 10 September 1870, p. 12.

²³ *Auckland Weekly News*, 26 August 1871, p. 11.

²⁴ *Thames Advertiser*, 4 November 1874, p. 3; *Thames Guardian and Mining Record*, 5 July 1872, p. 2.

²⁵ *Auckland Provincial Government Gazette*, 28 November 1870, p. 434.

Tapu.²⁶ In January 1872, when a new company was formed to work five Tararu claims, he was appointed its manager.²⁷ Being a director of the Felix, holding 900 shares, when it was wound up he contributed £5 to the £30 reward offered for information to determine who had salted the trial crushings and thereby caused the development of an unproductive mine.²⁸ In May he applied for the Don Pedro, at Moanataiari, and three months later was managing the company formed to work it.²⁹

In April 1873, he showed interest in buying the Nebraska Company's ground, but did not bid when it was auctioned.³⁰ Four months later, immediately after obtaining the Queen of the Thames No. 2, at Karaka Creek, he transferred it to the Queen of the Thames Company, of which he was a director.³¹ Two years later, with two others he moved to liquidate it and sell its assets to the Queen of the May Company.³²

In 1874 he was a director of the Ruby Company.³³ In July that year, he was one of six shareholders in the City of York Company who called an extraordinary meeting to dismiss the directors and change some of its rules.³⁴ After the chairman 'presumed that some of the gentlemen who were instrumental in calling the meeting would favor them with their views on the subject, and inform them why the meeting was called', there was 'some delay' before Walker spoke:

As was stated in the advertisement, the meeting was called in the first place to remove the directors from office. He was one of those

²⁶ *Auckland Provincial Government Gazette*, 18 July 1871, p. 188, 26 July 1871, p. 194, 26 September 1871, p. 257.

²⁷ *Auckland Weekly News*, 13 January 1872, p. 14; *Thames Guardian and Mining Record*, 17 January 1872, p. 2.

²⁸ *Thames Guardian and Mining Record*, 23 April 1872, p. 3, 27 April 1872, p. 2; *Auckland Weekly News*, 27 April 1872, p. 9.

²⁹ Te Aroha Warden's Court, Register of Thames Applications 1872-1873, entry for 2 May 1872, BBAV 11594/1a, ANZ-A; *Thames Guardian and Mining Record*, 15 May 1872, p. 2, 5 July 1872, p. 2.

³⁰ *Thames Advertiser*, 30 April 1873, p. 3.

³¹ Thames Warden's Court, Register of Licensed Holdings 1872-1875, folio 112, BACL 14397/7a, ANZ-A; *Thames Advertiser*, 18 August 1873, p. 2, 4 June 1874, p. 2.

³² *Thames Advertiser*, 13 October 1875, p. 3.

³³ *Thames Advertiser*, 12 August 1874, p. 2.

³⁴ *Thames Advertiser*, 20 July 1874, p. 2.

who had signed the requisition. In fact, he drew it up, and he drew it up for the purpose of getting a board of directors to be representative of the present shareholders, as the majority of those who were at that time ruling the company were only interested in it to a limited extent.

He moved that all directors be removed from office. When questioned, he stated that some directors 'did not hold the requisite number of shares. He knew directors who for days had no shares, although they held office'. When one director commented that there was no necessity for the motion at this time, although there 'might have been some propriety in it' earlier, Walker interjected: 'That was when you disposed of your shares'. This director claimed that 'a narrow ring was formed by a few men seeking to prostitute the interests of the company to their own purposes, and a more degraded movement than this he had never seen'. After naming Walker as one of four men 'working to forward their own purposes', he charged them with 'buying and selling, and trading, and wanting to buy, sell, and trade, and wanting to keep the mine within their power, and that was the secret of the whole thing'. Walker's desire to remove the office to Auckland was allegedly 'for a selfish motive'. In response, Walker 'asked what this ring had been guilty of. It was, he thought, nothing illegitimate. If buying as cheaply as he could, and selling as dearly as he could, was what was referred to, he must plead guilty. Beyond that he had not gone, and did not know what the ring was guilty of further'. A suggestion that he replace one of the directors prompted laughter from some shareholders, and he declined. 'An aspersion had been cast upon that poor ring, until it was cleared off – until it was either convicted or acquitted – he could take no part in the management of the company'. After an amendment was carried refusing to remove the directors at this time and in this way, Walker moved to increase the qualification to be a director from 25 to 100 shares, but accepted an amendment of 50. His motion to empower the directors to discharge the manager without reference to a special meeting was defeated, but his proposal that shareholders calling an extraordinary general meeting hold 1,000 shares (instead of 500) was accepted.³⁵

The *Thames Advertiser* was pleased that shareholders had foiled this attempt to get control of the mine 'and so work dividends out of the fluctuations in the market value of the company's shares for their own especial benefit, as it is generally believed the same parties do in an

³⁵ *Thames Advertiser*, 12 August 1874, p. 3.

adjoining mine, the City of London'.³⁶ Four months later, with nine other shareholders he called another special meeting to change the directors, but after helping to get some Auckland men as new directors he abandoned his request for this meeting.³⁷

In late 1875, having difficulty in tracing the valuable seams, Walker had to drive crosscuts, rises, and winzes in a manner that in part of the Long Drive resembled 'the workings of a beehive'. The loss of mercury during crushing had 'called forth' his 'experience to obviate this defect, and mechanical appliances under his direction' were being erected beside the Moanataiari battery.³⁸ With the reforming of the company in 1876, the Long Drive was merged with others into the Kuranui Hill United Company, which Walker managed from April onwards.³⁹

In February that year he was selected by the City of London Company's directors to help draw up a drainage scheme for all the companies mining at Waio-Karaka.⁴⁰ The following month, after he confirmed another's opinion that there was no gold between Karaka and Tinker's Gully, the proposal to drive a tunnel between these two places was abandoned.⁴¹ In 1878 he acquired 500 of the 7,000 shares in Rowe's Caledonian Tribute and Gold Mining Company.⁴² In the following January, after tributers found good gold in the Kuranui Hill Company's mine, the 'indefatigable' Walker was developing this discovery.⁴³

In March 1881, at the annual meeting of the Kuranui Hill United Company, some shareholders attacked Walker. Robert Chapham Barstow, formerly a magistrate in Auckland and elsewhere,⁴⁴ commenced by asking whether one of his sons was tributing in the mine. The chairman, Thomas

³⁶ *Thames Advertiser*, 12 August 1874, p. 2.

³⁷ *Thames Advertiser*, 13 November 1874, p. 2, 13 January 1875, p. 3.

³⁸ *Thames Correspondent*, *New Zealand Herald*, 27 September 1875, p. 3.

³⁹ Declaration of Thomas Peacock and James Stodart, 12 June 1886, Mines Department, MD 1, 87/43, ANZ-W; J.H.M. Salmon, *A History of Gold-Mining in New Zealand* (Wellington, 1963), p. 187; for details of the mines owned by this company, see editorial, *Thames Advertiser*, 6 April 1881, p. 2; *Auckland Weekly News*, 16 April 1881, p. 19.

⁴⁰ *Thames Advertiser*, 11 February 1876, p. 2.

⁴¹ *Thames Advertiser*, 21 March 1876, p. 3.

⁴² *New Zealand Gazette*, 20 June 1878, p. 906.

⁴³ *Thames Advertiser*, 8 January 1879, p. 3.

⁴⁴ See *New Zealand Herald*, 29 September 1890, p. 5, 2 October 1890, p. 5; *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 2, pp. 425-426.

Peacock, a former mayor of Auckland and director of many companies,⁴⁵ ‘explained that formerly he had been connected with one of the tribute parties, but the directors as soon as they learned of it set their face against it. One of Mr Walker’s sons was employed at the battery on wages, but none were employed on tribute’.⁴⁶

Richard Laishley, a lawyer,⁴⁷ then led the attack on Walker’s management:

While he had every confidence in the directors’ control of the mine, he felt bound to refer to a great dissatisfaction felt in the practical management of Mr Walker. A great number of complaints had been made about him, of what precise character he did not know, but this he did know, that Mr Walker had not been successful in finding gold. The question, therefore, arose if they were to continue to work the mine for the benefit of shareholders, and as he was inclined to that opinion, he was ready to move in the direction of a change. There was no specific charge against Mr Walker that would justify them in dismissing him, but if shareholders made an expression of opinion in favour of a change, they would be bound to give heed to it.⁴⁸

An extended version of his speech had him alleging ‘much dissatisfaction’ with the management and that complaints against Walker ‘were far from being uncommon. In saying that he was free from any feeling against Mr Walker, for he was a man whom he did not know, but he was merely giving expression to views current outside, and of which he believed the directors were not ignorant’. Laishley claimed not to imply that Walker ‘was a bad manager, in fact he might be the best manager on the field’, but he had not found gold. ‘It was a wise business maxim to avoid unsuccessful men, and Mr Walker had proved that he had been an unsuccessful man, so far as the mine was concerned’, and asked whether the mine was to be ‘worked for the benefit of the shareholders’ or for the benefit of Walker. Accordingly, he moved that, ‘as it seems expedient that a change in the working management of the mine be made’, Walker’s services ‘be dispensed with’. Barstow, in seconding, explained that he ‘had nothing to say against Mr Walker; he did not know him, in fact was not aware that he had ever

⁴⁵ See *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 2, pp. 110, 126.

⁴⁶ *Auckland Weekly News*, 2 April 1881, p. 15.

⁴⁷ See *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 2, p. 279.

⁴⁸ *Thames Advertiser*, 30 March 1881, p. 3.

seen him'. He then cited Peacock's statement that, if Walker's son 'was not at one time actually a tributer, he was in the mine working among tributers'. Peacock responded that he 'hesitated to take up the position of dismissing him on account of the dissatisfaction expressed at his non-success'. Nobody 'who faithfully did his duty' as manager could avoid

incurring the ill-will of some one. Stories were then put in circulation, and these the directors had fully inquired into, and in every case had found them without foundation. It was well known that the directors had intimated their resolution of dismissing him if ever they found that he was interested in any of the tributes let in the mine, but even this knowledge had failed to bring forward proof that he had done wrong. The parties who were most offended at Mr Walker had been asked to make definite statements about their complaints, but in every case they failed to do so.⁴⁹

On Peacock's recommendation, the motion was adjourned for discussion at 'a special more largely attended meeting'.⁵⁰ A director commented that it was not fair to blame Walker for not finding gold that was not there, and repeated that the charges against him 'had been gone into again and again, but always with the same result'.⁵¹ Because it held 'similar views', the *Thames Star* reprinted a paragraph published in the *Free Lance*:

I notice a Mr Laishley is walking into Walker, of the Kuranui Hill mine; and of all the rotten pleas that were ever set forth for giving a good and faithful servant the sack, this, I think is the rottenest. Because Walker cannot find gold enough in the mine to pay heavy divs., he is to be sacked. They say he is unsuccessful. To my way of thinking he has been most successful. I don't believe there is another man on the Thames would have worked the mine half as well as he has done, and instead of the shareholders growling at the want of dividends, I think they ought to be thankful for having a mine at all. If Mr Laishley loses a client every time he is unsuccessful, I am afraid he will go clientless very shortly.⁵²

⁴⁹ *Auckland Weekly News*, 2 April 1881, p. 15.

⁵⁰ *Thames Advertiser*, 30 March 1881, p. 3.

⁵¹ *Auckland Weekly News*, 2 April 1881, p. 15.

⁵² *Free Lance*, n.d., reprinted in *Thames Star*, 4 April 1881, p. 2.

A *Thames Advertiser* editorial unequivocally supported Walker:

To bring about a change in the management of the mine without assigning any reason beyond that of ill-luck on the part of the present manager, is, to say the least, a novelty. If the consequences were less serious to an old and faithful servant of the company we should be inclined to regard the whole proceeding as a joke; but what may be sport to a section of shareholders holding such extraordinary notions, is certainly beyond a joke to the gentleman concerned, one of the most experienced gentlemen, and certainly most respected mine managers on the field.

Walker had given 'some eleven years of faithful service', and it was 'absurd' of some shareholders to consider he was no longer fit to be manager because he had 'not succeeded in stumbling upon a huge block of golden country, when he has had an underground world to explore'. The company owned many properties, including the All Nations and Don Pedro, 'some of them famous for their surface richness', but this richness did not extend to the deeper levels. Walker 'deserved success, although he may not have obtained it, so far as it is represented by heavy deposits, during the past few years'. There was 'some reason to hope for an improvement in the class of country now being opened out, and no metamorphosis of managers will effect a change'. Tributers had produced over £5,000 for the company during the past two years, indicating 'unbounded success, not failure'.⁵³

A Thames correspondent wrote that Laishley's remarks had 'attracted no little attention', and that such 'an old and faithful servant' should be put on trial just because the mine was not paying dividends had 'created a feeling of indignation among many'. If success was to mean paying dividends, then 'very few' Thames managers could claim to be successful; should they all be dismissed? 'No, the success of a mine manager must be based upon a different standard than that of paying occasional dividends at very irregular intervals'. Under Walker's management, 'no company has executed more extensive prospecting works than the Kuranui', all under his 'personal supervision', and there were 'few' mines whose workings were 'in such good order'. It was not Walker's fault that 'many of the lodes met with have proved unusually barren', for his prospecting had 'proved most conclusively' that rich runs of ore did not go below the level of the beach. Despite many other companies having 'entirely collapsed' during periods of

⁵³ Editorial, *Thames Advertiser*, 6 April 1881, p. 2.

depression, 'the Kuranui has kept its head above water', and was in 'quite as good a position as ever' through his management.⁵⁴

Walker paid to publish a 'Notice to Shareholders':

With a view of setting certain shareholders right on some matters, about which there seems to be considerable want of correct information, I venture to lay before you the following:-
I am charged with being an unsuccessful Mine Manager. My answer is that since I have been on the Thames I have been *eminently* successful.... It will be admitted that all the runs of gold on and near our Spur came to a full stop at the sea level, and that to that depth all the companies of which the Kuranui Hill United is now composed had already worked their respective claims previous to my taking charge. During the eleven (11) years of my management, the operations above sea level have been merely a gleaning of remnants; but, notwithstanding, I have unearthed from these old claims in that time 44,456 ounces of gold. This includes the gold won by tributers.

He gave details of the 8,188 feet driven to find payable ore in the deep levels. 'If we have failed to command success we at least deserved it. It is no comfort that all our neighbouring claims are so far in a similar bad case', although favourable prospects in the Caledonian would benefit the Kuranui. He provided details of the work done by tributers, who provided the company with £5,063 12s 6d, whereas the same work done by wages men would have meant a debt of £2,064 16s 7d.

These figures speak well for tributing, and perhaps, also, say something for the management. If it appears that I have been careless, dishonest, incapable, or otherwise unworthy to hold this position, I will leave on a day's notice on the order of my directors. But I confess to a feeling of being unfairly treated unless I am judged on my merits and by my work.

Replacing him with another manager, 'however capable, will hardly counterbalance the certain loss of my many years experience in your mine, unless, indeed, the new comer prove really an embodiment of good luck'. He warned of the 'general effect' his dismissal would have on other employees and, especially, managers.

⁵⁴ Thames Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 16 April 1881, p. 9.

I can also, too, easily understand the gnawing feeling produced by the hopes of dividends too long deferred, and can readily forgive owners who have had, in addition, their ears poisoned by fables circulated for the benefit of the men who manufacture them (the fables not the ears.) I stand quite alone and only ask a fair trial. I am not conscious of having made any blunder, or of having fallen into any scrape, nor have I cultivated at the Company's expense a ring of friends to fight for me on such as the present occasion. I am, however, not without hope that a sense of justice and an eye to their own personal advantage will operate conjointly with the shareholders in my favour at the meeting.⁵⁵

A 'moderately good attendance of Auckland and Thames shareholders' attended the adjourned meeting. After explaining the background, Peacock said 'it was against reason' to dismiss Walker for not finding gold. 'In a mine like theirs, where a large amount of work had been done, it was important that the manager should have a thoroughly detailed knowledge of the ground, which it would take a manager a long time to acquire'. Walker was 'in attendance, and could attend to answer any question'. Although entitled to attend, being a shareholder, the secretary explained that he 'did not desire to be present'. One shareholder defended Walker and his management; as for his disputes with tributers, 'these had been investigated by the directors, and he came well out of them'. When one of Walker's opponents claimed 'public opinion said that the manager was incompetent, and that he was joined with a clique' of Aucklanders, another shareholder 'strongly' objected. He 'had worked in the low levels of the Kuranui and United Pumping Association, and would say that no more systematic prospecting had been done in any part of the field, and he thought a change of management at present would mean winding up the company'. William McCullough, an experienced mining reporter and owner of the *Thames Star*,⁵⁶ insisted that 'no practical man who saw his work could say' that Walker 'was incompetent'. Laishley concluded the debate by repeating that Walker was unsuccessful because he had not found gold. Businessmen often came across men 'whose integrity was unimpeachable, but in their personal affairs they would avoid them. Why should they be more lax in a company concern'. He argued that Walker's 'mind was in a groove which prevented him from seeing anything but his own ideas. They wanted fresh ideas. They could not be worse off than they were, and they

⁵⁵ J.W. Walker, 'Notice to Shareholders', *Thames Advertiser*, 8 April 1881, p. 2.

⁵⁶ See *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 2, p. 96; *Observer*, 30 December 1899, p. 9.

might be better off if the mine was worked more for the benefit of the shareholders and not for the benefit of Mr Walker'. An amendment leaving the matter for the directors to decide was carried by 14 votes to five.⁵⁷

After Walker resigned four months later,⁵⁸ he worked on a plan for 'the most thorough prospecting and working' of about 60 acres between the Waiotahi and Moanataiari Creeks. For 'some time' he had been 'securing the ground and collecting information about the various lodes which traverse it'. Some of this area had been successfully worked previously, but 'a large area' was 'hitherto unoccupied' because its 'distance inland' had made payable working difficult. Walker and the other promoters planned 'to open up the mine in such a way that the quartz can be won at a minimum of cost, and the great expense now entailed of carting, etc, avoided'. A large low level tunnel would be driven along the line of the Caledonian No. 1 lode. It was anticipated that this mine, to be called the Fame, would 'eventually be probably one of the largest gold producers on the field'. Walker was associated with Edward Kersey Cooper,⁵⁹ another mine manager, who would seek capital from his English friends. A correspondent described the scheme as 'certainly one of unusual magnitude in mining affairs, and far more extensive than anything that has yet been attempted here, but it has about it all the elements of success', if sufficient capital was provided.⁶⁰ As Cooper was based in Northland, Walker was in charge of this 'spec'.⁶¹ Observers confidently anticipated success.⁶²

Walker had indeed been acquiring claims during 1881,⁶³ transferring the Fame and Fortune claims to Cooper in August, 'subject to conditions contained in deed'.⁶⁴ The deed has not survived, but must have arranged that Walker retained an interest in these mines, which from then onwards

⁵⁷ *Auckland Weekly News*, 16 April 1881, p. 19.

⁵⁸ *Thames Advertiser*, 25 August 1881, p. 3.

⁵⁹ See paper on his life.

⁶⁰ Thames Correspondent, *New Zealand Herald*, 29 July 1881, p. 3.

⁶¹ *Thames Star*, 30 July 1881, p. 2.

⁶² For example, 'A Peep into the Future', *Thames Star*, 12 September 1881, p. 2.

⁶³ See *Thames Advertiser*, Warden's Court, 9 April 1881, p. 3, 28 August 1881, p. 2, 14 June 1881, p. 2.

⁶⁴ Thames Warden's Court, Register of Licensed Holdings 1875-1882, folios 154, 156, BACL 14397/10a; Register of Thames Claims 1880-1882, claims 959, 960, BACL 14397/13a, ANZ-A.

were worked by Cooper.⁶⁵ The Bee and the Ant, acquired in November, were forfeited nine months later, as was the Union claim at Una Hill one month later.⁶⁶

THE TAIRUA GOLDFIELD

In April 1875, Walker was elected to a committee to protest against claims at the new Tairua field being of 30 acres.⁶⁷ During that year he became a shareholder in one claim and three companies, being a director of one of these.⁶⁸ In December he inspected mines on behalf of himself and other speculators; his inspection on behalf of the Tairua Company led him to join the criticism of the working of its mine.⁶⁹ No involvement in later years was recorded.

THE WAITEKAURI GOLDFIELD

In 1876 and 1877, Walker acquired interests in five companies and was director of two, the Young Colonial and Keystone.⁷⁰ In early 1881 he included Waitekauri in his investigation of prospects in Ohinemuri, and in October applied for five claims.⁷¹ He also acquired another for non-working.⁷² An Ohinemuri correspondent wrote that 'a tall gentleman from the Thames, with a pedestrian name', had 'taken up the country wholesale, with the object, I hear, of retailing it out to hard up English capitalists,

⁶⁵ See paper on Edward Kersey Cooper.

⁶⁶ Thames Warden's Court, Register of Licensed Holdings 1875-1882, folios 185, 186, BACL 14397/10a, ANZ-A; *Thames Star*, 25 August 1882, p. 3, 28 September 1882, p. 2.

⁶⁷ *Thames Advertiser*, 20 April 1875, p. 3.

⁶⁸ Thames Warden's Court, Register of Claims 1875-1876, folio 42, BACL 14397/9a, ANZ-A; *New Zealand Gazette*, 29 April 1875, p. 302, 24 June 1875, p. 428, 2 September 1875, p. 592, 23 September 1875, p. 615.

⁶⁹ *Thames Advertiser*, 7 December 1875, p. 3, 11 December 1875, p. 3; *Auckland Weekly News*, 18 December 1875, Supplement, p. 1.

⁷⁰ *New Zealand Gazette*, 10 February 1876, p. 123, 30 March 1876, p. 226, 31 August 1876, p. 616, 5 October 1876, p. 681, 23 August 1877, p. 856, 6 September 1877, p. 926; Company Files, BBAE 10286/41, ANZ-A.

⁷¹ *Thames Advertiser*, 1 February 1881, p. 2; *Thames Star*, 8 October 1881, p. 3, 28 October 1881, p. 3.

⁷² Warden's Court, *Thames Advertiser*, 18 October 1881, p. 3.

“Just to give them a show, you know”’.⁷³ Nothing came of this plan, and four of these claims were forfeited in the following year.⁷⁴

TE AROHA, 1880-1883

One week before the opening of the new Te Aroha goldfield, Walker visited it,⁷⁵ but, clearly unimpressed, did not acquire any interests. Waiorongomai impressed him more, and he obtained a miner’s right on 7 December 1881.⁷⁶ In the following February he inspected the Eureka,⁷⁷ but did not acquire any shares in the company formed to work it. At the end of March, on behalf of his son Walter he arranged for the pegging out of the Cabinet, which he abandoned two and a half weeks later.⁷⁸ He declared his ‘great faith in the future of the Te Aroha district, and fully believes it will be one of the most permanent gold mining districts of the North Island’, but warned that ‘certain difficulties’, unspecified, had to be removed.⁷⁹ In May he marked out four claims named, as noted, after Victorian goldfields, but abandoned them ten days later.⁸⁰ He successfully sought the forfeiture to himself of the Wood for non-working, but failed to obtain the Last Find on the same grounds.⁸¹ Three barren claims were taken off him in June.⁸² In July, a leading Auckland sharebroker, Joseph Newman,⁸³ required him ‘to prove objection of License for Hercules Claim’, an objection Walker withdrew once it was agreed that Newman should have two-thirds of the

⁷³ Ohinemuri Correspondent, *Thames Advertiser*, 18 October 1881, p. 3.

⁷⁴ *Thames Star*, 25 August 1882, p. 3, 6 October 1883, p. 3.

⁷⁵ *Thames Advertiser*, 19 November 1880, p. 3.

⁷⁶ Te Aroha Warden’s Court, Miner’s Right no. 1837, issued 7 December 1881, Miners’ Rights Butt Book 1881-1882, BBAV 11533/1i, ANZ-A.

⁷⁷ Paeroa Correspondent, *Thames Advertiser*, 4 February 1882, p. 3.

⁷⁸ Te Aroha Warden’s Court, Notices of Marking Out Claims 1882, no. 71, BBAV 11557/2a, ANZ-A.

⁷⁹ *Thames Advertiser*, 28 March 1882, p. 3; *Auckland Weekly News*, 1 April 1882, p. 11.

⁸⁰ Te Aroha Warden’s Court, Notices of Marking Out Claims 1882, nos. 113–116, BBAV 11557/2a, ANZ-A.

⁸¹ Te Aroha Warden’s Court, Plaintiff Book 1880-1898, 50, 51/1882, BBAV 11547/1a, ANZ-A.

⁸² Te Aroha Warden’s Court, Plaintiff Book 1880-1898, 56-58/1882, BBAV 11547/1a, ANZ-A.

⁸³ See *New Zealand Herald*, 5 January 1892, p. 5.

interest and Walker one-third.⁸⁴ An attempt at the end of August to obtain surplus ground in another claim was withdrawn within two weeks.⁸⁵ During that year he also acquired shares in four companies.⁸⁶ He then ceased to acquire further interests, turning his attention to other fields, apart from visiting in 1885 with a man promoting a new treatment for refractory ore.⁸⁷

In August 1882, Walker applied for two water races in the Tui district, but withdrew his application three weeks later;⁸⁸ this was his only involvement in this portion of the field until the late 1890s.

In May 1882 the *Observer* reported that Louis Ehrenfried, a Thames brewer,⁸⁹ was 'going in for a grand hotel at the Te Aroha Goldfields. Mr Walker, of the Long Drive, is likely to be the boss'.⁹⁰ In May, Walker applied for a publican's license for a 30-room hotel and sought tenders to erect it on the corner of Whitaker and Kenrick Streets.⁹¹ From June 1882 to the end of August the following year, he held the license for Ehrenfried's hotel, the fourth hotel to be erected.⁹² Originally known as Walker's Hotel, in 1885 it became the Palace.⁹³ In early June 1882, the *Te Aroha Mail* reported that builders were 'vigorously at work pushing on with the building, early and late, in order to make up for time lost in procuring the necessary timber'. Being on the main road to Thames and the nearest hotel to the site of the

⁸⁴ Te Aroha Warden's Court, *Plaint Book 1880-1898*, 65/1882, BBAV 11547/1a; Register of Licensed Holdings 1881-1887, folio 108, BBAV 11500/9a, ANZ-A.

⁸⁵ Te Aroha Warden's Court, *Plaint Book 1880-1898*, 85/1882, BBAV 11547/1a, ANZ-A.

⁸⁶ *New Zealand Gazette*, 23 March 1882, p. 490, 27 April 1882, p. 646, 14 September 1882, p. 1264.

⁸⁷ *Te Aroha News*, 12 September 1885, p. 2.

⁸⁸ Te Aroha Warden's Court, Register of Applications 1880-1882, folio 206, nos. 272, 273, BBAV 11505/3a; Application dated 21 August 1882, Mining Applications 1882, BBAV 11289/9a, ANZ-A.

⁸⁹ See *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 2, pp. 332-333.

⁹⁰ *Observer*, 7 May 1882, p. 116.

⁹¹ *Waikato Times*, 6 May 1882, p. 2; *Thames Advertiser*, 9 May 1882, p. 2; *Mercantile and Bankruptcy Gazette of New Zealand*, 28 February 1885, p. 67.

⁹² Te Aroha Magistrate's Court, Register of Publicans' Licenses 1882-1892, entry for Walker's Hotel, BBAV 11493/1a, ANZ-A; *Waikato Times*, 7 August 1883, p. 2; *Ohinemuri County Diamond Jubilee 1885-1945: Souvenir* (Paeroa, 1945), p. 63.

⁹³ Te Aroha Magistrate's Court, Register of Publicans' Licenses 1882-1892, entry for Walker's Hotel, BBAV 11493/1a, ANZ-A; *Te Aroha News*, 27 April 1885, p. 2.

proposed bridge over the Waihou, it would contain 45 rooms on two storeys.⁹⁴ Two months later, it reported that the 'first portion' would open within a few days.

It is being neatly fitted up, so far as the rooms will permit. At present, there are eight bedrooms (single and double), bar, bar parlor, kitchen, etc. The present bar and parlor are only temporary, and intended ultimately for bedrooms, the commercial part of the premises forming part of the main building having yet to be added in front of the present one. The bedrooms are all well furnished and fitted up. The bar and bar parlor each contain good fires, quite a novelty in the hotel line, and one that will be thoroughly appreciated during the cold weather of the present season. When complete, the hotel will be the handsomest and most comfortable in the district.⁹⁵

He had to ask the council to define the level of the street before he could erect the frontage.⁹⁶ A tender for £2,196 to complete 'Long Drive Walker's Palace', as a headline put it, was accepted; the final cost was 'over' £3,000.⁹⁷ When the architects produced their plans and specifications, a metropolitan newspaper provided full details of its splendours:

The principal front will be 98 feet in extent, with a side frontage to another street of 69 feet. On the ground floor there will be two entrances from the main street, one to the boarding portion of the establishment, and the other to the bar and billiard-room. The bar, 18 x 18, will be at the corner of the two streets, and at the side of it the private bar, 18 x 8. Under the bar will be a cellar, 6 feet in height, running the full extent of the bar. Behind it will be a tap-room, 26 x 14. The hotel entrance leads directly to the billiard-room, which is 35 x 26, and adjacent is a sitting-room, 14 x 11. The main entrance hall is eight feet wide, and at the end of it is the staircase leading to the upper floor. On the left of the hall are two sitting-rooms, one 22 x 14, and the other 14 x 11. To the right is the dining-room, 41 x 25. At the end of the main hall is a door communicating with the building already erected, and which will form part of the hotel. This latter section will be subdivided into ten bed-rooms. A verandah eight feet in width runs along both street frontages. The upper floor will contain two sitting-rooms, 12 x 14 respectively, and 21 bed-rooms, averaging 14 x 9

⁹⁴ *Te Aroha Mail*, 10 June 1882, p. 2.

⁹⁵ *Te Aroha Mail*, n.d., reprinted in *Thames Star*, 7 August 1882, p. 2.

⁹⁶ Piako County Council, *Waikato Times*, 30 September 1882, p. 2.

⁹⁷ *Thames Star*, 5 October 1882, p. 2; *Waikato Times*, 17 February 1883, p. 3.

each, with bath-rooms, lavatory, linen closets, and all the conveniences appertaining to a first-class hotel. The sitting-rooms will open on a balcony the full extent of the frontages of the building, and situate over the verandah. The balcony and verandah will be of an ornamental design. The roof of the building will have a bold projection, ornamented with cut brackets, and the general design of the building will be of a neat and artistic character.⁹⁸

In mid-February 1883 the Hamilton newspaper announced that his 'palatial hotel' would be completed by the end of the month.⁹⁹ It considered it would 'eclipse many of the first hotels of the metropolis, both in point of style and accommodation'.¹⁰⁰ Some of the first visitors considered it 'was many years before its time, and that the accommodation it afforded was far in advance of the place', but the boom in mining combined with the attraction of the hot springs meant, the newspaper considered, that his enterprise was 'exceedingly well timed', and the development of the hot baths would result in his being 'handsomely rewarded'.¹⁰¹ Not till early April was the furnishing complete; amongst the facilities were suites of private rooms for families and invalids.¹⁰²

When the Hot Springs Hotel burnt down in May, 'the ladies belonging to' the publican's family 'were left without many clothes, etc', but Walker 'at once, with his usual kindness, invited them to his hotel'.¹⁰³ But it was not a financial success. As Walker explained in the following year, Ehrenfried had 'found the money for the building, and took a mortgage over it', Walker spending 'about £280 on the hotel. Found the business did not pay, owing to Te Aroha not being as prosperous as had been anticipated. Had to pay interest on the borrowed money, and found that the house was losing money. There was no money on the field until after the battery started'.¹⁰⁴

⁹⁸ *Auckland Weekly News*, 16 September 1882, p. 18.

⁹⁹ *Waikato Times*, 15 February 1883, p. 2.

¹⁰⁰ *Waikato Times*, 17 February 1883, p. 3.

¹⁰¹ *Waikato Times*, 1 March 1883, p. 3.

¹⁰² *Waikato Times*, 10 April 1883, p. 3.

¹⁰³ *Waikato Times*, 22 May 1883, p. 2.

¹⁰⁴ District Court, *Thames Star*, 6 August 1884, p. 2.

In early August, the license was transferred to another publican, and Ehrenfried took over the land upon which the hotel was erected.¹⁰⁵ In reporting this transfer, the local newspaper commented that it had a 'well deserved reputation' during Walker's tenure.¹⁰⁶ Long afterwards, the *Observer* described it as the first hotel at Te Aroha 'of any pretensions', and considered that Walker 'was, perhaps, never more popular than when he was a boniface', meaning publican.¹⁰⁷ He was reported in 1892 to be planning to build a large hotel at Waihi,¹⁰⁸ but nothing came of this intention.

In addition to obtaining the ground on which the hotel and associated buildings was erected, Walker acquired four residence sites in Lipsey's Block, outside the township; two of his daughters and one of his sons were 'dummies' for three of these. Rent was paid only until February 1884 because the family had left by then.¹⁰⁹

Whilst living in Te Aroha, Walker described himself first as a mining engineer and then as an agent.¹¹⁰ He had first become an agent in Thames, after ceasing to manage the Kuranui mines. The *Thames Advertiser* reported that Walker, 'late of the Kuranui, intimates that he has commenced business as a Mining Agent and Mining Engineer, and from his long acquaintance with the field, and vast experience in mining generally, he is sure to receive a large measure of support'.¹¹¹ Late in March 1882, he 'commenced business at Te Aroha as a sharebroker, mining, and general commission agent'.¹¹² He erected 'an immense sign over his office. He is going into business at a large rate'.¹¹³

¹⁰⁵ *Waikato Times*, 7 August 1883, p. 2; Te Aroha Warden's Court, Register of Applications 1880-1882, folios 99-100, 159, 168, 170, BBAV 11505/3a; Rent Ledger 1881-1900, folios 21-23, 38-39, BBAV 11501/1a, ANZ-A.

¹⁰⁶ *Te Aroha News*, 11 August 1883, p. 2.

¹⁰⁷ *Observer*, 6 August 1904, p. 4; Partridge, p. 114.

¹⁰⁸ *Ohinemuri Gazette*, 13 February 1892, p. 4.

¹⁰⁹ Te Aroha Warden's Court, Rent Ledger 1881-1900, folios 364-367, BBAV 11501/1a, ANZ-A.

¹¹⁰ *New Zealand Gazette*, 27 April 1882, p. 646, 14 September 1882, p. 1264.

¹¹¹ *Thames Advertiser*, 18 October 1881, p. 3; for an example of his advertisements, see *Thames Star*, 22 October 1881, p. 3.

¹¹² *Thames Advertiser*, 28 March 1882, p. 3.

¹¹³ *Thames Star*, 3 April 1882, p. 2.

Walker participated in the social life of the community in a small way. To assist the erection of a public hall and reading room, in 1882 he purchased 20 shares in the company promoting it, and was one of its directors.¹¹⁴ In 1883, he was elected to the committee of the newly formed Jockey Club.¹¹⁵ Had he stayed longer in the district, like other publicans he would have become prominent in community affairs.

FINANCIAL DIFFICULTIES IN THE FIRST HALF OF THE 1880s

At the end of 1882, Walker tried to sell his ten-roomed leasehold residence at Mt Pleasant, on the hills behind Shortland, but nobody made an offer.¹¹⁶ In April 1883, a Chinese gardener sued him over goods valued at £9, he was ordered to pay a bank £60 for a dishonoured promissory note, and the Thames River Steam Navigation Company successfully sued him for £12 3s 6d.¹¹⁷

In June the following year, this company sought a distress warrant to obtain the £14 18s 6d he now owed.¹¹⁸ Instead of paying, at the beginning of July Walker filed as a bankrupt.¹¹⁹ His liabilities were £591 but his assets were worth only £278. He blamed his failure on the hotel, because when he went to Te Aroha he was 'solvent, and had considerable property in marketable shares'. The assignee 'expressed satisfaction with the bankrupt's action', and arranged to discharge him at the next court sitting.¹²⁰ He had to sell his furniture and effects (including a cow).¹²¹ Two

¹¹⁴ Company Files, BADZ 5181, box 41 no. 259, ANZ-A; *Thames Advertiser*, 4 November 1882, p. 3.

¹¹⁵ *Thames Advertiser*, 12 February 1883, p. 2.

¹¹⁶ *Thames Star*, 21 December 1882, p. 2; for the number of rooms, see *Thames Electoral Roll, 1879*, p. 86.

¹¹⁷ Thames Magistrate's Court, Complaint Book 1881-1884, 80/1883, BACL 13737/12a; Civil Record Book 1881-1883, 79/1883, BACL 13735/1b; Te Aroha Magistrate's Court, Civil Record Book 1881-1884, 36/1883, BCDG 11221/1a, ANZ-A.

¹¹⁸ Te Aroha Magistrate's Court, Home Warrant Book 1883-1928, 22/1884, BBAV 11498/1a, ANZ-A.

¹¹⁹ *Te Aroha News*, 5 July 1884, p. 2.

¹²⁰ District Court, *Thames Star*, 6 August 1884, p. 2.

¹²¹ *Thames Star*, 2 August 1884, p. 3.

months after proceedings began, he was discharged.¹²² Two years later, the assignee sold the Don Pedro claim, at Thames, for the benefit of his creditors, who received a mere £1 from the sale; the purchaser had to meet a debt of £23 on the property.¹²³

A REEFTON INTERLUDE

In August 1884, the manager of the Golden Fleece United Company, at Reefton, resigned to take up another position, and Walker left Thames to replace him.¹²⁴ According to the *Cyclopedia*, he went there ‘on behalf of the Bank of New Zealand’.¹²⁵ Before he took up the position, a Reefton correspondent reported a rumour that he would ‘bring down a staff of miners from the Thames, who, it is said, will receive a lower rate of wages than had hitherto been paid. The miners here are up in arms against the proposal’.¹²⁶ Walker denied the report,¹²⁷ and ensured that his denial was widely publicized:

I find that the said “report” (if any such there ever was), must have been strictly confined to a select circle of your own correspondent’s friends.

Probably “your own” sent the item as a suggestion, not a rumor.

In either or any case I know of no such matter.

As a suggestion I have nothing whatever to say on the subject.

As a rumor it is utterly false, and without even a shadow of truth for a foundation.

Oblige me by saying so in your next publication.¹²⁸

After supervising some development, by mid-1885 most work had ceased and he returned to Thames.¹²⁹ Later, the company’s directors and

¹²² Thames Magistrate’s Court, Letterbook 1876-1896, p. 1214, BACL 14458/1b, ANZ-A; District Court, *Thames Star*, 3 September 1884, p. 2.

¹²³ *Thames Advertiser*, District Court, 4 November 1886, p. 2, District Court, 8 December 1886, p. 2, 15 December 1886, p. 2, 18 December 1886, p. 2.

¹²⁴ *Thames Star*, 20 August 1884, p. 2; *Grey River Argus*, 27 August 1884, p. 4.

¹²⁵ *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 2, p. 834.

¹²⁶ Reefton Correspondent, *Otago Daily Times*, 8 September 1884, p. 2, 15 September 1884, p. 2.

¹²⁷ Reefton Correspondent, *Otago Daily Times*, 17 September 1884, p. 2.

¹²⁸ Letter from J.W. Walker to *Otago Daily Times*, reprinted in *Inangahua Times*, 22 September 1884, p. 2.

secretary certified that during his 12 months' employment he had worked to their 'entire satisfaction'.¹³⁰

THE BRIEFEST OF INVOLVEMENT IN KARANGAHAKE MINING

In August 1885, Walker applied for the Alabama at Karangahake, provoking conflict with others seeking both this and the Sultana.¹³¹ He withdrew his application in the following month because the ground applied for overlapped with other claims.¹³²

THAMES MINING, 1883-1888

Walker had only a small role in Thames mining for most of the 1880s, concentrating on Waihi. In August 1883, Walker acquired two claims in Waiotahi Creek, the Fame and the Fortune, but abandoned them early in November.¹³³ The previous month, along with three others, one being Cooper, he successfully applied for the Darwin Extended in the same area.¹³⁴ He became the owner of the Fame in April 1884, only to abandon it again.¹³⁵ Later in the year, he wanted low-grade ore in the Upper Waiotahi conveyed cheaply on the aerial tramway so that it could be treated.¹³⁶

In October 1885, he became a director of the Union Company, which worked the Albion.¹³⁷ The following month, he became owner of the Queen,

¹²⁹ Advertisement, *Inangahua Times*, 4 February 1885, p. 3; *Grey River Argus*, 4 June 1885, p. 2, 13 July 1885, p. 2, 16 September 1885, p. 4; *Thames Advertiser*, 12 August 1885, p. 2.

¹³⁰ Declaration of H. Kilgour, B. Letchfield, and G.W. Moss, 5 November 1886, Mines Department, MD 1, 87/43, ANZ-W.

¹³¹ *Thames Advertiser*, 12 August 1885, p. 2, Warden's Court, 21 September 1885, p. 3.

¹³² Thames Warden's Court, Register of Applications for Licensed Holdings 1881-1886, folio 122, BACL 14452/1a, ANZ-A.

¹³³ Thames Warden's Court, Register of Claims 1882-1884, no. 1165, BACL 14397/14a, ANZ-A.

¹³⁴ Thames Warden's Court, Register of Applications for Licensed Holdings 1881-1886, folio 105, BACL 14452/a, ANZ-A; *Thames Star*, 18 October 1883, p. 3.

¹³⁵ Thames Warden's Court, Register of Claims 1882-1884, no. 1204, BACL 14397/14a, ANZ-A.

¹³⁶ *Thames Star*, 18 August 1884, p. 3.

¹³⁷ Company Files, BADZ 5181, box 50 no. 323, ANZ-A.

at Collarbone Creek, which he abandoned in May 1887 after a flood destroyed his level.¹³⁸ In July 1888, he sued the council for a remarkably precise £24 0s 1d because he could not get his ore to the battery to be crushed and later the county workmen took it to make the road.

In April, 1887, I was the proprietor of the Queen claim, Collarbone creek. I had been working in the mine and had broken out a considerable quantity of quartz, which remained for about two or three months. The reason I could not get the quartz crushed was because there was no road to convey it on. There were fifteen or sixteen tons of quartz which was highly mineralized and worth according to my opinion two ounces to the ton. I think that the charge I made to the County of £2 per ton was fair and reasonable. I have treated tens of thousands of tons of quartz, and have no hesitation in saying the quartz was worth £2 per ton.... I have not parted with the quartz to any one, though I have abandoned the ground since. The flood in the Karaka destroyed my level and in consequence I had to give it up.

Cross-examined.... I only put in a claim for 12 tons because I am a decent honest sort of man, and don't want to be hard on the County. I have let portion of the claim on tribute. The quartz came from the middle of the claim. The road was not passable, but I thought to be able to get the quartz down as soon as the county repaired the road. The quartz was of a special kind, easily distinguished, and I am sure that it was my quartz. From mortar prospects obtained by me I judged that the stuff would go an ounce and a half to the ton. There were several men working in the mine who saw the gold in the stone as it was broken out. I did not abandon the ground because the quartz was not payable. I am not sure the road is a county road, but I believe it is.

After three miners confirmed the value of the ore, James Roycroft, a miner and carter, ¹³⁹ who had worked for Walker in this mine, gave evidence for the defence:

He recollected some quartz being taken out of the mine, which he had told the men working on the road to take to mend the road with. He was receiving £1 a week from Mr Walker and held 3 shares in the mine. He made three tests of the quartz and could not even get a color of gold. When he gave the quartz to the road

¹³⁸ Thames Warden's Court, Register of Claims 1884-1886, no. 1396, BACL 14397/15a, ANZ-A; *Thames Advertiser*, 6 October 1886, p. 2, 30 May 1887, p. 2, Magistrate's Court, 28 July 1888, p. 2.

¹³⁹ See paper on the Roycroft brothers.

men he considered the stone was valueless. The stuff was taken from the surface. Mr Walker threw the mine up, because a fresh swept his tramway and workings away.

In cross-examination, this witness admitted that the quartz taken out belonged to Mr Walker and he had therefore no right to give it away.

Witness also said that at that time a cart could have got to the place where the quartz was stacked.

After an amalgamator recalled crushing three or four loads for Walker, in his presence, 'which yielded 3 1/2dwt for the lot', and the battery manager remembered 'a very poor return something like two ounces of gold to twenty tons of quartz', Walker was non-suited.¹⁴⁰

In March 1886, he attended a meeting of the Thames Drainage Board, held in Auckland, and succeeded in having his Queen removed from the assessment list, but failed to obtain a reduction of the rate for his Don Pedro, a decision he appealed against.¹⁴¹ When his appeal was heard in the warden's court, he explained that he had discovered at the drainage board meeting that the rate set was 7s per man's ground.

Was quite willing to pay for three men's ground, but objected to pay any amount which the Board chose to levy. It was usual for the reefs to strike obliquely across the claim. Had worked the mine at various times during the past twelve years, and it had never yet yielded £60 a year. The deepest works in the mine were about 40ft below the level of the sea, so he could not say that the operations of the [Big] Pump benefited the ground.

In reply to the board's counsel, he said he 'could not remember that the ground had cost him more than the annual rental for the past five years. Had never paid any drainage rate upon this piece of ground. Was quite willing to pay 7s per man's ground'.¹⁴² He had only worked it at 'a shallow depth', 45 feet below the adit. 'If he had to drain the mine himself, he did not think it would cost him a penny', for 'there had never been a drop of water seen' in it. Having received only £20 from it over the past 12 months, he had let it on tribute.¹⁴³

¹⁴⁰ Magistrate's Court, *Thames Advertiser*, 28 July 1888, p. 2.

¹⁴¹ *Thames Star*, 29 March 1886, p. 2; *Thames Advertiser*, 19 April 1886, p. 2.

¹⁴² Warden's Court, *Thames Star*, 30 April 1886, p. 2.

¹⁴³ Warden's Court, *Thames Advertiser*, 1 May 1886, p. 2.

Thomas Radford,¹⁴⁴ a mine manager who had assisted in producing the assessment list for the board, noted that several reefs and leaders ran through the Don Pedro. ‘In making up the assessment list he and the others were not only guided by the area of the ground, as this would not be a fair basis, but also took into consideration the depth, extent of workings, and whether the mines assessed were paying’. The Don Pedro would benefit from the Big Pump and he considered £5 per month to be a fair assessment. ‘Before commencing to make the assessment it was arranged that the minimum amount at which a claim could be assessed should be £5. Did not think the men in the Don Pedro could work without the assistance of the Pump. The value of drainage to every claim assessed was not less than £5 per month’. James Coutts, a leading mine manager (and future mining inspector),¹⁴⁵ considered that all claims rated benefited by £5 per month. The warden, Harry Kenrick,¹⁴⁶ after noting that ‘it was certainly a difficult matter to arrive at a satisfactory to all concerned’, accepted that the rate was reasonable, not excessive, and dismissed Walker’s case, with costs.¹⁴⁷

Walker’s subsequent letter revealed much about his personality: ‘Suffering under a sense of having been treated unfairly, I claim a privilege of being tried at the bar of public opinion, and without any apology proceed to state my case. Representing two and one-fifth men’s ground, I am rated at £5 per month for drainage fees’, and listed the charges applying to adjacent mines.

As I could not understand why my three men’s ground should be harder to drain than any three men’s ground of my adjoining neighbours, I demurred at being charged beyond the standard rate, and appealed to the Board, but was told a resolution was passed that no mine, however small, should pay less than five pounds per month. That this resolution is most unjust, is manifest,

and he could not understand ‘how any body of men being moderately honest and intelligent’ could make this decision, ‘well knowing it could not be less than fatal’ to the Don Pedro and the Manukau.

¹⁴⁴ See *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 2, p. 861; *Observer*, 10 October 1891, p. 7, 22 April 1905, p. 5; *Thames Star*, 15 August 1907, p. 2.

¹⁴⁵ See *Observer*, 18 January 1908, p. 4.

¹⁴⁶ See paper on his life.

¹⁴⁷ Warden’s Court, *Thames Star*, 30 April 1886, p. 2.

If I have been unable to find reasons for the infliction of this imposition, it is not because I have failed to ask for them. I asked the assessors, and I asked the Board, individually and collectively, in court and out of court. I am answered: (1) that if I had to lift my own proportion of water by itself and for myself, I would not be able to do so for any sum less than five pounds per month; (2) that because the Manukau is charged more in proportion than the Pedro, therefore I have no right to grumble. Now these are two pretty statements to be met with, and condemned upon, for really no others are made to show why I should be fleeced. I write the word fleeced advisedly and I hereby challenge the assessors – as such – and particularly the individual members thereof who are also owners of ground adjoining, to give me the real motive for adopting this minimum five pound clause, I ask [Robert] Comer [a leading mine manager]¹⁴⁸ and I ask [Samuel] Turtle [a leading sharebroker]¹⁴⁹ how they, acting in a public capacity, dare to deal out death to me in order to save their own skin. These look strong terms, but that is just what their action amounts to, and I want no one to misunderstand me. However I see no more reason to blame them than the other members of the Drainage Board, they are all equally guilty, only Sam [Turtle] and Uncle [Comer] stand out more prominently as “lone hand” owners and are spotted out accordingly. If they voted for the minimum clause let them render me a sufficient and business like reason, let them point out how this clause *can* be equitable from any standpoint, and I will shut up and apologize. There can be no question or comparison raised about the relative and respective depth and extent of workings, all my neighbours have their workings hundreds of feet deeper than mine, and my benefits are certainly in proportion no greater. The witnesses, Radford and Coutts (who were also assessors) simply enough tried to justify their act by repeating the very thin argument that because I could not do my own drainage for five pounds therefore I must pay five pounds. They also stated I was between two good mines, and *therefore* valuable, but they were both aware that neither of these two mines have ever traced gold into the Pedro, and that during the last seven years it has starved out more than thirty tribute parties, besides being a white elephant from start to finish for the owners. All the same, they stock to five pounds as being a *fair* charge for poor Pedro. “He is only a Pedro whom nobody owns.” I am willing to pay in fair proportion to area, depth, and benefit obtained. Where the rule of proportion is infringed some must suffer that others escape. I can see no more reason for fixing an oppressive minimum on small

¹⁴⁸ See *Thames Advertiser*, 29 November 1898, p. 4.

¹⁴⁹ See *Thames Advertiser*, 17 June 1890, p. 2; *New Zealand Herald*, 17 June 1890, p. 4.

mines than on small ships, small men, or small anything. The whole thing and theory is ridiculous and contrary to reason. It is moreover directly opposed to the prevailing tendency and spirit of our times. Why, it is now the turn of the big fellows to come down and suffer. We are now giving the *little* fellows a lift, we are bursting up the big estates, we want land – and everything else – for the people, and the people means the *small* people. Talk about the [Irish] Land League, we want it here badly – my monthly rent per man's ground is 45s 6d. My big brothers next door pay from 5s 2d to 7s. Fancy I pay just £2 0s 4d per man's ground per month *more* than Mr Samuel Turtle, my yearly rent is £60. If it is necessary and fair to draw money in such proportion then Turtle's contribution would be £600 3s. But he lets himself off with £68 8s. I am not meaning to roast Sam any more than necessary, I am merely making an example of his case – so to speak. I like Sam, but I really cannot afford to give him such a start, and here I must crave indulgence for making all this fuss about such a trifle, as I am being annually mulct of. But it is because I cannot afford it as much as that it is not right, and that I don't like it. These are poor times, anyhow, and I am not so young and hopeful as I used to was. I have been robbed before, and sometimes slandered, in days past, but I lived through all even if I do not forget. My time, however, is getting short, and I shall have small chance to pull up against this blow. My temper is not what it was, I regret that I am no longer disposed to offer my second cheek, one smite is more than I seem to want at any one time. It must be my liver, I presume, anyhow, this blessed drainage minimum haunts me night and day and deprives me of my peace of mind, as well as of my pence, I am therefore doubly to be commiserated. I dreamt last night that Radford came to tell me my schooner was confiscated and sold in Auckland in default of payment of harbor and lighthouse dues. You see she was an old tub and only 40 tons or so, and they had clapped in minimum on her. Then little [James Marshall] Lennox [a leading Auckland sharebroker and company director]¹⁵⁰ woke me up, I thought he had *walked* up the Frith [Firth of Thames] with seven-league boots on his feet, and wearing Mount Eden as a hat; the thing (the mountain, not Lennox) turned upside down, his head in the crater, poor crater, he pulled a slip of innocent looking blue-ruled from the inside breast-pocket of his inside big coat, presented it, fired it into me, and stalked silently and majestically away down stream. He only stopped to try the oysters at the Spit. The last I saw of him he was picking his teeth with the lighthouse. I found he had brought my gas bill – Great Scott – another minimum!!! It is just the same with my water rates, my baker's, butcher's and doctor's bills

¹⁵⁰ See *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 2, pp. 130, 312-313; *New Zealand Herald*, 17 December 1917, p. 6.

haunt my couch. They bristle with minimums, my rest is spoiled in nightmare, I am building wharves and lighthouses, Gas and Water works, occupied in all the arts, sciences and trades in order to steer clear of minimums. I do hope Radford and Company will live to repent the introduction of this fell curse into a hitherto happy hunting ground. The Bathurst Bur [a weed], the Codlin moth [a pest], the Yellow Agony [Chinese immigrants],¹⁵¹ the whooping cough, the Book Agent, the Insurance Man, and even the Colorado Beetle shrink into utter insignificance compared with this theory of minimum. It is the fraud of the century – a pestilent paradox, and the converse in every sense of its pretensions. This communication would be incomplete without reference to the judgment given against me by Warden Kenrick. I will only say that I try hard to think it was in accordance with the big balance of evidence brought forward against me.... Radford and Coutts were cock sure I was being kindly treated; possibly the Warden concluded that these men – my brother managers – ought to know.... But he will pardon me if I say the equities were overshot and never touched. One note of admiration for these two brothers: If they made no ostentatious display of sagacity or veracity they were at least consistent throughout – no hesitations, no vacillation. They had said five pounds is a fair thing and they stuck to it like men and brothers. Of course the sacrifice of a small tuber like myself in a cause so grand is a small matter to them; but the poor Pedro suffers death all the same. The mine never did and never will pay twenty pounds a-year, much less sixty. I am in a rat-trap; If I surrender the license tomorrow I shall still be liable throughout the whole year. I am told that Mr Coutts, one of the assessors, has been made wroth by a rumour that I had stated his influence was used to bias the other assessors towards slating me with this minimum. I never said so, or inferred that much. He evidently is easily persuaded that I overrate his influence or his personal animosity. I beg to again assure him he may rest easy and believe me less given to malicious fiction than he seems to suppose. I really don't carry much malice in my system; anyhow, I don't deal in it wholesale. But I have in my possession a document which is a rare curiosity, and a boss specimen of that article. If Mr Coutts has any such desire, and will send written permission, I will publish it; it is no use to me. And now to finish. There is said to be no evil or accident so utterly calamitous but carries with it some redeeming good element, however small, or, vice versa: Nothing is wholly good or wholly bad. The loss of the Pedro may afford leisure to string together for publication a few accumulated jottings. These principally refer to our local governing bodies and their transactions. I almost feel certain they are susceptible of being

¹⁵¹ Jonathon Green, *The Cassell Dictionary of Slang* (London, 1998), p. 1303.

made readable if not racy. I really don't know how to excuse trespassing on your space and readers' patience.

And with those implied threats he concluded.¹⁵² Those abused so roundly chose not to respond. The Don Pedro would be sold as part of his bankrupt estate in December.¹⁵³ But he did not forget, and in the following year, when Patrick Galvin was collecting information for the *Handbook of New Zealand Mines*, published that year, Galvin went 'very carefully over Mr Walker's sketch of the Kuranui Hill Mines: it is interesting, and, from all I can learn true enough: still I do not think it quite suitable'. He decided to show it to the Minister 'so that he may be made aware of the grievances complained of'.¹⁵⁴ Along with descriptions of past developments, Walker particularly complained about the failure to develop the low levels properly:

It is matter for deep and lasting regret that, at the onset, instead of sinking where the Big Pump was placed, one (or more) strong company was not formed for working large sections of the ground below sea level on some rational and workmanlike plan – But these great works are begun and carried out by the individual small proprietors, each with only its own interest in view, during the heat and excitement of the period when the Caledonian Company was getting gold in enormous quantities and when others hoped that they also required only to seek in order to find similar Bonanzas – The class of Engine selected for the pumping was most unsuitable for economical work, and its coal consuming capacity has been a constant source of complaint to all except those interested in the coal mines of Kamo and Bay of Islands.

A fatal mistake was also made by all the companies in that they made no adequate money provision for opening the mines. They declared dividends to within a few pounds of the value of the gold as it was obtained, and when that suddenly gave out they were left helplessly dependent on calls that were found impossible of collection, and consequently the bulk of the deep ground remains in a condition almost untried.

Throughout the whole period that the enormous monthly pumping expenditure was going on the prospecting work bore no proportionate rate to the cost of the pumping – [Galvin crossed out the next section:] It looks as if these gigantic works had been undertaken for the sole purpose of raising water – not gold.

¹⁵² Letter from J.W. Walker, *Thames Advertiser*, 7 May 1886, pp. 2-3.

¹⁵³ District Court, *Thames Advertiser*, 18 December 1886, p. 2.

¹⁵⁴ Patrick Galvin (editor, *Handbook of New Zealand Mines*) to Warden, 18 February 1887, Thames Warden's Court, Inward Correspondence 1879-1896, BACL 13388/1a, ANZ-A.

The Government subscribed £50,000 and the local bodies also have been most liberal in their monthly contributions towards the pumping – Some twelve months since a Drainage area was declared, a Board formed, and an assessment levied on all ground within the said area – Many mines inside the drainage area are hopelessly outside the influence of the pump and cannot now or ever derive any benefit. The consequence to these cannot but be fatal to the development of the district and, if this unjust course is pursued all non producing mines so treated must be locked up and idle while the miners who have spent years and their all of money on it will be driven out in a beggared condition – This looks a highly colored picture of our future – It is unfortunately a true one – My own case is that in one section of ground I have spent nearly two years and nearly nine hundred pounds in merely driving an opening adit for the purpose of opening out a new line of mineral country which previously had been unwatered and therefore idle for twelve years – I have found a large reef six weeks since and driven into it twenty six feet without reaching the hanging wall – To reach this reef I had to drive my adit level nine hundred feet – I have not yet seen a color of the gold I am looking for, But I am threatened with an assessment towards the Big Pump although my mine is nearly a mile distant from it and does not now or ever will, in my life time, receive any drainage benefit – On the contrary my adit level is draining and thereby rendering available for work an entire section of new country which has no drainage relationship to the channel of ground influenced by the pump –

The foregoing is somewhat a personal matter but nevertheless and as my case is by no means a solitary instance, I have entered upon it here to show how the policy of keeping the pump going in the interest of a few market brokers and jobbers at the cost of the many who derive no benefit, is operating directly, in the extinction of legitimate honest mining – [end of omitted section]

If the ground in the immediate vicinity of the Pump was opened at deep levels by a system of well ventilated levels and connecting passes and worked in sections by wages men, by contractors, or by gangs of tributers while the pump keeps the water down, [next section omitted]: then and only then, there is a few chances of a more satisfactory result. And therefore unless some such policy is not adopted, and the business run on its merits, the sooner the pump is finally shut down the sooner we may look for a return of prosperity to this Goldfield....

[Next section on the developments of the field omitted:] That is about all the history of our deep ground works that are of any importance and it reads like stories of research for the missing link, the North West passage or for the North Pole. But there are many persons of more or less intelligence who believe in the possible existence and discovery of all three – There are also men

here who do not despair of strong deposits of gold in the sections referred to, and of those I am perhaps the most sanguine – [end of omitted section]

I would point out that nowhere in Australia or in the more regularly stratified rocks in South Island gold fields, are found [rephrased and weakened:] a set of mining circumstances at all similar to ours – and that the code of regulations & provisions which there meet the difficulties equitably, where applied here are manifestly unjust and absolutely absurd, inapplicable and unworkable....

[After describing the geology of the field dividing ‘the district into many watertight separate compartments’, next section omitted:] The influence of the Big Pump or even of the Queen of Beauty pump is no more felt in the South East division of the area than at the Pool of Siloam – and the cripples of Canaan are more entitled to pay assessments than

Your Obt Servant
J.W. Walker¹⁵⁵

At the end of 1886 he was preparing to go to England on behalf of himself ‘and others’ to float a company to work 167 acres between the Karaka and Waiotahi Creeks. The surrounding ground had been worked for sometimes ‘excellent’ and even ‘splendid’ results, but the block was ‘difficult to work, except on a large scale’, because of its position, which required wire tramways to convey quartz for treatment.¹⁵⁶ Maps and surveys of what was to be called the Thames Freehold Mining Company were prepared to enable him to depart in mid-January, and examples of a self-acting aerial tramway at Reefton were to be copied.¹⁵⁷ Being unsuccessful in raising overseas capital, he turned to other fields, not being involved in Thames mining between 1888 and 1892.

MINING AT WAIHI, 1880-1890

The *Observer* wrote, in 1904, that Walker had taken ‘a large part in establishing Waihi on the splendid footing which it has retained’.¹⁵⁸ At first

¹⁵⁵ J.W. Walker to Mining Registrar, Thames, 3 January 1887, Mines Department, MD 1, 87/831, ANZ-W.

¹⁵⁶ *Thames Advertiser*, 18 December 1886, p. 2; *Auckland Weekly News*, 18 December 1886, p. 9.

¹⁵⁷ *Auckland Weekly News*, 25 December 1886, p. 17.

¹⁵⁸ *Observer*, 23 April 1904, p. 17.

he had not been impressed with Billy Nicholl's discovery of the Martha lode,¹⁵⁹ which he first visited, along with Owharoa and Waitekauri, in late January 1881.¹⁶⁰ His opinion, given in July, was that 'the talk of the Thames is all Waihi. From what he could gather, the wildest anticipations are being formed of the success of the new field, and many sharp customers seem to think well of it',¹⁶¹ thereby implying that he did not share the 'wildest anticipations' of the 'sharp customers'. Some investors had arranged for him to negotiate with Nicholl, but he 'came to the conclusion that the venture was worthless and withdrew the offer' to erect a battery in return for a third of the interests in the mine.¹⁶² Those sanguine about the prospects of Waihi considered that Walker had missed a great opportunity. In September, 'a peep into the future' imagined that within ten years he would die of chagrin because of 'having cut himself out of the Waihi, thereby losing the chance of leaving a large fortune to his children'. This 'was too much for him', and 'the very name of Waihi always brought on the shivers, and he gradually pined away'.¹⁶³

Not till July 1885 did Walker apply for a claim, the Sheet Anchor, which was granted to him in the following month.¹⁶⁴ With co-owner Edward Kersey Cooper, he forfeited it in the following March for non-working. In admitting the non-working he explained that 'things had looked so bad until lately that he did not take the trouble to register his title'.¹⁶⁵ He soon became one of the leading miners at Waihi, in 1886 being one of the largest shareholders in the Union¹⁶⁶ as well as its manager, and in June was arranging to send a large parcel of ore to be treated in Swansea, Wales.¹⁶⁷

¹⁵⁹ See paper on Billy Nicholl.

¹⁶⁰ *Thames Advertiser*, 1 February 1881, p. 2.

¹⁶¹ 'Thames Tittle Tattle', *Observer*, 9 July 1881, p. 477.

¹⁶² Salmon, p. 247.

¹⁶³ 'A Peep into the Future', *Thames Star*, 12 September 1881, p. 2.

¹⁶⁴ Thames Warden's Court, Register of Applications for Licensed Holdings 1881-1886, folio 143, BACL 14452/1a, ANZ-A.

¹⁶⁵ Warden's Court, *Thames Advertiser*, 5 March 1886, p. 2.

¹⁶⁶ For map showing its position on Union Hill, see J.F. Downey, *Gold-mines of the Hauraki District, New Zealand* (Wellington, 1935), p. 237.

¹⁶⁷ *Thames Advertiser*, 24 February 1886, p. 3, 2 June 1886, p. 2; *Te Aroha News*, 27 February 1886, p. 2; Te Aroha Warden's Court, Letterbook 1883-1900, p. 120 (30 November 1886), BACL 11534/1a, ANZ-A.

In that month, he sold half of his interest.¹⁶⁸ Of its 30,000 shares, he held 9,502 in December, having sold 10,748 between March and June. One year later, he retained 6,970, having sold 6,032 between February and August 1887. He was also a director.¹⁶⁹ He was one of the five owners of the Albion, which was transferred to the Union in July. In December he arranged for it to be photographed, to assist him to float it when visiting London.¹⁷⁰ In February 1887 it was reported that he, along with unnamed Auckland promoters, had successfully floated the Union there.¹⁷¹ Not having gone to London after all, immediately after this announcement was made he visited Waihi. It was rumoured that the sale price was £50,000 for the promoters and an equal sum to be spent on the mine.¹⁷² He was appointed as one of the three New Zealand directors.¹⁷³ Later in February, when seeking a special claim of 70 acres, a water race, and a machine site, he stated that he would spend £20,000 in developing it.¹⁷⁴

According to a later mining inspector, the Union was ‘never very productive’. Despite an easily worked reef which ‘evidently carried some fair values in parts’, most of these values ‘were in silver, and at that period the available metallurgical knowledge was not sufficiently advanced to enable any considerable portion of the silver-content to be recovered’. By the end of March 1887, 350 tons had produced 525oz of bullion, but most of the silver was lost. Another two parcels were tested, one in London, making a total of 484 tons yielding approximately £2,375.¹⁷⁵

An obituary stated that he had come to realize that, as at Thames, ‘a district overlaid by rhyolite debris, where shafts and pumping were required’, needed ‘big companies with large capitals to ensure success’.¹⁷⁶ He represented Waihi at a meeting with the Minister of Mines in Paeroa in April 1887.¹⁷⁷ Four months later, he finally left for London to float one or

¹⁶⁸ *Thames Advertiser*, 21 June 1886, p. 2.

¹⁶⁹ Company Files, BADZ 5181, box 50 no. 323, ANZ-A.

¹⁷⁰ *Thames Advertiser*, 1 December 1886, p. 2, 18 December 1886, p. 2.

¹⁷¹ *Thames Advertiser*, 5 February 1887, p. 2.

¹⁷² *Thames Advertiser*, 9 February 1887, p. 2.

¹⁷³ *Auckland Weekly News*, 19 February 1887, p. 18.

¹⁷⁴ *Thames Advertiser*, 25 February 1887, p. 3; *Te Aroha News*, 12 March 1887, p. 3.

¹⁷⁵ Downey, p. 236; for map of this company’s ground and adjacent holdings, see p. 237.

¹⁷⁶ *Auckland Star*, 24 March 1916, p. 7.

¹⁷⁷ *Thames Advertiser*, 13 April 1887, p. 2.

more Waihi mines, having an option on claims adjoining the Union.¹⁷⁸ He was accompanied by Thomas Henry Russell, owner of the Waihi mine; according to one newspaper ‘the initiatory step of obtaining fresh capital could not be entrusted in better hands’.¹⁷⁹ It was later stated that samples from the Union he had sent for testing in California had given a return of £40 to the ton, providing the incentive to form a company.¹⁸⁰ For several weeks Walker investigated mining in Utah, Nevada, and Montana to find ways to treat the ore, and afterwards inspected a dry crushing process in London.¹⁸¹ Russell’s father, Thomas, was reportedly Walker’s agent in London when the Union was incorporated into the newly floated Waihi Company,¹⁸² although he was much more than a mere agent.¹⁸³ Walker held a large shareholding in the new company.¹⁸⁴

On his return in late February 1888, Walker announced that sufficient capital had been provided to start mining immediately, and stated that ‘three or four months’ profitable results’ would ‘restore confidence in New Zealand mining ventures’.¹⁸⁵ He was appointed the first superintendent of the Waihi Company’s mine.¹⁸⁶ He provided a boarding house ‘where men are boarded and lodged well and comfortably’, but when, in August, he raised the charge for board from 12s to 14s a week, as the men were being paid only 7s a day they struck until wages were increased. A compromise was quickly reached, with miners being paid 8s and ‘outside men’ 7s, the increased charge for board remaining.¹⁸⁷ Immediately afterwards, ‘owing to

¹⁷⁸ *Thames Advertiser*, 12 August 1887, p. 2; *Auckland Weekly News*, 27 November 1913, p. 17.

¹⁷⁹ *Thames Advertiser*, 13 August 1887, p. 2.

¹⁸⁰ *Hauraki Tribune*, n.d., cited in *Thames Advertiser*, 6 April 1892, p. 2.

¹⁸¹ *Te Aroha News*, 3 December 1886, p. 2; letter from J.W. Walker, *Thames Advertiser*, 23 June 1898, p. 4.

¹⁸² *Waikato Times*, 12 May 1887, p. 2.

¹⁸³ See *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 2, p. 104; R.C.J. Stone, *Makers of Fortune: A colonial business community and its fall* (Auckland, 1973), p. 190.

¹⁸⁴ Philip Rainer, ‘Company Town: An industrial history of the Waihi Gold Mining Company Limited’ (MA thesis, University of Auckland, 1976), pp. 20-21.

¹⁸⁵ *Thames Advertiser*, 28 February 1888, p. 2.

¹⁸⁶ John McCombie, ‘The History of the Waihi Mine’, *Mining Magazine*, vol. 8 (1913), p. 139.

¹⁸⁷ *Thames Advertiser*, 8 August 1888, p. 2, 9 August 1888, p. 2; *Te Aroha News*, 11 August 1888, p. 2; *Waikato Times*, 11 September 1888, p. 2.

the recent “strike,” Mr Walker is parting with some of his men, and engaging others in their stead’;¹⁸⁸ clearly strike leaders were being victimized, as the workforce was not being reduced.

Walker, who ‘personally managed the Waihi mine for about four years’, visited California during 1888 to discover how similar ore was treated there.¹⁸⁹ ‘After examining various treatment plants, he decided to adopt dry crushing and pan-amalgamation’, and ‘great changes’ in machinery and treatment were introduced in October.¹⁹⁰ Despite these changes, although ‘a large amount’ of mining was done, not much ore was treated because of an unsatisfactory process. He planned to construct a dam and water race to drive more machinery and to open up a new low level, and told the mining inspector that, should the lodes 100 feet below the present levels be equal in value to the latter, ‘the permanence of an extensive rich new mining field will have been established beyond a doubt’.¹⁹¹ The warden noted that the company had ‘done a great deal of work; but through being in too great a hurry, I am sorry to say, put their plant up in the wrong place’ to obtain the maximum water pressure.¹⁹² Walker employed 128 men during the subsequent 12 months, but because the plant was being altered, it worked for only half this time.¹⁹³ The warden anticipated that it would treat the ore successfully.¹⁹⁴ Walker ceased to manage the mine at the end of May 1890,¹⁹⁵ before the benefits of the modified plant were proven; in fact, not until cyanide was used in 1893 was the appropriate method used.¹⁹⁶ After his resignation, T.H. Russell purchased the adjoining Martha mine and plant for £3,000, a low price that the Mines Department’s inspecting

¹⁸⁸ *Te Aroha News*, 15 August 1888, p. 2.

¹⁸⁹ *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 2, p. 834; H.A. Gordon to Under-Secretary, Mines Department, 1 May 1888, *AJHR*, 1888, C-5, p. 27.

¹⁹⁰ McCombie, ‘History of the Waihi Mine’, p. 139; *Waikato Times*, 11 September 1888, p. 2.

¹⁹¹ George Wilson to Under-Secretary, Mines Department, 25 April 1889, *AJHR*, 1889, C-2, p. 103.

¹⁹² Warden to Under-Secretary, Mines Department, 4 May 1889, *AJHR*, 1889, C-2, p. 95.

¹⁹³ George Wilson to Under-Secretary, Mines Department, 17 April 1890, *AJHR*, 1890, C-3, p. 149.

¹⁹⁴ Warden to Under-Secretary, Mines Department, 26 April 1890, *AJHR*, 1890, C-3, p. 141.

¹⁹⁵ *Thames Advertiser*, 10 May 1890, p. 2.

¹⁹⁶ Stone, p. 190.

engineer considered ‘scarcely credible’, and concentrated on extracting ore from the Martha lode.¹⁹⁷

An obituary recalled that Walker

went through the heartbreaking experiences, when all sorts of methods were tried to save the very fine gold before the discovery of the cyanide process. On one occasion, not so long before the cyanide was introduced, Mr Walker sold 9000 Waihi shares at about 2/- per share. Afterwards, when the stock were worth £10 each, he did not care to think of what he had lost on that transaction.¹⁹⁸

However, after ceasing to be the company’s manager he was a director, and, as ‘a large shareholder’, was able to sell shares for a good profit.¹⁹⁹

Walker also held interests in other claims, one newspaper complaining in 1888 about his being granted 95 acres and his syndicate getting an additional 95 acres.²⁰⁰ In November 1889, he was granted three months’ protection for his Nut, on Martha Hill, which was later incorporated in the Waihi Company’s ground.²⁰¹

A COROMANDEL INTERLUDE

In September 1890 it was announced that Walker had been appointed as general superintendent of the Kauri Timber Company’s auriferous land at Whangapoua. The *Thames Star* considered that the directors had been ‘most fortunate, as he possesses a thoroughly practical knowledge of mining ... while his qualifications from a business point of view cannot be excelled’; they ‘could hardly have made a better or more satisfactory selection’.²⁰² Walker had some prior knowledge of the Coromandel district, having

¹⁹⁷ H.A. Gordon to Minister of Mines, 8 June 1891, *AJHR*, 1891, C-4, p. 39; George Wilson to Under-Secretary, Mines Department, 4 May 1891, *AJHR*, 1891, C-4, p. 156.

¹⁹⁸ *Auckland Star*, 24 March 1916, p. 7.

¹⁹⁹ *New Zealand Mining Standard and Financial News*, 28 November 1896, p. 7; Warden’s Court, *Thames Star*, 20 February 1901, p. 4.

²⁰⁰ *Hauraki Tribune*, n.d., cited in *Thames Advertiser*, 3 December 1888, p. 2.

²⁰¹ *Thames Star*, 28 November 1889, p. 2; H.A. Gordon to Minister of Mines, 8 June 1891, *AJHR*, 1891, C-4, p. 40; Downey, p. 236.

²⁰² *Thames Star*, 13 September 1890, p. 2.

reported on the Union Beach mine in 1876.²⁰³ But then in April 1891 'his private engagements' forced him to resign.²⁰⁴

A TASMANIAN INTERLUDE

On 8 September 1891, a report appeared in the *Thames Advertiser*:

Mr J.W. Walker, than whom no man is better known in the mining world of New Zealand, as a successful discoverer, manager, promoter, proprietor and shareholder, is betaking himself to Mount Zeehan, Tasmania. Mr Walker, we understand, will still continue to hold his interests in New Zealand, but as the prospects at Mount Zeehan are at present exceedingly inviting to men possessed of capital and experience, and as there is far more movement there just now than there is anywhere in New Zealand, he is going thither to look into matters with his own eyes.... Apart from his public character, his innumerable personal friends will not forget him, nor is he likely, we think, to forget them; and, in fact, all hope that he is going now only to return by and by crowned with well earned success.²⁰⁵

He returned in late November, 'and thinks there is no place like home'.²⁰⁶ His time away was so brief because he arrived just as the local mining boom collapsed.²⁰⁷

In 1898, there was a report that he might go to Tasmania to construct a railway through the Mount Zeehan and Mount Lyell district,²⁰⁸ but this did not happen. The only other time he was involved in Australian mining was in 1904, when he examined and reported 'on several mining areas for Home capitalists'. It was rumoured that he was 'uncertain' whether to return to New Zealand, but he did, almost immediately.²⁰⁹

MINING AT WAIHI, 1891-1898

²⁰³ *Thames Advertiser*, 25 July 1876, p. 2.

²⁰⁴ *Thames Advertiser*, 14 April 1891, p. 2.

²⁰⁵ *Thames Advertiser*, 8 September 1891, p. 2.

²⁰⁶ *Observer*, 28 November 1891, p. 6.

²⁰⁷ Geoffrey Blainey, *The Peaks of Lyell*, 2 ed. (Melbourne, 1959), pp. 52-53.

²⁰⁸ *Thames Advertiser*, 23 March 1898, p. 4.

²⁰⁹ *Thames Star*, 18 October 1904, p. 2, 5 November 1904, p. 2.

Even while working for the Kauri Timber Company, in January 1891 he applied for the Grand Junction Special Claim at Waihi, and two months later applied for the three Grand Junction Licensed Holdings, of 30 acres each.²¹⁰ After withdrawing the former application, he was granted the latter.²¹¹ As the Waihi Company declined to purchase these for £150, he worked the ground, on the boundary of the original Martha claim, and in 1892 hoped to cut the Martha lode.²¹²

In August 1891, James Park, then director of the Thames School of Mines,²¹³ provided Walker with a report on the Grand Junction Nos. 1-3. Nearly ten years later, he sued Walker for £500, having waited to be paid until the property was floated in 1895, after which he ‘repeatedly’ asked for the money. In a letter read out in court, Walker claimed Park ‘had never furnished him with an account. Had he done so, he would have been paid either in cash or Junction shares’. Park gave evidence that no amount had been agreed, but that after his report was written Walker thanked him for it ‘and said he would be paid what others were’. Park considered £500 was ‘reasonable’, as for reporting on adjoining properties he had received £500 in fully paid-up shares from Walker and his partner, Charles McLean. (McLean was an experienced miner,²¹⁴ and he and Walker were recalled as being ‘great Friends & partners’.)²¹⁵ Before Walker’s most recent trips to England, Park had ‘seen him touching his fee’, to be told that the matter was in the hands of another man, who told him Walker had said nothing about it. When Walker returned, Park offered to take shares, but Walker ‘replied his shares were tied up at England and not till Christmas could he deal with them’. Subsequently he told Park ‘he was coming to his office to give him a pleasant surprise. He did not call’.²¹⁶

²¹⁰ *Thames Advertiser*, 21 January 1891, p. 3, 20 March 1891, p. 3, 28 July 1893, p. 2.

²¹¹ Warden’s Court, *Thames Advertiser*, 22 May 1891, p. 2.

²¹² Warden’s Court, *Thames Star*, 20 February 1901, p. 4; *Thames Advertiser*, 6 April 1892, p. 2.

²¹³ See *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 2, p. 478.

²¹⁴ See *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 2, p. 502; Mines Department, MD 1, 91/625, ANZ-W; ‘Yorick’, ‘Waihi Notes’, *Thames Advertiser*, 3 August 1896, p. 3; *Thames Star*, 29 January 1917, p. 4; *Observer*, 10 February 1917, p. 5.

²¹⁵ A.W. Sawyer, Handwritten Memoirs, n.d. [1940s], W.G. Hammond Papers, folder 34a, MS 134, Library of the Auckland Institute and War Memorial Museum.

²¹⁶ Warden’s Court, *Thames Star*, 19 February 1901, p. 2.

In his evidence, Walker said he had had 'surveys made of the ground and reports from mining experts and others'. Park had been asked 'to write a few words in support of the other reports. It was customary for mining men to assist each other under such circumstances and to be recompensed if anything came of the proposal'. Although 'London people liked practical men's reports in preference to those from scientific men', Park's report 'may have had effect with the syndicate which floated the Company'. Not till 1898 had Park asked him for money, although during the 'boom time' Park 'did remind him of the matter, upon which he replied he had not forgotten him and would not'. Another man who wrote a report had not received anything, while one other was paid £50. Two years ago he had told Park 'he would make him a present'. Not till he recently received a solicitor's letter did he realize that Park wanted a fee, and had offered 'within the last few weeks a handsome present'. He had 'not arrived at any decision as to what the present was to be', until 'lately' offered £100. He considered Park 'would have been well paid with £10 at the time he gave the report. Of late had offered £100, not because of its value, but as a present'. He had 'wanted as many reports as possible in support of each other' to assist his flotation, and 'had always felt under an obligation to those men who gave reports, and had intended to recognize the obligation'.

A mine manager viewed Park's report as being really a letter, for it provided no details; 'he would not pay more than £2 2s for it'. Another manager considered that for Park's report '£3 3s would be a fair price - £5 5s would be a good payment'. The warden wondered 'why the case had been brought into court. He was not in a position to say what was the value of any report of a mining expert'. He noted that Walker said 'he always intended to give some consideration', and that the more successful the flotation 'the more handsome should the present be', and adjourned the matter 'to afford time for an arrangement' to be made between the parties.²¹⁷ One month later, it was reported that Park's claim had been 'amicably settled'; he was paid £100, 'each side to pay their own costs'.²¹⁸

In September 1892, Walker asked Richard John Seddon, the Minister of Mines, for a year's protection for his 90-acre Grand Junction and his water right. Successful working of this ground would 'give an impetus to mining that will be felt throughout the entire island'. He was planning to go

²¹⁷ Warden's Court, *Thames Star*, 20 February 1901, p. 4.

²¹⁸ *Thames Star*, 19 March 1901, p. 2, 21 March 1901, p. 2; *Auckland Weekly News*, 22 March 1901, p. 26.

to England, where he had an ‘assurance’ of obtaining ‘sufficient capital to purchase machinery and to cover mining costs’, obtain ‘motive power’, and a ‘reduction plant on a large scale – Of course I am unable to find money for a job of this magnitude single handed – I have failed to find assistance here or in Australia’.²¹⁹ Protection was granted.²²⁰

In 1893, Walker took plans and reports to England to assist him to float the Waitete, 90 acres at one end of the Martha reef, along with his three Grand Junction claims, at the other end.²²¹ In November, after the Grand Junction claims had been worked for about six months, protection was extended after the warden confirmed that Walker had spent a ‘considerable sum of money’ and, should he obtain more capital, it would be ‘an excellent thing for this District’.²²² As the Mines Department did not believe much money had been spent, the period of protection was reduced to six months.²²³

Walker later described spending 15 months of ‘hard work in England’ trying to float his claims, but as a break reportedly had ‘a real good time in Paris’.²²⁴ Not until May 1894 was it announced that he had floated the Grand Junction and Waihi West special claims.²²⁵ The *Thames Star* commented that ‘every credit is certainly due to Mr Walker for his persistency’.²²⁶ Later Walker said that he ‘had to wait long weary months “eating his heart out” ... before he could persuade a few capitalists of the right sort to “plonk down the needful” ’.²²⁷ But as the flotation had not been

²¹⁹ J.W. Walker to R.J. Seddon (Minister of Mines), 3 September 1892, with plans of Grand Junction and of its proposed water race to Walker’s water right in the Ohinemuri River, Mines Department, MD 1, 95/317, ANZ-W.

²²⁰ Under-Secretary, Mines Department, to J.W. Walker, 12 October 1892; memorandum of R.J. Seddon, 10 December 1892, Mines Department, MD 1, 95/317, ANZ-W.

²²¹ *Thames Advertiser*, 28 July 1893, p. 2; *Auckland Weekly News*, 29 July 1893, p. 10.

²²² Application of J.W. Walker, 23 November 1893; G.H.A. Purchas to Minister of Mines, 23 November 1893; Warden to Under-Secretary, Mines Department, MD 1, 95/317, ANZ-W.

²²³ H.A. Gordon to Under-Secretary, Mines Department, 13 December 1893; memorandum by Under-Secretary, Mines Department, 28 December 1893, Mines Department, MD 1, 95/317, ANZ-W.

²²⁴ Warden’s Court, *Thames Star*, 20 February 1901, p. 4; *Ohinemuri Gazette*, n.d., cited in *Thames Advertiser*, 8 January 1894, p. 2.

²²⁵ *Thames Advertiser*, 18 May 1894, p. 2.

²²⁶ *Thames Star*, 17 May 1894, p. 2.

²²⁷ *Thames Advertiser*, 9 January 1895, p. 3.

as successful as expected, two-thirds of the capital of the Waihi Grand Junction Company came from New Zealand.²²⁸ He also formed a syndicate 'for general prospecting purposes'.²²⁹

In July 1894, when another three months of protection was sought, the minister was told that Walker had floated the property after experiencing 'considerable difficulty in getting men of capital to venture in this undertaking owing to the many disappointments they have had in these speculations'. It was expected that work would restart in from one to three months.²³⁰ Because no capital had been received, two months' protection was granted.²³¹ At the end of October, six months' protection was sought for the Waihi West Nos. 1-3 because, although Walker was arranging to obtain capital from a Glaswegian syndicate, negotiations had not been completed.²³² One the same date, the same period was requested for the Grand Junction Nos. 1-3. After the company was floated, 'at the last moment some had withdrawn and consequently the arrangement fell through. Mr Walker then went to Glasgow and appears to have been more successful there for he has since sent a remittance and has now cabled that some machinery is coming'.²³³ Four months was granted to both.²³⁴

Appointed the manager and manager for the Grand Junction, Walker returned from London at the beginning of 1895 with boring equipment plus two boring experts; pumping machinery was to arrive shortly.²³⁵ Early in February his boring plant commenced work.²³⁶ Later that month, after

²²⁸ Salmon, p. 251.

²²⁹ *Thames Advertiser*, 9 January 1895, p. 3.

²³⁰ G.H.A. Purchas to Minister of Mines, 12 July 1894, Mines Department, MD 1, 95/317, ANZ-W.

²³¹ Warden to Under-Secretary, Mines Department, 14 July 1894, Mines Department, MD 1, 95/317, ANZ-W.

²³² James Darrow to Minister of Mines, 29 October 1894, Mines Department, MD 1, 95/317, ANZ-W.

²³³ G.H.A. Purchas to Minister of Mines, 29 October 1894, Mines Department, MD 1, 95/317, ANZ-W.

²³⁴ Memorandum of Minister of Mines, 3 November 1894, Mines Department, MD 1, 95/317, ANZ-W.

²³⁵ J.W. Walker to Minister of Mines, 1 February 1895, Mines Department, MD 1, 95/317, ANZ-W; *Thames Advertiser*, 3 January 1895, p. 3; *AJHR*, 1895, C-3A, p. 14; *New Zealand Gazette*, 16 May 1895, p. 829.

²³⁶ *Thames Advertiser*, 12 February 1895, p. 2.

speaking to Alfred Jerome Cadman, the Minister of Mines, he formally applied for a subsidy for deep sinking because hard rock had made diamond drilling 'very slow and costly'. He claimed that his testing of the lower levels was 'a matter of National interest and importance and worthy of your attention and assistance'. In addition, he asked for carbons for the drill because the supply he had brought from England was running out.²³⁷ Not only did the department have no carbons to spare, it would not assist with drilling because all Waihi companies would 'expect the same treatment'.²³⁸ Not till February 1896 were his three Grand Junction licensed holdings transferred to the company.²³⁹

In between trips to England, Walker supervised the Grand Junction for some years.²⁴⁰ At the end of June 1895, he informed Cadman of some problems. After explaining that he had twice been to England to obtain capital for his Waihi claims, he claimed to have 'originated the Waihi Company' in 1887 and to have floated the Grand Junction in 1893. 'In both instances I have been instrumental in bringing money into the country, and in opening to some proper purpose the most successful mine in New Zealand'. Since returning from England in January 1895 he had 'induced' two investors, T.W. Rothwell and Leonard Welstead, to visit, and 'together with their friends in England' they had taken over 'more than one languishing mine' on the peninsula and provided capital for development. (Welstead was chairman of the Grand Junction Company,²⁴¹ and Rothwell, a leading London sharebroker and one of the largest investors in the Waihi Company, was chairman of Walker's Waihi Syndicate.)²⁴² He had sought land 'beyond the capacity of any but powerful monied companies to work'

²³⁷ J.W. Walker to A.J. Cadman (Minister of Mines), 23 February 1895, Mines Department, MD 1, 95/317, ANZ-W.

²³⁸ H.A. Gordon to Under-Secretary, Mines Department, 7 March 1895; memorandum by A.J. Cadman, 8 March 1895; Under-Secretary, Mines Department, to J.W. Walker, 11 March 1895, Mines Department, MD 1, 95/317, ANZ-W.

²³⁹ Paeroa Warden's Court, Register of Licensed Holdings 1887-1896, folios 31-33, ZAAP 13293/1a. ANZ-A.

²⁴⁰ *Thames Advertiser*, 8 August 1895, p. 3, 5 December 1898, p. 2; Salmon, p. 251.

²⁴¹ *New Zealand Herald*, 4 June 1895, p. 6, 5 June 1895, p. 6, 13 July 1895, p. 5.

²⁴² *Thames Star*, 29 March 1895, p. 2; 'Dicky B.', 'Waihi Warblings', *Thames Advertiser*, 1 April 1895, p. 3, 2 April 1895, p. 3; Thames Correspondent, *Auckland Star*, 18 April 1895, p. 2; *Observer*, 20 April 1895, p. 15; *New Zealand Herald*, 1 May 1895, p. 5, 16 May 1895, p. 6, 19 July 1895, p. 6.

and made arrangements with English capitalists before obtaining leases ‘on the not unreasonable presumption that there could be no possible objection raised here or elsewhere to my patriotic proceedings’. But the warden had granted him the Waka, Favona, and Brilliant ‘with a threat that the absurd labor conditions are to be ridgedely enforced’, which meant ‘prohibition’. He claimed that Cadman knew ‘that strict compliance with those out-of-date labor covenants is impossible’, and if Cadman wanted ‘to promote legitimate business’ he must protect Walker and others ‘in the gradual development of our land on a footing such as we can see our way towards a possibility of success’. Mining was ‘sufficiently precarious in itself’ and ‘unreasonable and unworkable covenants will absolutely deter legitimate investment’. He had spoken to the secretary of the miners’ union, who did not want to bind ‘outlying districts’ which needed ‘abundant capital, and liberal conditions’ to avoid their becoming ‘useless as mining land, or indeed as anything else’.

He then mentioned another new arrival in New Zealand, a Scot, Andrew Hamilton Waddell, who had been writing to the newspapers in Wellington and elsewhere ‘with the malicious intention of doing me person[al] injury’. He described Waddell as ‘a drunken crank, a travelling sundowner’, meaning ‘a swagman who arrives at a station at sundown, too late in the day to do any work, but in time to draw rations’,²⁴³ who was ‘well known as a liar, and worse – whose object is to damage me at all hazzard’. He had employed Waddell to undertake diamond drilling at Waihi because he claimed to be an expert, but within two days ‘he destroyed, lost or stole over £300 worth of diamonds, and was mad drunk when I returned – I merely paid him off without thrashing, or even scolding, him’. He enclosed copies of Waddell’s letters to Rothwell and himself, which revealed ‘what class he belongs to’, because he expected Cadman would ‘hear more about, and from, him later’.²⁴⁴ Waddell had written to Cadman in the previous month, describing himself as a diamond drill expert who had worked for the Waihi Company prior to working for Walker in Waihi’s Grand Junction. He claimed to have prospected successfully in New South Wales and to have found good signs of gold in the Urewera district, for which he sought protection and assistance for his prospecting.²⁴⁵ Even after being told that

²⁴³ G.A. Wilkes, *A Dictionary of Australian Colloquialisms*, (Melbourne, 4 ed., 1996), p. 373.

²⁴⁴ J.W. Walker to A.J. Cadman, 26 June 1895, Mines Department, MD 1, 95/1155, ANZ-W.

²⁴⁵ A.H. Waddell to A.J. Cadman, 17 May 1895; see also A.H. Waddell to H.A. Gordon, 17 May 1895, Mines Department, MD 1, 96/378, ANZ-W.

he was prospecting on Maori land illegally, he continued to seek permission to continue prospecting the district.²⁴⁶ (Waddell's letters criticizing Walker have not been traced; his 1896 ones did not mention Walker, instead arguing that New Zealand had vast reserves of payable ore that required diamond drilling to locate.²⁴⁷ Waddell, who had links with Benjamin Murray, the Victorian government geologist, as Walker had noted, made himself prominent in several ways whilst in New Zealand.)²⁴⁸

In Waddell's March letter to Walker he claimed to be a special correspondent for *The Times*. 'I have gone to Katikati to get rid of this town as I hate people coming to you and saying "Waddell is on the booze" after your kindness to me', and promised never to drink on Walker's property again. 'I cannot tell you how sorry I am – Not that I want you to keep me on or not'. He believed Walker wanted to get rid of him.²⁴⁹ Five days later he had told Rothwell that he intended to expose the career of Walker and his companies in the *Investors' Guide and Investors' Review* 'by telling plain unvarnished facts about his career since 1849'. He believed Walker had built a 'large house' at Whangapoua at the Kauri Timber Company's expense, and warned: 'Beware of him and his bogus mines and reefs'.²⁵⁰ No such exposure has been traced.

Walker was informed that the labour conditions had been enforced to counter dubious flotations, but as Cadman intended to encourage bona fide flotations, these regulations might be waived.²⁵¹ During the mining boom of 1895, Walker acquired 6,667 of the 60,000 shares in the Mount Waihi

²⁴⁶ A.J. Cadman to A.H. Waddell, 22 May 1895; A.H. Waddell to R.J. Seddon, 7 February 1896, Mines Department, MD 1, 96/378, ANZ-W.

²⁴⁷ Letters from A.H. Waddell, *Evening Post*, 8 January 1896, p. 3, 4 June 1896, p. 5.

²⁴⁸ See *Bay of Plenty Times*, 24 April 1895, p. 2; *Thames Advertiser*, 22 May 1895, p. 2, 8 February 1897, p. 1; *Thames Star*, 6 June 1896, p. 2, 11 June 1896, p. 2, 8 February 1897, p. 3; *Auckland Star*, 25 February 1897, p. 5, letter from A.H. Waddell, 4 May 1897, p. 3; *New Zealand Herald*, 4 March 1897, p. 5, 14 October 1898, p. 7; advertisement, *Tuapeka Times*, 11 November 1899, p. 2; Magistrate's Court, *Star*, 8 August 1900, p. 3; *Evening Post*, 22 August 1903, p. 12, 27 December 1912, p. 8.

²⁴⁹ A.H. Waddell to J.W. Walker, 25 March 1895, Mines Department, MD 1, 95/1155, ANZ-W.

²⁵⁰ A.H. Waddell to T.W. Rothwell, 30 March 1895, Mines Department, MD 1, 95/1155, ANZ-W.

²⁵¹ Under-Secretary, Mines Department, to J.W. Walker, 12 July 1895, Mines Department, MD 1, 95/1155, ANZ-W.

Company.²⁵² He and Charles McLean both had 12,750 shares, out of 60,000, the highest number by far in the Sir Julius.²⁵³ McLean was granted the Brilliant in June, at the same time as Walker was granted the Favona; as they adjoined the Grand Junction, on the line of the Martha and Silverton reefs, it was intended to float them in London as one company.²⁵⁴ Walker was one of the six men who made up the Favona Syndicate, and McLean managed both mines.²⁵⁵ In June 1896 they were incorporated in Waihi Consolidated Gold Mines, which McLean managed until the end of July, when he resigned to accompany Walker to London.²⁵⁶ Also in June, Walker was granted the Waitete Extended, which he transferred to another investor in July, when he was also registered as a shareholder in the Ohinemuri Company.²⁵⁷ McLean also held a 'large interest' in the latter company, whose ground was adjacent to the Waihi Consolidated that McLean managed once again after his return to New Zealand in August 1897.²⁵⁸

Walker inspected more properties in May, shortly before leaving for London to try to float them.²⁵⁹ In early September 1897 he obtained more samples from the Grand Junction, and departed for London late in October.²⁶⁰ The *Observer*, in noting this second departure, commented that 'the foreign capital owe Long Drive Walker a good turn, as it was he who laid them on to a rattling good thing in the Waihi mine'.²⁶¹ During 1897, miners sinking shafts in the Grand Junction intersected the Martha lode

²⁵² *New Zealand Gazette*, 19 September 1895, p. 1486.

²⁵³ *New Zealand Gazette*, 14 November 1895, p. 1805.

²⁵⁴ Paeroa Warden's Court, *Thames Advertiser*, 5 June 1895, p. 2.

²⁵⁵ Jackson and Russell Papers, Letterbook no. 61, p. 295 (3 February 1896), MS 360, Library of the Auckland Institute and War Memorial Museum; *Thames Advertiser*, 27 April 1896, p. 2.

²⁵⁶ Paeroa Warden's Court, Register of Special Claims 1895-1896, folios 3, 4, ZAAP 13294/1b, ANZ-A; *Thames Advertiser*, 30 July 1896, p. 2, 'Yorick', 'Waihi Notes', 13 August 1896, p. 3.

²⁵⁷ Paeroa Warden's Court, Register of Special Claims 1895-1896, folio 170, ZAAP 13294/1b, ANZ-A; *New Zealand Gazette*, 23 July 1896, p. 1161.

²⁵⁸ *Thames Advertiser*, 9 August 1897, p. 2.

²⁵⁹ *Thames Advertiser*, 26 May 1896, p. 3.

²⁶⁰ *Thames Advertiser*, 9 August 1897, p. 2, 9 September 1897, p. 3, 26 October 1897, p. 2; *Thames Star*, 9 September 1897, p. 4.

²⁶¹ *Observer*, 6 November 1897, p. 7.

500 feet below the surface.²⁶² When Walker returned in the following February, the *Observer* asked: 'When are we going to hear from Long-Drive Walker? It's time that £20,000 came along'.²⁶³ He explained that, having gone to London mainly to raise capital for the Grand Junction, he had obtained £37,500 when the reconstructed company 'afforded complete satisfaction to the New Zealand shareholders' and 'considerably' improved its 'position and prospects'.²⁶⁴ At the end of the year he was once more appointed to manage it, but six months later showed a new manager over the mine.²⁶⁵ Even after striking the Martha lode, the history of the mine was 'one of alternate periods of progress and marking time' because of drainage problems.²⁶⁶ In May 1906, by which time the mine was the sole producer of gold at Waihi apart from the Waihi Company, the warden praised the company for having persevered 'for some years under somewhat difficult circumstances and at great cost, mainly owing to the great quantity of water it has to cope with'. This had now been overcome, a great amount of development work had been done, and a battery was being erected, after spending 'some £200,000 in mining operations without receiving any result so far'.²⁶⁷ Its first crushing finally occurred in that year, by which time the company had spent £218,000 in drilling and plant, 'without any significant return'.²⁶⁸ For the years 1906 to 1910, bullion worth £387,772 19s 8d was extracted, and by the latter year it had 'just reached the profit-making stage' and paid its first dividend.²⁶⁹

INVESTMENT IN MINES IN SEVERAL DISTRICTS DURING THE 1890s AND EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY

In 1891, 'Obadiah' cryptically reported that Waiomu 'and Walker have parted company. His £10,000 "spec" is knocked on the head. He thought

²⁶² J.M. Bell and Colin Fraser, *The Geology of the Waihi-Tairua Subdivision, Hauraki Division: Geological Survey Bulletin No. 15 (New Series)*, (Wellington, 1912), p. 11.

²⁶³ *Observer*, 26 February 1898, p. 9.

²⁶⁴ *Thames Advertiser*, 24 February 1898, p. 4, 25 February 1898, p. 1; *Auckland Weekly News*, 26 February 1898, p. 23.

²⁶⁵ *Thames Advertiser*, 5 December 1898, p. 2; *Thames Star*, 16 June 1899, p. 1.

²⁶⁶ Bell and Fraser, p. 11.

²⁶⁷ Warden to Under-Secretary, Mines Department, 22 May 1906, *AJHR*, 1906, C-3, p. 91.

²⁶⁸ Salmon, p. 251.

²⁶⁹ Bell and Fraser, p. 162.

there was too much carr(y) on in it'.²⁷⁰ The details of this 'spec' and why it did not proceed have not been traced. Two years later, two of the mines he wanted to float in London were the Monowai and the Gem, both at Waiomu.²⁷¹

In September 1895, Walker applied for the Tamihana, at Whangamata, but later withdrew his application.²⁷² He was much more persistent over Maratoto. In the previous month, at the height of the mining boom, it was reported that Billy Nicholl had placed 'the old Maratoto mine' in his hands, to be sold in London.²⁷³ Negotiations lasted until the end of the following April, when Walker and McLean purchased the Maratoto special claim, of 70 acres, including a small plant, for £2,000.²⁷⁴ Nicholl later recorded that Walker wrote to him 'to come to Waihi and see him if I wanted to sell the mine and let him know what I would take for it'. Nicholl wanted £2,500, 'but Walker 'was prepared to give £2000 and no more. After a bit of barney I consented', but then his wife deserted him and tried to take all this money. 'But for Walker refusing to buy the claim unless I got half the money, I would have been left penniless'.²⁷⁵

This property was renamed 'Walker's Maratoto'.²⁷⁶ Immediately after the purchase was agreed to, Walker asked his London agent to float the property,²⁷⁷ and worked it while this was being negotiated. The Hikutaia, applied for in September 1895, was merged into Walker's Maratoto in the following September, as was the New Maratoto, which he had bought in the previous month.²⁷⁸ The following month, he transferred half the interests to

²⁷⁰ 'Obadiah', 'Shares and Mining', *Observer*, 26 September 1891, p. 7.

²⁷¹ *Thames Advertiser*, 28 July 1893, p. 2.

²⁷² Thames Warden's Court, Register of Applications for Licensed Holdings and Special Claims 1887-1896, folio 161, BACL 14376/1a, ANZ-A.

²⁷³ *New Zealand Herald*, 1 August 1895, p. 6.

²⁷⁴ *Auckland Star*, 30 April 1896, p. 5; *Thames Advertiser*, 2 May 1896, p. 2.

²⁷⁵ W.S.C. Nicholl, untitled memoirs, n.d. [1927], pp. 34-35, MS 1714, Alexander Turnbull Library.

²⁷⁶ For a description of the claim, see Bell and Fraser, pp. 100-101; for a map of the claim and the Maratoto area, see Bell and Fraser, map facing p. 104.

²⁷⁷ *Auckland Star*, 30 April 1896, p. 5; *Thames Advertiser*, 2 May 1896, p. 2.

²⁷⁸ *Ohinemuri Gazette*, 7 September 1895, p. 4; Paeroa Warden's Court, Register of Special Claims 1895-1896, folio 213, ZAAP 13294/1b; Register of Licensed Holdings 1887-1896, folio 98, ZAAP 13293/1a, ANZ-A.

McLean.²⁷⁹ In May 1897 Walker was granted permission to work it with only two men for four months.²⁸⁰ In September 1898, the ground was transferred to a new Maratoto Company, of which both Walker and McLean were directors.²⁸¹

Walker acquired other interests in the Komata, Maratoto, and Waitekauri districts. In September 1898, he was granted the Oceania at Waitekauri and was allotted 11,000 of the 80,000 shares in the company formed to work it.²⁸² In October, he acquired the Triumph, at Komata, which was transferred to the Komata Triumph Company in the following June; he held 8,650 of its 120,000 shares.²⁸³ In October 1896, he held 1,000 of the 100,000 shares in the Waitekauri Junction Company.²⁸⁴

The first time that Walker was recorded as inspecting the prospects of Owharoa was in 1881;²⁸⁵ he was not sufficiently impressed to acquire any claims. In 1891 he owned the Smile of Fortune, and in 1901 applied for the Zanobia and Zanobia Extended,²⁸⁶ purely for speculative purposes, for he did not supervise any mining in this district.

In January 1905 Walker was 'favourably impressed, after a personal inspection, with the possibilities of the Champion, at Neavesville, and his option of £100 gave him six months in which to form a company.²⁸⁷ In April, despite receiving 'splendid reports', he relinquished his option.²⁸⁸

²⁷⁹ Paeroa Warden's Court, Register of Special Claims 1896-1897, folio 31, ZAAP 13294/2a, ANZ-A.

²⁸⁰ Paeroa Warden's Court, *Thames Advertiser*, 22 May 1897, p. 2.

²⁸¹ Paeroa Warden's Court, Register of Special Claims 1876-1897, folio 31, ZAAP 13294/2a; Company Files, BADZ 5181, box 148 no. 950, ANZ-A.

²⁸² Paeroa Warden's Court, Register of Special Claims 1895-1896, folio 15, ZAAP 13294/1b, ANZ-A; *New Zealand Gazette*, 26 September 1895, p. 1546.

²⁸³ Paeroa Warden's Court, Register of Special Claims 1895-1896, folio 20, ZAAP 13294/1b, ANZ-A; *New Zealand Herald*, 4 March 1896, p. 6; *New Zealand Gazette*, 11 June 1896, p. 940.

²⁸⁴ *New Zealand Gazette*, 15 October 1896, p. 1722.

²⁸⁵ *Thames Advertiser*, 1 February 1881, p. 2.

²⁸⁶ *Thames Advertiser*, 7 September 1891, p. 2; *Ohinemuri Gazette*, 6 February 1901, p. 3.

²⁸⁷ *Thames Star*, 14 January 1905, p. 2; Thames Warden's Court, Registrations 1904-1905, no. 2286, BACL 11343/12a, ANZ-A.

²⁸⁸ *Thames Star*, 19 April 1905, p. 4; *Observer*, 22 April 1905, p. 18.

In 1896, Walker was, briefly, a mining agent, and a member of the Auckland Chamber of Mines.²⁸⁹

MINING AT THAMES, 1892-1899

As in the previous decade, Walker had only marginal involvement in this field. In February 1892, he announced a proposal to construct a water race at the Billy Goat falls in the upper Kauaeranga Valley to provide Thames with electric lighting.²⁹⁰ The county council opposed his application,²⁹¹ prompting a furious response after its clerk ‘grossly misrepresented’ his scheme ‘through ignorance or otherwise’. Walker informed Richard Seddon, the Minister of Mines, that granting him a water right would ‘not diminish the water available for the County race one pannican full or in any way endanger or affect it’, whereas refusing his application would ‘materially retard the development of this field’. He claimed that mining along with other local issues ‘languish, hampered and handicapped by the extortionists and prohibitory rates charged for power by the County monopoly’. Based on his 22 years of mining experience he had ‘formed a solid conviction that, with the cheap electric motive power I intend to introduce, and with reduction plant and gold saving appliances “up to date”’, he would be able to treat ‘millions of tons’ of ore. His scheme would

go a long way in assisting to deal with our deeper levels – and in the continuation of the Kuranui Tunnel and other kindred undertakings.

I say nothing against your granting Government assistance towards those works if you see your way to do so, but I am acting on the principle that “God helps those who help themselves” and I respectfully solicit your protection from the childish and selfish action of the Council which is calculated to burke the progress of the field.

²⁸⁹ *Ohinemuri Gazette*, 11 July 1896, p. 2; *New Zealand Gazette*, 23 July 1896, p. 1161; *List of Companies Registered with the Auckland Chamber of Mines, Auckland, New Zealand* (Auckland, 1896), p. 6.

²⁹⁰ *Thames Advertiser*, 12 February 1892, p. 3, 25 February 1892, p. 2, advertisement, 3 March 1892, p. 3.

²⁹¹ Warden’s Court, *Thames Advertiser*, 1 April 1892, p. 2.

I have incurred considerable costs and trouble in this matter – I am the first applicant for the right in question which, if refused, will be injustice and injury to the field and to me.²⁹²

In a letter to the press he insisted that his races would ‘not prejudice the interests of the Thames public in the least; neither will my operations withdraw a single pint of water from the stream which supplies the County race’.²⁹³ Seddon left the matter to be decided by the warden, who agreed with the council that the fullest amount of unpolluted water should be available to the county.²⁹⁴ Both the warden and the council considered that a public body, not private enterprise, should provide electric lighting to ensure the profits went to meet the needs of the mining industry, and the Mines Department concurred.²⁹⁵

In 1893, Walker explained in detail his solution to working the deep levels:

If the deep ground is ever to be successfully handled, the first item on the programme is the formation of a new company (or companies) owning a large area, and the second is that the then joint owners themselves put up the capital required, or, failing that, seek assistance from outside speculators. The success or otherwise of obtaining such capital, not less than £200,000, will depend on the inducement (terms) offered by the vendors, and on concessions from Government in the form of remission of rent and of the labour covenants, etc. If the Government have rock drills or other gear at their disposal by all means get the use of them on easy terms if required, but in the name of common sense and honesty do not call this a national undertaking, and thereby try to bring the Government into trouble over it. There is nothing more national about it than there is in flounder-catching on our mud flats. This is simply a large private speculation, and a very good one at that. That success is possible I never doubted, but, all the same, I am fully alive to the difficulties and to the certain

²⁹² J.W. Walker to R.J. Seddon, 14 June 1892, Mines Department, MD 1, 93/392, ANZ-W.

²⁹³ Letter from J.W. Walker, *Thames Star*, 18 June 1892, p. 2.

²⁹⁴ Memorandum by R.J. Seddon, 20 June 1892; Under-Secretary, Mines Department, to J.W. Walker, 20 June 1892; Thames County Chairman to Warden, 27 June 1892; Warden to Under-Secretary, Mines Department, 3 October 1892, Mines Department, MD 1, 93/392, ANZ-W.

²⁹⁵ Warden to Under-Secretary, Mines Department, 3 October 1892; County Chairman to Minister of Mines, 7 April 1893; H.A. Gordon to Under-Secretary, Mines Department, 25 May 1893, Mines Department, MD 1, 93/392, ANZ-W.

inevitable heavy outlay. Considerable mild amusement has been evolved on the question of whether the value of the deep ground should be proved by bores or by sinking shafts; but those who raise this question are lamentably innocent if they do not know that the men who tackle this enterprise will pin their faith on neither one nor the other of those methods along, and indeed the whole of this part of the subject may be safely left in the hands of the men who propose to pay the piper. The whole conditions and surroundings of this work are unique, and therefore demand special legislation, and indeed the same may be said of a large section of the inland portion of our peninsula. It seems abundantly proved that away from the immediate vicinity of the Thames proper our vein stuff is seldom or never of a specimen class. Larger lodes are more common, and the metal more regularly distributed throughout, necessitating thereby an enormous outlay for preliminary proving the value and extent of the deposit, in the first place, and (if successful) afterwards in the construction of reduction and metal saving plants. The feverish times of sensational specimen bunches are seldom repeated, but instead we have ample assurance that if we adapt ourselves rationally to the circumstances as we now find them and prevail on Government to fit the said condition of things, we shall speedily see mining here in a far more prosperous state than even in the early days of the field.

He cited the example of a Victorian mine he had visited 16 months previously which had struck good ore at depth. He expected that, as there, they would strike less water below 'the disturbed upper strata', and concluded by insisting that 'the initiation and ultimate success of establishing deep mining here depends entirely on the present owners of the ground. The time is ripe for the floating of a strong company for that purpose, but if the present opportunity be neglected, there may never be such another for many years'.²⁹⁶

Amongst the mines he hoped to float in London later that year was the Sylvia, at Tararu, the northern suburb of Thames, but was unsuccessful.²⁹⁷ In May 1895 he pegged out 100 acres of the Thames foreshore as the Favourite, believing 'the richest goldfield of the peninsula lay under the foreshore opposite the noted old mines', and planned to spend £35,000

²⁹⁶ Letter from J.W. Walker, *New Zealand Herald*, 3 March 1893, p. 3.

²⁹⁷ *Thames Advertiser*, 28 July 1893, p. 2; Colin Fraser, *The Geology of the Thames Subdivision, Hauraki, Auckland* (Geological Survey Bulletin No. 10 (New Series), (Wellington, 1910)), p. 75.

tracing the lodes under the sea.²⁹⁸ His ground included some of the hillside. One newspaper at first understood that he was making ‘another attempt to utilize the tailings which had been washed out on the foreshore from rich ores ignorantly treated at the batteries’, but he had ‘a more important object’. He had ‘developed a theory that there is a geological depression or elevation along the foreshore’ and that ‘by sinking to no very considerable distance the continuation of the great rich lodes of the Thames may be found extending seaward. The theory is not a new one, but this seems to be the first practical effort to give effect to what has been so often urged’ by Walker and others.²⁹⁹ In early September, when the ground was granted, he announced that he would float it in London. The *Thames Advertiser* considered that it should be one of the best local mines, and assured Walker of ‘our warmest good wishes. He has fought a long up-hill fight with rare courage, and we are glad that at last there is every appearance of his securing the competence he so well deserves’.³⁰⁰ The following year he sunk a prospecting shaft, but the outcome was not what he had hoped, for good geological reasons.³⁰¹

In July 1897, an application for the Tararu Freeholds was struck out because Walker said it included a portion of his freehold property.³⁰² In June 1898, he compared the former glories of the field with its present state, especially the possible encouragement of tributing:

There *was* a time, alas! long past, when the gleaning of our richest mines offered fair chance for able, skilful miners to undertake tributing risks. Some did very well indeed, many earned good wages, many managed to scramble along “on a crust,” but even in those days the larger proportion drew blanks. All this is well known to every storekeeper and housewife on the field, but the general public fails to realize how much of the bottom has been knocked out of the tributing Paradise, since the palmy days of “long, long ago.” In such formations as the Moanataiari, All Nations, Long Drive, Caledonian, and in fact generally all over this field, it was in the best interests of both the mine and the men that the work of hunting up, and working, the thread-veins was left to tributing parties, (the companies having dealt with the principal lodes and leaders), while still the adits,

²⁹⁸ *Thames Advertiser*, 23 May 1895, pp. 2, 3.

²⁹⁹ *Auckland Weekly News*, 8 June 1895, p. 28.

³⁰⁰ *Thames Advertiser*, 6 September 1895, p. 2.

³⁰¹ *Observer*, 25 April 1896, p. 9; Fraser, pp. 31-32, 115.

³⁰² Warden’s Court, *Thames Advertiser*, 7 July 1897, p. 4.

drives, crosscuts, passes, etc, remained in safe working order. These were the times, and these were the conditions, under which the otherways unemployed found means of existence, on the tribute system. That this system worked well is abundantly evidenced by the results in this country and elsewhere. Not only did the shareholders receive substantial profit from otherwise worthless gleanings, but we all know of many very sickly companies that were not only saved from liquidation but were actually made very pronounced dividenders through the discoveries made by tributers.

All this was very well – while it lasted – unfortunately for us all it is, that the known extent of out payable auriferous ground in the immediate neighbourhood of Thames is very limited indeed – and also unfortunately for us all it is, that the more gold we (you and I) take out of the ground the less is left for the fellow who follows – consequently when fellows have been following fellows, as at Thames, for the last fifteen years, the possibilities of success among our surface rabbit warrens has been reduced to zero, long before the advent of the Bogus British Company Monger, and the Gilt Edged Mining Expert.

No doubt it suited the purpose of those gentlemen to blow cold on the tribute system, and to promote a belief in England that the upper sections would prove a source of wealth if worked on owners' account, hence tributing was voted out of court. But all that belongs to another story, and indeed is very ancient history. Just what concerns us, at present, is the question of how we are to exist. There is no chance of getting employment on wages in the company's mines. They are nearly all *reducing* hands. The chances of making a living on tribute among the old surface blocks are very faint indeed, and of course dwindle daily. The old drives, etc, are mostly collapsed. It is beyond the means of small parties of tributers, working on a time limit, to undertake a system of re-opening, even if there was a certainty that the "game was worth the candle."

The only chance I can see in those surface blocks is to let them on a low percentage and for just such a period as the men choose to keep on struggling on them....

When the Thames companies have made the discovery that it is not easy, in London, to sell "a sow's ear as a silk purse," they will be glad enough to invite men to undertake the stoping etc of their deeper blocks on a reasonable tribute....

There will be tribute blocks to be let then in abundance – anywhere and everywhere, and that *sans* so many ridiculous restrictions. Just *when* the Thomas Hauraki pumps will read, say one thousand feet deep, and just what success will attend, I am not rash enough to predict, but I see no reason to be otherwise than hopeful, and my best wishes go with them all the way. There are very few absolute certainties in gold mining. The heavy cost

for deep sinking is perhaps one of the safest to prophesy about, and those gentlemen in Auckland who prate about surface blocks, will get to understand this, and also some other things within the next three years.³⁰³

In the following month, he wrote again about the field:

From the very start of our Thames field mining has been conducted in a very cramped style. There were altogether too many little companies, each with its own burden of directors, managers, and office expenses, and all working regardless of any organized system towards economic development, drainage, ventilation, etc, etc. Only ground of exceptional richness, and with many natural facilities, could possibly pay under such circumstances. But the then circumstances are now very ancient history, and, if ever the old Thames sees a return of good times, the old order of things must be considerably remoulded. In the immediate neighbourhood of Grahamstown, the upper deposits of gold are confessedly leaning towards a "feather edge." If there are other deposits, (and there doubtless are such), at greater depths, these are not yet discovered, and the only dead certainties in this connection are the difficulties, the time, and enormous cost of getting at them.³⁰⁴

In June 1899, he was granted the Catherthum, at Tararu,³⁰⁵ but this came to nothing.

HIS WAIRAKAU FARM

Walker had considered abandoning mining for farming at least as early as 1874, when he was one of the Thames residents seeking a special settlement at Te Aroha.³⁰⁶ Three years later, he attended a meeting calling for land for settlement.³⁰⁷ In 1888, as he was a principal purchaser of ewes and lambs at a Mackaytown sale,³⁰⁸ he must have held land to run these on. Four years later he applied for an occupation license of 60 acres near

³⁰³ Letter from J.W. Walker, *Thames Advertiser*, 23 June 1898, p. 4.

³⁰⁴ Letter from J.W. Walker, *Auckland Weekly News*, 23 July 1898, p. 20.

³⁰⁵ Warden's Court, *Thames Advertiser*, 21 June 1899, p. 4.

³⁰⁶ Auckland Provincial Government Papers, ACFM 8180, 1332/75, ANZ-A.

³⁰⁷ *Thames Advertiser*, 27 January 1877, p. 3.

³⁰⁸ *Te Aroha News*, 26 May 1888, p. 2.

Waihi,³⁰⁹ but it is not known if he did any farming there. ‘A Tramp, Esq.’, otherwise journalist John Dickson Wickham,³¹⁰ in 1896 visited Opitini, near Whangapoua on the Coromandel Peninsula, and came across a ‘well-built white-painted verandahed cottage, standing in a good-sized paddock, in which a man was clearing off the tall fern and tea-tree’. Walker had constructed it when he managed the Kauri Timber Company’s mine, and he had tried to grow grass in the paddock. ‘Who but Walker would ever dream of wasting good fencing on such barrenness. That farming mania will be his ruin yet’.³¹¹

In 1896 he acquired what he called Wairakau Farm, upstream from Waiorongomai, containing either 1,258 or 1,261 acres of reclaimed swamp, of which 638 acres were freehold.³¹² A manager ran the farm, as Walker did not live on the land but remained at his Thames home, and when visiting Te Aroha stayed in a hotel.³¹³ He had cattle, sheep, and pigs, and bred Clydesdale horses and turkeys.³¹⁴ In 1902, he sought a family to milk his cows and look after pigs and calves.³¹⁵ At the end of April 1903 he had 200 sheep, but sold these during the following year.³¹⁶ In August 1903, he advertised for a family to run a herd of 140 cows, on shares.³¹⁷

In 1899, after he complained about the impassable state of the road to his property, the council agreed to clear 60 chains of drains alongside.³¹⁸ It was known as ‘Walker’s Road’ by 1900, when he asked the council to assist

³⁰⁹ Warden’s Court, *Thames Advertiser*, 19 February 1892, p. 3.

³¹⁰ See *City of Auckland, East, Electoral Roll, 1880*, p. 15; *Auckland Weekly News*, 4 December 1880, p. 9.

³¹¹ ‘A Tramp, Esq.’, ‘Casual Ramblings’, *Auckland Weekly News*, 26 September 1896, p. 38.

³¹² Land Transfer Primary Index No. 4, folio 842, DOSLI, Auckland; *Thames Advertiser*, 26 May 1897, p. 2, 23 June 1897, p. 2; Jackson and Russell to Thomas McIndoe, 21 June 1905, Letterbook no. 86, p. 364, Jackson and Russell Papers, MS 360, Library of the Auckland Institute and War Memorial Museum; *Auckland Weekly News*, 7 September 1905, p. 21; *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 2, p. 834.

³¹³ *Te Aroha News*, 13 January 1900, p. 2; *Waikato Argus*, 23 April 1900, p. 2.

³¹⁴ *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 2, p. 834; advertisement, *Te Aroha News*, 9 October 1900, p. 4; *Thames Star*, 3 August 1900, p. 2.

³¹⁵ *Ohinemuri Gazette*, 1 September 1902, p. 3.

³¹⁶ ‘Annual Sheep Returns’, *AJHR*, 1903, H-23, p. 26; 1904, H-23, p. 25.

³¹⁷ Advertisement, *Te Aroha News*, 6 August 1903, p. 2.

³¹⁸ Piako County Council, *Waikato Argus*, 26 August 1899, p. 4.

him to construct an outfall drain from his land to the river.³¹⁹ He remained unhappy with the council, writing to it in March 1903 'asking what special benefit he derived from payment of rates. It was resolved that no special reply could be given'.³²⁰

In 1902, Walker came into conflict with a neighbouring farmer, Robert Mackie, as did many others.³²¹ The cause was his request to close a road running through his property, which, as he explained to the council, was 'unmade and unused'. When Mackie asked that no fences be allowed on the road, councillors supported Walker, advising him to ask the land board to prevent Mackie running his cattle on unoccupied land. If Walker 'would apply to be allowed to put up any necessary gates, the Council would grant him permission to do so, and make the necessary by-laws providing for the proper use of the gates'.³²² In January and May he sued Mackie for damaging his fence; Mackie, ordered to pay £2, was sentenced to one month in prison for failing to pay.³²³ When released, he sued Walker for damages of £35 3s, but was non-suited.³²⁴ By September that year, when he became involved in a 'gigantic' scheme to revitalize Thames mining, Walker had leased his farm, and in the following year it was sold.³²⁵ According to the *Observer*, by 1903 farming had 'palled', and, 'tired of settling down', he sold his farm, 'put some options in his bag, and hit out for London'.³²⁶

MINING AT TE AROHA, 1896 TO 1910

In November 1895 Walker revisited the Te Aroha district, 'combining business with pleasure'.³²⁷ The following May, he applied for the Devereux, 100 acres adjoining the main Tui claims, and in September stated that, as

³¹⁹ Piako County Council, *Waikato Argus*, 10 January 1900, p. 4, 30 November 1900, p. 4.

³²⁰ Piako County Council, *Auckland Weekly News*, 26 March 1903, p. 26.

³²¹ See paper on Robert and Elizabeth Mackie.

³²² Piako County Council, *Waikato Times*, 24 February 1902, p. 2.

³²³ Te Aroha Magistrate's Court, Criminal Record Book 1896-1907, 5, 16/1902, BCDG 11220/1b, ANZ-A; Armed Constabulary Force, Report of Charges taken at Te Aroha Lock Up 1880-1903, 13/1902, in private possession.

³²⁴ Te Aroha Magistrate's Court, Plaintiff Book 1893-1918, 34/1902, BCDG 11224/1b, ANZ-A.

³²⁵ *Thames Star*, 5 September 1902, p. 2; 'Obadiah', 'Shares and Mining', *Observer*, 26 December 1903, p. 20; *Auckland Weekly News*, 7 September 1905, p. 21.

³²⁶ *Observer*, 17 August 1912, p. 4, 11 July 1914, p. 4.

³²⁷ *Te Aroha News*, 16 November 1895, p. 2.

the ore was both complex and low-grade, large capital was required. After explaining that he intended going to England at 'an early date' expecting to be able to raise £25,000, his application was granted.³²⁸ Also granted at the same time was the Night and Morning, another 100 acres, bounded on its north by the Devereux; part it was in the recreation reserve at the top of the mountain.³²⁹ He claimed that he would raise at least £25,000 in England to work its low-grade ore.³³⁰ In June, he applied for the Premier Extended, 100 acres at Waiorongomai, which was granted the following month. William Morris Newsham, a local prospector,³³¹ assisted to find the pegs delineating its boundaries.³³² Three days later, he applied for the Orion, 100 acres near Te Aroha, but withdrew the application at the end of August.³³³ In March 1897, he was granted the Te Aroha Queen, also near the township.³³⁴ He did not hold these for long, for his cheque paying overdue rent came too late to prevent all four being forfeited in May 1897.³³⁵ In June 1896 he visited again,³³⁶ undoubtedly to inspect his own and others' properties. In January 1896, Newsham transferred the Aroha, on the main range, to him.³³⁷ In July, with Joseph Campbell, then prominent in local mining,³³⁸ he sent three samples for testing; they contained only mere traces of gold.³³⁹

³²⁸ Te Aroha Warden's Court, Mining Applications 1896, 6/1896, BBAV 11289/14a, ANZ-A.

³²⁹ Te Aroha Warden's Court, Mining Applications 1896, 7/1896, BBAV 11289/14a, ANZ-A.

³³⁰ J.W. Walker to Under-Secretary, Mines Department, 30 September 1896, Mines Department, MD 1, 97/402, ANZ-W.

³³¹ See paper on his life.

³³² Te Aroha Warden's Court, Mining Applications 1896, 17/1896, BBAV 11289/14a, ANZ-A.

³³³ Te Aroha Warden's Court, Mining Applications 1896, 25/1896, BBAV 11289/14a, ANZ-A.

³³⁴ Te Aroha Warden's Court, Register of Licensed Holdings and Special Claims 1887-1909, folio 104, BBAV 11500/8b, ANZ-A.

³³⁵ Receiver of Gold Revenue, Te Aroha, to J.W. Walker, 14 April 1897, 20 May 1897, Te Aroha Warden's Court, Letterbook 1883-1900, pp. 413, 422, BBAV 11534/1a, ANZ-A.

³³⁶ *Ohinemuri Gazette*, 20 June 1896, p. 4.

³³⁷ Te Aroha Warden's Court, Mining Applications 1896, 11/1896, BBAV 11289/14a, ANZ-A.

³³⁸ See paper on his life.

³³⁹ Thames School of Mines, Assay Book 1895-1897, entry for 3 July 1896, School of Mines Archives, Thames.

In 1898, at a Te Aroha banquet in honour of Cadman, the Minister of Mines, Walker made a 'short racy speech' in reply to the toast to the mining industry.³⁴⁰ He argued that 'different mining legislation was required for the Te Aroha district, as the restrictions needful for other parts of the field, such as the Thames, were simply oppressive when applied to Te Aroha'.³⁴¹ 'A uniform system of mining laws would not suit all districts'.³⁴² Campbell told this banquet that he had come to New Zealand under Walker's 'auspices' to find a way to treat Te Aroha's refractory ores.³⁴³ Two years previously Walker had indeed been interested in the hyperphoric process,³⁴⁴ but now he responded that he 'was not so sanguine as Mr Campbell' in the success of his process, but recommended that 'all people should suspend their judgment on his process until they had better means of judging the results'.³⁴⁵ 'He had been a long while in the business, and had seen too many reverses', he warned.³⁴⁶

In early October 1899, Walker told Cadman that the only way to work Te Aroha mines was with 'very large Capital, applied in scientific and practical principles'. He claimed that the district could become 'as prolific, and as promising', as Waihi. As 'sufficient capital for its proper development, say from £150,000 to £250,000', which would also meet the cost of treatment, would be sought in England, he wanted from 400 to 500 acres of unoccupied land, promising not to interfere with two small claims held by others. He had the support of miners, their union, the local bodies, and the inhabitants. The latest rock drills, powered by electricity, would drive at least three 'large tunnel – thoroughfares entering towards the several ore bodies from different starting points'.³⁴⁷

When informed that regulations forbade such a large area being granted,³⁴⁸ Walker did not abandon his plan, obtaining the support of the

³⁴⁰ *Waikato Argus*, 26 May 1898, p. 4.

³⁴¹ *Auckland Weekly News*, 28 May 1898, p. 10.

³⁴² *Te Aroha News*, 26 May 1898, p. 2.

³⁴³ *Waikato Argus*, 26 May 1898, p. 4; *Auckland Weekly News*, 28 May 1898, p. 10.

³⁴⁴ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 11 July 1896, p. 30.

³⁴⁵ *Auckland Weekly News*, 28 May 1898, p. 10.

³⁴⁶ *Te Aroha News*, 26 May 1898, p. 2.

³⁴⁷ J.W. Walker to A.J. Cadman (Minister of Mines), 6 October 1899, Mines Department, MD 1, 99/1750, ANZ-W.

³⁴⁸ Under-Secretary, Mines Department, 16 October 1899, Mines Department, MD 1, 99/1750, ANZ-W.

Piako County Council to obtain up to 600 acres as a prospecting area to be developed 'on a complete scale'.³⁴⁹ When he sought support from the Te Aroha Borough Council, councillors resolved to 'cordially approve' his proposal and promised to 'render what legitimate assistance they can'.³⁵⁰ The Ohinemuri County Council also supported his being granted this large area, and the miners' union expressed its 'cordial approval'.³⁵¹ One of George Wilson's last acts as Inspecting Engineer for the Mines Department³⁵² was to express his opinion that 'the deep levels should be further explored. The nature of the rock in which the lodes exist is favourable and indicates that the veins and reef fissures may extend downwards'. He considered the department should assist Walker to obtain the capital needed to explore the reefs in depth, for 'only by the introduction of capital on a large scale can the reefs in this district be profitably worked'. New methods of treatment would be required.³⁵³ At the end of October, when Walker asked to discuss his proposal with Cadman, he requested that while he floated it in London the ground be removed from the goldfield for one year, meaning no rents and other charges would be paid.³⁵⁴ Cadman promised to meet him when next in Te Aroha.³⁵⁵ Their discussion was not reported, but the outcome was clear: Walker was not granted this ground.

Early in December 1900, Walker applied for Walker's First, Second, and Third Special Quartz Claims, each of 100 acres, running from the Tui district towards the Mangakino and Waitawheta Streams. These

³⁴⁹ Piako County Council, *Waikato Argus*, 24 October 1899, p. 4; Piako County Council to Minister of Mines, 24 October 1899, Piako County Council, Letterbook 1899-1901, p. 70, Matamata-Piako District Council Archives, Te Aroha.

³⁵⁰ Te Aroha Borough Council, Minutes of Meetings 1898-1911, p. 47, Meeting of 18 October 1899, Matamata-Piako District Council Archives, Te Aroha.

³⁵¹ *Thames Advertiser*, 24 October 1899, p. 2; *New Zealand Mines Record*, 16 November 1899, p. 161.

³⁵² See paper on his life.

³⁵³ George Wilson to Under-Secretary, Mines Department, 19 October 1899, Mines Department, MD 1, 99/1750, ANZ-W.

³⁵⁴ J.W. Walker to A.J. Cadman, 30 October 1899, Mines Department, 30 October 1899, Mines Department, MD 1, 99/1750, ANZ-W.

³⁵⁵ Under-Secretary, Mines Department, 6 November 1899, Mines Department, MD 1, 99/1750, ANZ-W.

applications were withdrawn,³⁵⁶ in or after March 1901, when two samples were tested at Thames: one, from ‘footwall big reef’, contained 17dwt 15gr worth £12 7s, and one from ‘Centre Big reef’ had only a trace valued at 3s 2d.³⁵⁷

In mid-January 1910, when Walker again visited Te Aroha, he informed the warden that he was sailing to England in a month’s time to form a syndicate that would provide £2,000 annually to work the Premier Extended, Te Aroha, and Day Dawn claims. These adjoining claims were ‘at an elevation of 2500 feet on the Eastward water shed leading towards Waitawheta’ and contained several large lodes and fragments of ore giving ‘encouraging assay results sufficient to warrant and encourage a thorough and costly exploitation’. He wanted the ground protected, for two years, while he formed a company.³⁵⁸ In March, Thomas Gavin³⁵⁹ informed the warden that Walker had options over his Premier Extended and the Day Dawn, owned by Charles Manuel,³⁶⁰ as well as the Te Aroha.³⁶¹ Gavin confirmed Walker’s assessment of the needs:

The country would be difficult to work, and costly exploitation necessary while the ores are of a refractory nature. It was mostly old ground and worked on and off for 30 years. It was along the main line of existing reefs and extensive capital would be required to work it. It would be quite impossible to raise the necessary capital in the Colony.³⁶²

As no English capital, large or small, was subscribed, nothing came of Walker’s last scheme for this district.

THAMES MINING, 1900-1905

³⁵⁶ Te Aroha Warden’s Court, Mining Applications 1901, 10-12/1901, BBAV 11289/16a, ANZ-A.

³⁵⁷ Thames School of Mines, Assay Book 1898-1907, entry for 2 March 1901, School of Mines Archives, Thames.

³⁵⁸ *Te Aroha News*, 13 January 1910, p. 2; J.W. Walker to Warden, 17 January 1910, Te Aroha Warden’s Court, Mining Applications 1910, 13/1910, BBAV 11289/20a, ANZ-A.

³⁵⁹ See paper on his life.

³⁶⁰ See paper on his life.

³⁶¹ Te Aroha Warden’s Court, Mining Applications 1910, 11/1910, BBAV 11289/20a, ANZ-A.

³⁶² Warden’s Court, *Te Aroha News*, 24 March 1910, p. 2.

In December 1900, Walker applied for the Gigantic (his favourite name) at Puru, to the north of Thames, but then withdrew his application.³⁶³ The same sequence came with his application a month later for the Balmoral and Balmoral Extended at Thames.³⁶⁴ In April 1901, he wrote to the Minister of Mines, James McGowan, seeking ‘a very Special mining concession’. He explained that most of the land between the sea and ‘the Moanataiari clay-slide is “claimed” by more or less moribund companies’, and had been practically worked out to a depth of 500 feet.

All, or nearly all, the land Eastward of the said clay-slide, is idle, abandoned, and unproductive.

I hold the conviction that the foot-hills, overhanging the foreshore, (whence all our gold has been won) have had their auriferous character conferred upon them when they occupied a much loftier and more easterly position, whence in former ages, and under various influences they have been gravitated to their present location, leaving behind, in situ, the counterpart and continuation of our, at present, exhausted goldfield.

He wanted to raise capital to develop a large area, provided that rents would be ‘merely nominal during development, and afterwards fixed at a reasonable percentage of profits annually’, and that his ground was ‘subject only to a graduated yearly expenditure’. If his proposals were agreed to, Thames and New Zealand would ‘be certain gainers whether I win or lose’.³⁶⁵ Six months later he forwarded the plans, which had cost him ‘some £45’.³⁶⁶ His request was referred to the government geologist, Alexander

³⁶³ Thames Warden’s Court, Register of Applications for Licensed Holdings and Special Claims 1897-1909, 34/1900, BACL 14376/3a, ANZ-A.

³⁶⁴ Thames Warden’s Court, Register of Applications for Licensed Holdings and Special Claims 1897-1909, 1, 2/1901, BACL 14376/3a, ANZ-A.

³⁶⁵ J.W. Walker to James McGowan (Minister of Mines), 29 April 1901, Mines Department, MD 1, 1901/1419, ANZ-W.

³⁶⁶ J.W. Walker to James McGowan, 26 October 1901, Mines Department, MD 1, 1901/1419, ANZ-W.

McKay,³⁶⁷ who, after analyzing the geology of the area, was ‘not over sanguine of better results’ than previously.³⁶⁸

Walker remained sanguine, for he had decided that the hillside beyond the goldfield was ‘a slip from the higher range at the back’ and that the reefs worked earlier could be traced ‘some distance back and to the eastward’. He had explained his reasons for seeking a large area ‘on very special terms’ to the miners’ union, and was ‘sanguine of being able to raise the necessary money for preliminary testing the value of my opinions, and furthermore, also of raising a large capital for subsequent development should, happily, these my opinions be verified’. As he explained, the ground he sought was ‘now idle and unproductive. By granting my request the Thames community, and the country of New Zealand generally, have everything to hope for – and to gain – and nothing to lose’. The union executive responded that ‘any genuine mining venture, such as you mentioned’, would receive their ‘support and assistance’.³⁶⁹ Walker sent McGowan the union’s letter of support.³⁷⁰

At the end of May, Walker was told that the government was ‘unable to entertain’ his proposal, which would require special legislation, and he was referred to McKay’s article about the Moanataiari slide, which argued that it was most unlikely that gold would be found.³⁷¹ (Another geologist later agreed that the upland area was not promising.)³⁷² The *Thames Star* noted that Walker held ‘somewhat original ideas regarding the valuable auriferous areas of this district’, and cited McKay’s opinion that the area he wanted to develop contained no gold.³⁷³ Later in June, it reported that

³⁶⁷ See Roger Cooper, ‘Alexander McKay 1841-1917’, *The Dictionary of New Zealand Biography: vol. 2: 1870-1900* (Wellington, 1993), pp. 290-291.

³⁶⁸ Memorandum by Alex McKay, 9 May 1901, Mines Department, MD 1, 1901/1419, ANZ-W.

³⁶⁹ *Thames Star*, 23 May 1901, p. 4.

³⁷⁰ J.W. Walker to James McGowan, 13 May 1901, enclosing W.H. Lucas (Secretary, Thames Miners’ Union) to J.W. Walker, 11 May 1901, Mines Department, MD 1, 1901/1419, ANZ-W.

³⁷¹ Under-Secretary, Mines Department, to J.W. Walker, 31 May 1901, Mines Department, MD 1, 1901/1419, ANZ-W; ‘Mining on the Thames Goldfield: The Correspondence of the Reefs on the East and West Sides of the Moanataiari Slide’, *New Zealand Mines Record*, 16 May 1901, pp. 413-415.

³⁷² Fraser, p. 120.

³⁷³ Editorial, *Thames Star*, 5 June 1901, p. 2.

before returning to his Te Aroha farm he was 'to have an interview with some of the miners, old friends of his', about his scheme, and would also like to talk to union members. 'Notwithstanding' McKay's views, he was 'willing to test in a practical way the country, and to allow the theorists to have their own way undisturbed'. Not being a scientist, 'I am not going to enter into any newspaper or epistolary discussion with learned me. I am a miner, and pride myself in being a practical man, prepared to put my experience and my practical knowledge to use in solving the question, and not by pen and ink'. He asked to be allowed to work the ground 'in his own way, and not find when he starts to work he is hampered and bound down by the red tape of the Mines Department and the other shackles known as the Mining and Labour regulations'.³⁷⁴

On the following day, in an 'interesting interview', this newspaper provided details of the proposal and its reception by the government. Asked to explain what he had done 'with this important matter', Walker replied that he had sent details to the government and 'asked the Mines Department to assist as far as lies in its power'. He had also 'asked the Thames Miners' Union, as an interested party, for their co-operation and assistance, and that the matter should be discussed and deliberated upon'. Although McGowan had vetoed the scheme, he hoped that, should the miners support him, the government would reconsider. 'Out of courtesy to the Department', Walker did not give his response to its refusal to support him. 'However, we gleaned sufficient to enable us to state that Mr Walker, while in no way wishing to controvert the geological theories advanced, simply puts a business-like proposition before the Government' whereby he would explore and develop this 'idle, and unexplored' ground. He explained the special terms requested because 'it would require a very large amount to put the property on a working footing. My idea is to obtain the capital necessary for the prospecting and proving of the property, and if this results satisfactorily, to obtain the requisite capital for further work'. The regulations were created when the field 'resembled a potato field, and gold was won in almost the same manner as potatoes were dug', but now it had 'to be dealt with on business-like principles and with a large amount of capital'. He planned to explain his scheme to the union.

I want the miners of the district to say whether they as practical men, and men with an intimate knowledge of the district, have

³⁷⁴ Editorial, *Thames Star*, 21 June 1901, p. 2.

any objections to the proposal as submitted to the Government. If they object to the proposition and can prove that this particular country can be dealt with in a better way I am quite prepared to step out and let others deal with the question.

Should they 'approve of the scheme as a business-like proposition, for, be it remembered, I do not pose as a philanthropist', he would have further discussions with McGowan, when he expected that his department might 'be inclined to give the proposals further consideration, and not deal with the question from a geological point of view'. His scheme, which he was been considering 'for some considerable time', required 'a system of tunnelling at low levels, the tunnels being connected with the surface by air shafts to a depth of 1000ft or so', thereby providing 'practically a double method of prospecting'.

I have sufficient conceit in myself and confidence in the success of the undertaking that I should ask my friends in England to provide between £100,000 and £150,000 for the preliminary work. In my three visits to the Old Country and in meeting with influential mining people I have made many friends, and these friends have sufficient confidence to spend money in a legitimate and business-like proposal for the prospecting of a large property that might possess enormous possibilities – I, at any rate, would do my best to raise the requisite capital for the work proposed. But delays are dangerous. If obstacles are placed in the way the opportunity may be lost. With the latest and up-to-date machinery, with the use of vertical and diagonal drills, by the letting of large contracts, and the introduction of all the latest improved mining appliances I believe the work could be satisfactorily undertaken. The special treatment of all classes of ores has proved successful in many instances, and the fact should not be lost sight of, for it is an important detail, that a market can now be found for almost every class of mineral.

He outlined the 'general proposals' he had asked the government to consider whereby it would not 'restrict or harass operations' but 'be content to wait and endeavour to recoup themselves out of the profits if any are made. If no profits are made the Government and the district will have gained in experience at the expense of others, and nobody will suffer except those who have provided the capital'. To protect his 'principals in the event of success being attained, the percentage on profits should be fixed now'. He concluded by stressing the benefits to the district:

Land taken up under such conditions could not be allowed to remain idle. If the district is reaping a benefit from the land by means of the capital being expended upon its development surely that is an item worthy of consideration. Work would be provided for a large number of men. Would not that benefit the district?

The owners 'could not possibly reap any advantage in keeping the ground for speculative purposes', as they would have 'to spend a stipulated sum on bona fide prospecting and development work', and his 'personal recompense would depend entirely upon the success of the scheme'. He concluded by repeating that 'the geological formation or the theories advanced regarding the same did not enter into his calculations. He was prepared to deal with the matter in a practical and not a theoretical manner'.³⁷⁵

In a subsequent letter clarifying a couple of points raised, Walker explained that he expected 'to find gold in various combinations other than those previously familiar on this field and probably extending over a very extensive area. Preliminary testing will be done by drilling, operated from several favourable starting points, and driven at various angles to various depths', including 'the immediate enlargement and extension indefinitely' of the Moanataiari tunnel. It was not easy to determine how much capital was required to start work. 'Much will depend on the temper of the London market, and more upon the terms of inducement', but he would not commence preliminary work before obtaining an amount 'proportionate to the magnitude of the work, say from £50,000 to £100,000. Capital is the shyest bird known to us. Without it, however, I cannot move in the matter. With it I believe I see my way towards reviving the dormant district'. As for doubts about 'the advisability' of his creating a precedent 'whereby abuses may creep in, and the whole Peninsula be farmed off in large shepherding monopolies', he agreed that this must be prevented by regulations 'whereby shepherding speculations be severely sat upon and extinguished'.³⁷⁶

In the same issue of the *Thames Star* that published his letter, two editorials supported his plans. Having long advocated the extension of the Moanataiari tunnel, the newspaper considered that if he did 'even this work, we would say let him have the back country on any terms. It is quite clear we have not locally either the money or the men willing to undertake prospecting the back ranges'. Rather than let this ground remain idle, it

³⁷⁵ *Thames Star*, 22 June 1901, p. 4.

³⁷⁶ Letter from J.W. Walker, *Thames Star*, 26 June 1901, p. 3.

wanted Walker 'or anyone else who will undertake to prospect it, have it on liberal terms'.³⁷⁷ It also supported his application to the harbour board for a large section of the foreshore for depositing mullock and to provide a site for a reduction plant, and even a concentration works, rather than sending concentrates to New South Wales for smelting. It also noted his application for water rights over the Billy Goat falls in the upper Kauaeranga Valley to generate electricity for

his undertakings and probably to light the township. There is nothing small about Mr Walker's ideas, and it is refreshing to have a talk with so sanguine a man, when so many men are to be met with who think the best days of the Thames are past, and who cannot see a rosy future ahead. We want sanguine men in our midst, men who have opinions, and are prepared to back their opinion by putting their hands in their pockets. Mr Walker is one of these men, and if his example were followed by a dozen more, the present depression of this goldfield would soon disappear.³⁷⁸

'Not many members' were present when Walker presented his proposal to the union's executive. After explaining his proposals 'at great length', an 'interesting discussion' ensued, after which he was asked to present 'in writing his scheme, what concessions he wants, and other particulars', to enable the executive 'to deal definitely with the matter'. Walker 'readily agreed', and promised to consult again. In response to a suggestion that union members be asked to vote on it, Walker clearly did not want this to delay matters, being 'desirous of losing as little time as possible' and planning to interview 'the Government on the subject during the coming session'.³⁷⁹ He wrote to the union providing the details desired. The area was to be

not less than 500 acres, the period of lease 42 years, renewable, the rental to be merely nominal, but that 1 1/4% from dividends be devoted as rent and 1 1/4% given as a maintenance to the Thames Hospital. No less than £5,000 to be spent in labour alone in each of the first three years, and then the expenditure for labour to be increased regularly, and duly as successful developments proceed.

³⁷⁷ Editorial, *Thames Star*, 26 June 1901, p. 2.

³⁷⁸ Editorial ['Mr Walker Again'], *Thames Star*, 26 June 1901, p. 2.

³⁷⁹ *Thames Star*, 29 June 1901, p. 3.

He wanted 'at least one year' to prepare plans and obtain working capital, a period which could be extended with the unanimous approval of the warden, mining inspector, and a union representative. The *Thames Star* noted that there was 'no reference to the ground being excluded from the goldfield', which it understood was Walker's 'principal request'.³⁸⁰ At the end of July, the union supported the scheme, and agreed to approach the government on his behalf once a plan of the area was produced.³⁸¹ In late June it was reported that 'mining circles' in Auckland approved his scheme and that there was much interest in Thames.³⁸²

At the end of July, William Wilkinson, formerly owner and editor of the *Thames Advertiser*,³⁸³ warned McGowan that Walker's plan to float a company 'on the faith of gold being found at the back of the 3 mile radius' of the field seemed 'like another attempt to bleed the English capitalist on the faith of concessions by the NZ Govt and its approval'. Wilkinson had spent £1,500 on three drives on part of this ground without finding gold, and claimed that mine managers opposed Walker's schemes; he was critical of 'the coerced sympathy' of the union leaders, who were 'easily led by Walker's specious arguments and promises'.³⁸⁴

Early in August, Walker announced that the details were 'rapidly approaching completion'. What was 'really proposed' was to extend the direction of the Moanataiari tunnel in a south-easterly direction for about a mile and three quarters, with prospecting cross-cuts and shafts. He wanted 640 acres, or one square mile, on special terms. The *Thames Star* trusted that 'the mission of our veteran mining enthusiast', who had 'shown an example in originality and pluck to many, and particularly to those who are too prone to decry the field', would be 'in every way successful'.³⁸⁵ Later that month, it feared the scheme was doomed because it required special legislation.³⁸⁶

On 20 August, Walker asked McGowan to approve his scheme for 'exhaustively developing' 640 acres 'on the dividing range immediately

³⁸⁰ *Thames Star*, 25 July 1901, p. 2.

³⁸¹ *Thames Star*, 24 July 1901, p. 2.

³⁸² *Thames Star*, 25 June 1901, p. 2.

³⁸³ See *New Zealand Herald*, 23 September 1921, p. 6.

³⁸⁴ William Wilkinson to James McGowan, 29 July 1901, Mines Department, MD 1, 1901/1419, ANZ-W.

³⁸⁵ *Thames Star*, 9 August 1901, p. 2.

³⁸⁶ Editorial, *Thames Star*, 21 August 1901, p. 2.

eastward of the already occupied mines'. He intended to work this area, between 1,800 and 2,300 feet above sea level and 'idle and unoccupied for years', by the 'enlargement and extension indefinitely' of the Moanataiari tunnel, 'the only practical method of doing so thoroughly and economically'. By being driven 2,200 yards it would permit several companies to work their ground at depth, but he had no intention 'to divest' owners of their 'moribund holdings'. As it would take two years to drive the tunnel, test the ore, and sink ventilation bores, he wanted special terms to encourage 'my personal English business friends' to provide capital. 'Indeed it is only among personal friends' that it was possible to obtain capital, and even then only 'under very exceptional circumstances', but was confident he could raise the capital in one year. He wanted the ground granted for 42 years, renewable, with the rent being 'merely nominal but that Government receive one and one quarter per cent of all profits for all time, and that an equal amount be given towards local charities' such as hospitals. He would spend a minimum of £5,000 each year. 'I hold a very sanguine, favourable opinion and view the matter as of great national importance, calculated to bring a renewal of prosperity to the Thames district for a great many years'. A postscript pointed out that a private bill was passed in 1872 permitted the development of private land at Coromandel.³⁸⁷ The *Thames Star* noted that 'since the olden days no miner or speculator has proposed to construct' such a tunnel, and could not 'but admire' his 'hopefulness' and trusted that 'his courage and persistency will be rewarded'.³⁸⁸ At the end of the month he returned from visiting Wellington, where he had discussed his proposals. 'Mr Walker is of a sanguine temperament, and ultimately hopes to reap some benefit from his journey to see the Minister of Mines, but so far he cannot flatter himself that he has made much progress' because a private bill would have to be passed by parliament, which required 'both time and money'.³⁸⁹

While the matter was being considered in Wellington, Walker continued to be 'sanguine that something will come of his prospecting proposals'.³⁹⁰ Cabinet resolved, in October, to lay the proposal on the table

³⁸⁷ J.W. Walker to James McGowan, 20 August 1901, Mines Department, MD 1, 1901/1419, ANZ-W; printed in *Thames Star*, 31 August 1901, p. 3.

³⁸⁸ Editorial, *Thames Star*, 31 August 1901, p. 2.

³⁸⁹ *Thames Star*, 31 August 1901, p. 3.

³⁹⁰ *Thames Star*, 31 August 1901, p. 3, 17 October 1901, p. 2.

of the House of Representatives and refer it to the Goldfields Committee.³⁹¹ Later that month, this committee recommended that the government reserve the area for three years, and if in that time a tunnel was completed to its boundary, it would be leased to Walker at a peppercorn rent. As well, he would be granted lesser labour conditions but was required to spend £5,000 annually in wages.³⁹² The *Thames Star* feared that these conditions would ‘not, we fear, please’ him, and was ‘very doubtful’ if he would accept them, for it considered £5,000 to be ‘a large sum to be compelled to expend for practically no concession’. Under the regulations, he could hold the ground for one-third of that sum, and yet if he spent £15,000 extending the Moanataiari tunnel ‘concessions touching labor conditions may be granted’. It wanted the government to extend the tunnel because it would ‘benefit the whole community’, and berated McGowan for not recommending a £1 for £1 subsidy and for not exerting his influence more.³⁹³

Walker, frustrated that it might be ‘many months’ before the government reached a decision, requested that his plans be returned.³⁹⁴ Then, having read the details of the committee’s recommendation, he decided that ‘said terms – as far as they go – are fairly reasonable and practical, and as such may induce capital to meet the case’. But until peace was ‘firmly established’ in South Africa there would ‘be no market for any such scheme as mine’, and requiring the tunnel to reach his boundary was ‘cutting matters too fine’ for this reason in addition to ‘all the possibilities that lend to hinderment in a work of such character and magnitude’. He would have to make terms with the owners of all the ‘more or less moribund Companies’ whose ground he would cross.

My idea is to make such an Adit as will serve practically for fifty years – as a thoroughfare and waterway for the district, with due provision for double lines of rails suitable for much heavier traffic than has obtained hitherto – A safe and permanent travelling way between the lines of rails, and, under said gangway, a semicircular line of large earthenware fluming.

³⁹¹ Memorandum by Secretary of Cabinet, 12 October 1901, Mines Department, MD 1, 1901/1419, ANZ-W.

³⁹² Memorandum by Goldfields and Mines Committee, 24 October 1901, Mines Department, MD 1, 1901/1419, ANZ-W.

³⁹³ Editorial, *Thames Star*, 26 October 1901, p. 2.

³⁹⁴ J.W. Walker to James McGowan, 24 October 1901 (telegram); J.W. Walker to James McGowan, 26 October 1901, Mines Department, MD 1, 1901/1419, ANZ-W.

Taking all this into consideration, and also keeping in view the cost and time necessary in drilling air shafts, lighting and ventilating the works &c &c I submit that a limit of three years and a penalty of forfeiture in the conditions would militate against my efforts to raise the required capital –

I respectfully request that Ministers will understand that I am more than in earnest respecting as this matter concerns myself personally – I have the best of reasons for anticipating an enormous success, although most probably I shall not live to see the results, or much of them –

But for thirty two years Thames has been my home, and I shall leave there children and grandchildren for whose welfare and future, as also that of this mining Community, I have naturally special concern.³⁹⁵

Two days later, he told McGowan that the conditions ‘satisfy me’,³⁹⁶ and on following day wrote ‘To the Thames “Evening Star,” Beautiful Star’, about its editorial doubting he would be satisfied with the recommendations:

On the contrary I am much pleased with these recommendations – as far as they go – and they go quite far enough to convince me that the Committee are in earnest, and that whatever in them is not entirely acceptable and practical, they (the members of the Committee) are evidently in the proper frame of mind to grant all such reasonable and necessary modifications as they deem conducive to the success of the undertaking.

Once the tunnel reaches his ground and ‘extension of drives and proper ventilation works are in going order’, he expected there would be ‘scope for profitably spending annually far more in labor than merely £5000’. Because his was a ‘national undertaking’, the government would ‘doubtless’ frame its regulations appropriately.

Presumably the members of the Committee are not now, or ever have been, practical miners, and therefore may be forgiven if they have not realised fully the pros and cons – so to speak – connected with my scheme, and indeed, I submit, that the details should be relegated to a body of competent practical men whose function

³⁹⁵ J.W. Walker to James McGowan, 26 October 1901, Mines Department, MD 1, 1901/1419, ANZ-W; *New Zealand Herald*, 25 October 1901, p. 5.

³⁹⁶ J.W. Walker to James McGowan, 28 October 1901 (telegram), Mines Department, MD 1, 1901/1419, ANZ-W.

would be to draw up recommendations to guide both the Goldfields' Committee and the Cabinet. There are complicated considerations involved which only practical men are competent to handle. For instance, there is my fiery friend, Mr Michael O'Keeffe³⁹⁷ and his merry men of the Miners' Union. They must be made perfectly certain and satisfied that business is meant, not shepherding – mining, not merely marketing. Then, seeing that I shall have to drive some thousands of feet through the Moanataiari and other companies' ground, thereby giving them access to depths and deposits they could not otherwise attain, I shall want to know, in advance, where I shall “come in.” There is nothing unreasonable in that I think – and these details can be settled locally. But my greatest trouble is in the indefinite protraction of this disastrous Boer war, the result of which includes the complete collapse (so far as mining is concerned) of [the] London Stock Exchange. I cannot move until peace is firmly established, and until the resumption from the Transvaal of its glorious monthly output of 600,000ozs of gold. Think of it – Dear Star. Nearly two and a half million pounds sterling per month – and for years past every month has been a record – each “going better” than that preceding. What price Waihi Company with its £40,000 per month? compared with Africa. We are indeed small potatoes. But there are lots more Waihis in our island, as time and good legislation will prove. Meantime I am anxious to speedily procure my concession, so that I may immediately open communication with my business connections on the subject, giving time for the idea to spread and to soak in. I claim to differ from the old (or new) time “Sturdy Beggar” brand of requisitionists, inasmuch as – hat in hand – I seek no favor or subsidy from Government – I merely ask permission to develop, in the only manner possible, 640 acres of otherwise valueless land.³⁹⁸

The newspaper considered this ‘characteristic letter’ proved Walker to be ‘more easily pleased than we had thought he would be’ if he considered the committee members were

in earnest and their recommendation is an earnest of better things to come. We have before remarked that Mr Walker was a sanguine man, and we now find we were not mistaken in our estimate of the man. We like sanguine men, their effect on other men is health-giving and stimulating, and on the Thames at present we are lacking in enterprising and progressive men.

³⁹⁷ See chapter on Michael Dineen O'Keeffe.

³⁹⁸ Letter from J.W. Walker, *Thames Star*, 30 October 1901, p. 3.

It concluded, ‘Go ahead Mr Walker. “Contented wi little and canty [‘merry, brisk, and lively’]³⁹⁹ wi mair,” is an adage of your country, and when dealing with Governments and Ministers of Mines “blessed is he who expected little” ’.⁴⁰⁰ The following day, another editorial regretted that he ‘did not meet with much success’ when he had visited Wellington apart from McGowan agreeing to put his request to Cabinet. As McGowan had warned that probably a private bill would have to be moved to provide the necessary authority to do what Walker requested, the newspaper gave details of the 1872 private bill that enabled a tunnel to be constructed near Coromandel.⁴⁰¹

Shortly afterwards, Walker told the newspaper that he understood the committee would require him to spend £5,000 annually only after the tunnel reached his land, which would be within three years.⁴⁰² Later in November, it was clarified that he would not receive absolute title to the ground until the tunnel was extended to its boundary; in the meantime, the government would stop anyone else acquiring this ground during this time. The *Thames Star* considered that this ‘conditional title’ would not help Walker to obtain capital.⁴⁰³ Walker continued to seek the backing of the union, but in late December the newspaper regretting ‘to learn that owing to recent circumstances’ he was ‘not so sanguine about his prospecting scheme’, and hoped the new difficulties would be ‘overcome’.⁴⁰⁴

In mid-February 1902, a *Thames Star* columnist asked whether Walker had ‘not withdrawn from his big scheme owing to lack of support and enthusiasm, and if has not stowed away his maps for future reference. “A time will yet come,” he says, “and the maps will be useful then” ’.⁴⁰⁵ Walker sent the newspaper a ‘characteristic letter’ in April, which, being ‘scarcely in the form for publication’, it summarized. He expressed ‘his faith in the future of the goldfields, and his determination to do his share in developing them’, and wanted the union to be more aware of the need for

³⁹⁹ Eric Partridge, *A Dictionary of Slang and Unconventional English*, 8 ed., ed. Paul Beale (London, 1984), p. 180.

⁴⁰⁰ Editorial, *Thames Star*, 30 October 1901, p. 2.

⁴⁰¹ Editorial, *Thames Star*, 31 August 1901, p. 2.

⁴⁰² Letter from J.W. Walker, *Thames Star*, 4 November 1901, p. 3.

⁴⁰³ *Thames Star*, 22 November 1901, p. 2.

⁴⁰⁴ *Thames Star*, 20 December 1901, p. 2.

⁴⁰⁵ ‘Our Telephone – Can You Tell Me’, *Thames Star*, 12 February 1902, p. 4.

good relations with capitalists, 'without which good prospecting cannot be prosecuted'. The newspaper assured Walker it would help to spread his views and assist his efforts 'to develop the resources of the goldfield, increase the prosperity of the district, and benefit the working miner'.⁴⁰⁶ The following month, Walker reportedly had not abandoned his scheme and would seek union support once more.⁴⁰⁷ One month later, in mid-June, the newspaper regretted that he had 'lost heart over ever satisfactorily arranging for the prospecting of that portion of the goldfield beyond Punga Flat. He has determined, as he says, to shake off the dust of Thames, and leave it and its concerns after a sojourn of half a lifetime'.⁴⁰⁸

At the end of August, the union discussed with the borough council how to help mining. Walker received the telegram informing him of this meeting too late for him to attend, but he was expected to attend the subsequent public meeting and to 'bring forward some practical proposals'.⁴⁰⁹ Before he attended the latter, the *Thames Star* reported that he had 'a prescription in his pocket for the cure of the ills we are afflicted with, but he is not at all sure whether his patients, the Thames miners, will swallow the medicine', and suggested 'Dr Walker' should 'sugarcoat his pills'.⁴¹⁰ After the meeting heard union leaders attack the amount of protection granted and claims being larger than 100 acres, Walker said he 'had no doubt that protection was sometimes abused, but at the same time it was often necessary'. He proposed that 'suitable mining men' be selected to

devise some rational scheme for the improvement of the situation. The fault was that no development work was done. Tributing and fossicking was very well, but the present workings could not last much longer. He believed there was a big future before the Thames, but it would only arrive when development works were instituted. His idea was that there were three ways of instituting development works: (1) opening the deep levels; (2) working the country at the back of the present Thames field; (3) working the field under the Firth of Thames. All of the schemes involved great expenditure, but he believed the capital to carry them out could be obtained if the money market was taken at the right time.

⁴⁰⁶ Editorial, *Thames Star*, 12 April 1902, p. 2.

⁴⁰⁷ *Thames Star*, 10 May 1902, p. 4.

⁴⁰⁸ *Thames Star*, 17 June 1902, p. 2.

⁴⁰⁹ *Thames Star*, 30 August 1902, p. 4.

⁴¹⁰ *Thames Star*, 5 September 1902, p. 2.

His motion that the mayor, the union's president, and the chairman of the county council should 'jointly appoint a number of men acquainted with mining and formulate a scheme for developing the gold' was carried without dissent.⁴¹¹ The *Thames Star* commented that it did

not suppose that Mr Walker had any intention to "burst up" the meeting at the Miners' Union Hall last night, but his speech and resolution did so most effectively. As soon as the meeting agreed to pass over the duty of devising a scheme to a committee, of course all further discussion was out of place, and so it happened that a meeting called for a specific objected ended in doing nothing.⁴¹²

Its editorial considered that Walker's proposal 'simply means putting off the question indefinitely. Nothing will result from it. The meeting was called on the initiative of the Miners' Union, for practical men to suggest a rational scheme, as Mr Walker terms it, and what was the result? Nothing practical'.⁴¹³

According to the Waihi newspaper, Walker wanted to speak to a special meeting of the union, but it 'dissolved without hearing him' because it did not share his wish to encourage English capitalists to invest. Walker was 'a forcible speaker, and well worth listening to', but it was 'very evident he was not wanted the other night'.⁴¹⁴ One week after the meeting, his letter about 'finding remedy and relief' was published:

The matters may be divided as follows:- 1st, Immediate relief; 2nd, Permanent relief. Immediate relief is perhaps obtainable by getting the Minister of Mines to have all "workable" and idle leased ground at once thrown open on reasonable terms to tribute parties, or that it shall otherwise be fully manned in terms of the agreement under which the licenses were granted. These suggestions apply only to the land between the beach and Punga Flat, being the old Thames proper, and the word "workable" means only such land as can be worked "water-free" and without costly machinery. But, alas! such relief can be only partial and temporary. I suspect most of our practical miners fully realise that any gleanings obtainable now around our old workings will

⁴¹¹ *Thames Star*, 6 September 1902, p. 1.

⁴¹² *Thames Star*, 6 September 1902, p. 2.

⁴¹³ Editorial, *Thames Star*, 6 September 1902, p. 2.

⁴¹⁴ *Waihi Daily Telegraph*, n.d., reprinted in *Thames Star*, 11 September 1903, p. 4.

not go far towards a Thames revival or even driving the wolf from our doors. The fact is that unless new and extensive development works are started on a large scale to render new ground available, we shall soon have no use for miners, or unions, in the district. But meantime, by all means, compel companies who own “workable” ground either to work or surrender it.

While there were reasons for ‘confidence in the future of the old Thames proper’, he warned his readers not to ‘flinch’ from the fact that ‘the good old days’ of successful small mining parties was ‘gone, and gone for ever, and more’s the pity’. For ‘permanent relief’, he ‘thoroughly’ believed in the three schemes he suggested at the public meeting. ‘Each of them is a large order. But there they are, and here also we have the skilled labor and the will to test their merits respectively. But the land and the labor are helpless and hopeless unless they unite cheerfully and give to “filthy lucre” a fair share of the spoils as inducement to join the firm’.⁴¹⁵

In October, at a conference of ‘district representatives’, he suggested that they ‘take each portion of the field separately’ and discover which companies ‘had their ground locked up’. After arguing in favour of tributing, when asked to provide information about his scheme to extend the Moanataiari tunnel eastward he explained that ‘it meant the expenditure of a lot of capital’ and ‘would have to be dealt with in a thorough businesslike way without the interference of tinkering legislation. It was a work that would have to be done at contract price’. When the union’s president interjected: ‘Why don’t you import niggers?’ he responded that this comment ‘did not come well’ from him. ‘If such a proposal were hedged round with impossible conditions, then there was an end of it, for the present, but their grandchildren might benefit from the carry out of such a scheme’. After a ‘desultory conversation’, Walker’s proposal to extend the tunnel was referred to the Mining Improvement Committee.⁴¹⁶ After it recommended boring to find good lodes, Walker continued to recommend his own solution, and was asked for more details.⁴¹⁷

In August 1903, when he was granted several abandoned claims, it was reported that he planned to go to England to raise capital to test these by boring.⁴¹⁸ Two days afterwards, it was noted that Henry Hopper

⁴¹⁵ Letter from J.W. Walker, *Thames Star*, 11 September 1902, p. 3.

⁴¹⁶ *Thames Star*, 15 October 1902, p. 2.

⁴¹⁷ *Thames Star*, 8 October 1902, p. 2, 28 October 1902, p. 4.

⁴¹⁸ *Thames Star*, 3 August 1903, p. 2.

Adams,⁴¹⁹ in extending the Moanataiari tunnel, was doing what Walker had advocated but that Adams' development was the 'first practical proposition'.⁴²⁰ In October Walker provided detailed reasons why Tararu was the only site for a better harbour. 'There are now also over half a million tons of invaluable tailings annually on the way from Waihi, etc, towards your foreshore, and as this quantity is ever on the increase it forms a factor to be reckoned with believe me'. Forestalling the accusation that 'I am 'grinding my own little axe', he responded with 'a frank and free admission that I will benefit just in proportion as will every man and woman in the district according to the interest they happen to hold and feel in Thames prosperity'.⁴²¹ In late 1904 he again wanted the deep levels worked by one large company,⁴²² his last reported view on Thames mining, although, according to a January 1905 report, despite then living in Auckland he kept 'closely in touch with all mining matters pertaining to Thames'.⁴²³ In late 1906 it was stated that he had tried 'to boom Thames stocks' in London.⁴²⁴

WAIHI MINING, 1902-1915

After his attempt to obtain large areas at Thames failed, at the end of July 1902 Walker discussed with the Waihi Miners' Union committee 'matters of moment to themselves, and other matters pertaining to mining prospects' there,⁴²⁵ but nothing came of this initiative immediately. In August 1903, he pegged out seven claims, each of 100 acres, known as Walker's Waihi Central Nos. 1-3 and Walker's Waihi Gigantic Nos. 1-4.⁴²⁶ Walker, 'Obadiah' commented, was 'simply evergreen', seeming 'to defy the hand of time as the years pass away. Rumour credits Mr Walker with having expressed the intention of paying an early visit to London' to raise

⁴¹⁹ See paper on his life.

⁴²⁰ Editorial, *Thames Star*, 5 August 1903, p. 2.

⁴²¹ Letter from J.W. Walker, *Thames Star*, 15 October 1903, p. 4.

⁴²² *Thames Star*, 8 November 1904, p. 4.

⁴²³ *Thames Star*, 6 January 1905, p. 3.

⁴²⁴ 'Obadiah', 'Shares and Mining', *Observer*, 13 October 1906, p. 20.

⁴²⁵ *Ohinemuri Gazette*, 1 August 1902, p. 2; *Thames Star*, 1 August 1902, p. 2.

⁴²⁶ Waihi Warden's Court, *Thames Star*, 22 October 1903, p. 4; *New Zealand Mines Record*, 16 October 1903, p. 115.

capital ‘to prospect new ventures’ by diamond drilling.⁴²⁷ He had obtained some options to float there.⁴²⁸ Friends in England advised him about the state of the mining market; for instance, one warned him that New Zealand was ‘absolutely unknown at the present time’.⁴²⁹ In mid-December that year, he wrote to the *New Zealand Herald* about developing Waihi:

Since the floating and inception of the Waihi Company in 1887, and of the Grand Junction Company in 1894, the progress of those two mines has demonstrated, among other things, that mining, to succeed under the existing conditions there, must be conducted on a scale and at a cost and risk hitherto not necessary or contemplated in our previous experience elsewhere.

It was all very well in the early days of Thames prosperity to float, and more or less successfully run, companies on a capital of £10,000 to £20,000 (even that being mostly only “on paper”) and with areas of three to 30 acres. Those were the days of rich specimen finds at and near [the] surface, and on elevations mostly giving free, level drainage. Those were the happy, happy days of mining’s childhood, now, alas! gone, and for ever – more is the pity. But the mines at Waihi (outside the Martha Hill elevation) in order to have any chance of eventual success, must first possess an extensive area, and second, each must find about a-quarter million of money wherewith to first prove and afterwards deal with its mineral values.

The necessary areas are there all right, and are obtainable on terms easy and simple enough. But the trouble comes when we look around for the coin. No doubt the money would flow in fast enough provided that each mine had positive and previous assurance of rivalling the Waihi Company in producing its 50 thousands monthly. Such an assurance would simplify and satisfy everything and everybody. Unfortunately the coin must come first, the assurance only afterwards (if at all), and therein lies the trouble – my trouble, everybody’s trouble! If we had but 10 or 20 “Waihi” companies each yielding its £650,000 per annum – yes, “if!” But why not?

Is there a chance, a possibility, a hope, that there are more available rich deposits than those already in evidence? True, mining “certainties” don’t exist. But at Waihi the outlook is exceptionally favourable, and when the Grand Junction fulfils its present promises (certainly not until then) there will be lots of money procurable for developments further afield, provided

⁴²⁷ ‘Obadiah’, ‘Shares and Mining’, *Observer*, 8 August 1903, p. 20.

⁴²⁸ *Observer*, 17 August 1912, p. 4.

⁴²⁹ *Thames Star*, 6 October 1903, p. 2.

always, and also, that the capitalist sees that he will get “a fair run” for his money. But otherwise he will leave us severely alone. Among the essentials towards this consummation are:- (1) Security of tenure; (2) freedom of contract; and (3) the right to procure labour and materials in the open market and at market price. Can we afford to give such concessions in order to coax Mr John Bull to assist us to realize what we are unable to procure without his co-operation? Most certainly we can, and we must do so, unless, indeed, we are content to see Waihi stagnate and our mining population leave us – or starve.

Personally I may perhaps have an exaggerated opinion regarding the mineral resources of the Waihi district, but my estimate of the costs and the difficulties of attainment is no exaggeration whatever, and this letter is penned with the purpose of inducing all concerned, directly and indirectly (and who are not concerned?), to meet the Honourable Minister for Mines – by deputation – on his arrival among us in order to thrash out a means of procuring for capital requisite security of tenure and other facilities whereby we may obtain the object in view at the earliest opportunity. The Honourable the Minister, although perhaps not much of a miner, is a very capable and a successful business man, and doubtless will take a firm, practical grasp of the whole situation, and will deal accordingly with it when all the circumstances have been deliberately considered and thoroughly understood by him.

I am no advocate for granting to capital unconditional freeholds on what has been termed – more or less facetiously – the “miner’s birthrights.” The miner, however, must realize that capital also has “Birthrights,” and moreover, it is always able and ready to protect them. Those birthrights (?) of the miner don’t, anyhow, amount to much at Waihi, or elsewhere, as long as they remain buried a thousand or more feet underground.

New Zealand will, indeed, owe much to the Government and to the Minister that formulate an equitable mining code whereby Messrs Capital and Labour can amicably join hands on level terms for the speedy development of Waihi’s mineral resources.⁴³⁰

An editorial referred readers to this letter from ‘a well-known mining authority’, and summarized his views. ‘The object of his letter is to stimulate interest in this matter, so that the Government may be induced to take some action’.⁴³¹ Walker’s subsequent letter cited a recent American report on how mining there had been transformed through the introduction of modern mining machinery, with science replacing speculation. After this

⁴³⁰ Letter from J.W. Walker, *New Zealand Herald*, 14 December 1903, p. 3.

⁴³¹ Editorial, *New Zealand Herald*, 14 December 1903, p. 4.

long extract, he concluded by ‘hoping to live long enough to see and enjoy similar results from similar deserving enterprise at Waihi’.⁴³² The *Observer* published a flattering response to Walker’s initiative:

“Long Drive” Walker has always been one of the optimists who’s 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... This week he writes to the *Herald* in his old hopeful strain as to the big things he looks for at Waihi. He hopes to live long enough to see the same big results there that mining enterprise has achieved in America. Though he is 77 now, Mr Walker is full of plans of flotations, and having sold his farm at Te Aroha, he starts at once with a packet full of alluring Waihi options.⁴³³

Walker hoped to float ‘several holdings in the neighbourhood of the Grand Junction’ in London.⁴³⁴ In the following March he said he would remain in England until he accomplished something for Waihi, ‘even if it means that he will never return’.⁴³⁵ Before departing at the end of April, when he went to Wellington to consult with the government the *Observer* commented that he seemed ‘to possess the secret of perpetual youth’.⁴³⁶ He returned from London in November, still ‘vigorous and active’, but

without that million sterling of capital for the development of his group of properties at Waihi, and, like Kersey Cooper, with very modified expectations for the investment of foreign capital on our goldfields in the immediate future. But, nevertheless, he doesn’t despair of his flotation being a success when the [Russo-Japanese] war is over and the moment is opportune.⁴³⁷

In an interview he stated that capitalists were not interested in gold mining anywhere. ‘If they could believe there was any possibility of a return

⁴³² Letter from J.W. Walker, *New Zealand Herald*, 19 December 1903, p. 5.

⁴³³ *Observer*, 26 December 1903, p. 5.

⁴³⁴ ‘Obadiah’, ‘Shares and Mining’, *Observer*, 26 December 1903, p. 20; see cartoon, *Observer*, 16 January 1904, p. 5.

⁴³⁵ *Observer*, 5 March 1904, p. 4.

⁴³⁶ *Observer*, 23 April 1904, p. 17.

⁴³⁷ *Observer*, 12 November 1904, p. 4.

for their money they would touch it readily enough, but gold mining is at present quite out of the fashion'. Investors were 'perfectly satisfied with their dividend-paying mines here, but they are not anxious to lay out any more money on anything fresh until they see further ahead'. He was then asked about the properties he had hoped to float:

"Ah," replied Mr Walker sententiously, "the wise man doesn't try to sell a hen on a rainy day, and I have seen too much of London to attempt that. However, I left my business at Home in such a way that when this wretched, weary war is over – I don't think it will be until then – it will be brought to a head. The influence of the war, you will have noted in the fluctuations of Consols. If it goes on indefinitely it will beggar mining. Another thing that may improve the outlook, so far as mining is concerned, will be the coming to the front of a few more New Zealand mines. The properties I took Home were on the lines of the Martha and other Waihi lodes, and when conditions are better I anticipate very little trouble in getting my little business over."⁴³⁸

When Walker visited Waihi in February 1905, a reporter noted that he retained 'considerable mining interests' there, including six claims averaging 100 acres each. Although in his recent trip to London 'nothing of a definite character was achieved in the raising of capital, I understand that indirectly a good deal was done in paving the way for future operations'. Walker 'facetiously calls these mining areas his sheep runs. He is convinced that it is necessary, owing to depths of the reefs and other characteristics peculiar to the field, to have long areas to operate on'.⁴³⁹ On 22 May, in a deed of option signed with the Waihi Alma Company, by paying 10s he was granted the right to purchase its five claims for £13,500 within 18 months from 1 June. On the same date, an agreement was signed with the same company that, should he sell any of its properties, he would receive a commission of a quarter of 'all moneys shares or other consideration received by the Company'.⁴⁴⁰ Immediately afterwards, he left for London on his fifth trip to obtain capital.⁴⁴¹

⁴³⁸ *Auckland Weekly News*, 10 November 1904, p. 27.

⁴³⁹ *Thames Star*, 22 February 1905, p. 1.

⁴⁴⁰ Deed of Option, 22 May 1905; Agreement between Waihi Alma Gold Mining Company with J.W. Walker, 22 May 1905, Dufaur, Lusk, Biss, Fawcett Papers, folder 26, MS 93/67, Library of the Auckland Institute and War Memorial Museum.

⁴⁴¹ *Thames Star*, 22 May 1905, p. 2, 22 September 1905, p. 2.

The *Observer* called him ‘Auckland’s champion globe-trotter’, and later wrote that he ‘again scampered off to London like a released school-boy with more options’.⁴⁴² His voyages to London had ‘become as commonplace an occurrence as a mere ferry trip’. He wanted ‘to be on the spot at the crucial moment when the conclusion of the Russo-Japanese war and the developments in the Waihi Grand Junction Mine make capital available for at least a prospecting shaft on his properties in the neighbourhood of the Junction’, being ‘determined to get down to the low levels’.⁴⁴³

Before departing, he had written to the secretary of the Waihi Miners’ Union about the state of mining at Thames and Waihi:

At Waihi the real position, outside the Waihi and Junction Companies, is none too lively. The Extended are certainly shaping towards real work, and only require capital wherewith the make a mine. The Gladstone is another of our “noblest sights, struggling with adversity.” Many other sections are held under leases; some are boring, and otherwise “marking time:” but everyone knows that these can have no real value unless and until they can each procure a working capital of at least £100,000. We may say that we have a deadlock at Waihi as well as at the Thames, hence the urgent necessity of having the mining regulations so amended that both labour and capital may join hands on level terms and get to work opening new mines. At the present moment there is not the slightest chance of raising money in England or elsewhere for any mining proposition whatever, but the end of the Russia-Japan war will let loose a lot of England’s hoarded surplus money, and your Miners’ Union will do well to set traps for securing a share of it for the development and materializing of the otherwise unattainable wealth of your district. One vexed question impending at Waihi is drainage, and I venture to suggest that a Royal Commission or other body be empowered herein to guide legislation both for the Thames and for Waihi. At Waihi, with its large and continuous lode system, drainage will necessarily, and always, be a heavy item of expenditure, and just here I may remind you that I raised the question years ago of bringing in an adit from the beach, whereby the “lift” would be lessened some 380ft at least. This adit, if brought in on the ascertained line of reef system, would obviously be of immense benefit and importance for many future years.⁴⁴⁴

⁴⁴² *Observer*, ‘They Say’, 27 May 1905, p. 7, 17 August 1912, p. 4.

⁴⁴³ *Observer*, 27 May 1905, p. 5.

⁴⁴⁴ Letter from J.W. Walker, n.d. [early 1905], *Auckland Weekly News*, 15 June 1905, p. 37.

In late November, the *Observer* commented that he did not seem 'to have struck London at an opportune time for raising capital for his budget of mining ventures'. Reportedly he was 'killing time about Europe till after the New Year, when he hopes to find the London market more approachable'. It expected that, in the meantime, he 'could be depended upon to enjoy life to the full. Those buoyant spirits of his would do credit to a man one-fourth his years'.⁴⁴⁵ The *Thames Star* believed he had raised sufficient money to work the group of mines known as 'Walker's Waihi Gigantic'.⁴⁴⁶ The following month, a Waihi friend received a letter from him explaining that although he had had great hopes of raising money once the Russo-Japanese War ended, it had been succeeded by trouble in Morocco, a revolution in Russia, and an upcoming election in Britain. 'All of these combine towards keeping coin out of my reach. The outlook is anything but cheerful, but I intend to hang on, although it feels like hoping against hope'. He even expected food riots in London.⁴⁴⁷ Another private letter, written in mid-January 1906, revealed that he remained most optimistic about the long-term prospects of Waihi:

I note all you say concerning the wonderful developments in the Waihi mine, also your remarks re Waihi Beach. The reports from the Grand Junction are also all very favourable indeed. I have no doubt whatever respecting the ultimate and wonderful future of the Waihi district. Whoever lives long enough will see twenty or thirty thousand people thriving in the district. But we want money wherewith to realize these predictions, and that, at present, is not easily procurable. There is abundant money here now and always, but none for such goods as I brought here. Anything but gold is saleable here at present. Strange, it is not, but true. The bounders of South Africa have sickened the British public and also foreign speculators, so that they are overloaded with gold shares which they bought at prices ten times above the present quotations.

Yes, money is cheap and abundant for copper, tin, coal, oil, and for anything and everything. Now, fancy a man in his seventy-ninth year trying to beat down a foolish prejudice such as I have indicated. I think you will admit that mine is a very large contract. Indeed, but for my abundant confidence in the intrinsic value of Waihi as a specially wonderful field, I would throw up my cards, and come back to try and shake the rheumatism from

⁴⁴⁵ *Observer*, 25 November 1905, p. 5.

⁴⁴⁶ *Thames Star*, 25 November 1905, p. 2.

⁴⁴⁷ *Thames Star*, 18 December 1905, p. 4.

my old bones in the lovely healing springs of Te Aroha. I am informed that this one is a mild winter. Well, perhaps it is so. Anyhow, I can't find any use for mildness (?), and I am languishing for the day I can complete my mission and get back among you.⁴⁴⁸

Towards the end of 1905, work started in 'Walker's Gigantic Mine'.⁴⁴⁹ In the year to May 1906, 'Walker's "Gigantic" Group' employed eight men and spent about £1,000 sinking a shaft, which when down 60 feet struck more water than could be extracted by windlass and bucket, requiring the driving of an adit.⁴⁵⁰ In February, reportedly Walker 'pines to return to the New Zealand climate, but finds the floating of gold-mines on the London market an uphill game'.⁴⁵¹ When he returned in September he had to announce that he had been unable to raise much capital during his 18 months away. 'My friends and my own common sense made it clear to me that I would have to stay another twelve months to complete my mission, but I was not prepared to do that'. He had left details enabling his London representative to float his properties at a favourable time.⁴⁵² (By then, a syndicate had taken over 400 acres of his Waihi ground.)⁴⁵³ It was believed he had 'something up his sleeve' but was 'well able to disguise his feelings'.⁴⁵⁴ He had 'returned from his last – absolutely the last – trip Home to London to boom Thames stocks in general and Waihi in particular. He tells a mournful tale of Londoners' interest in New Zealand or any gold mining', but hoped mining would revive; 'when it does, he has planted his stocks in good ground for a full crop'.⁴⁵⁵ When he visited Waihi in October, the local newspaper commented that his trip seemed 'to have given him

⁴⁴⁸ J.W. Walker to W.M. Jackson, 12 January 1906, printed in *Waihi Daily Telegraph*, 17 February 1906, p. 3, *Thames Star*, 19 February 1906, p. 2, and *Auckland Weekly News*, 22 February 1906, p. 25.

⁴⁴⁹ James Coutts to Under-Secretary, Mines Department, 6 April 1907, *AJHR*, 1907, C-3, p. 12.

⁴⁵⁰ Warden to Under-Secretary, Mines Department, 22 May 1906, *AJHR*, 1906, C-3, p. 92.

⁴⁵¹ 'They Say', *Observer*, 24 February 1906, p. 7.

⁴⁵² *Thames Star*, 29 September 1906, p. 4.

⁴⁵³ *Thames Star*, 13 September 1906, p. 2.

⁴⁵⁴ 'They Say', *Observer*, 6 October 1906, p. 7.

⁴⁵⁵ 'Obadiah', 'Shares and Mining', *Observer*, 13 October 1906, p. 20.

fresh energy'.⁴⁵⁶ In the following May he was rumoured to be contemplating 'another trip to England in search of capital'.⁴⁵⁷

The 'drainage adit' in his 'Gigantic' mine had been driven 300 feet before it stopped, before April 1907, 50 feet short of the shaft, to arrange for more capital. An average of three men had driven it, for £800.⁴⁵⁸ In that month he revisited Waihi, where a correspondent noted that his appearance there was 'generally the forerunner of something fresh'.⁴⁵⁹ In March 1908, the mining inspector reported that, 'after a considerable amount of prospecting work' had been 'carried out in the way of driving and sinking, the mine was closed down and protection applied for'.⁴⁶⁰ In the following month he visited to check on the latest developments, and inspected the Junction, in which he had retained an interest.⁴⁶¹

In February 1910, the *Observer*, in reporting that he was about to leave for London, wondered what he was trying to float. '“Long Drive,” as one of the very oldest and most far-seeing mining experts of the Hauraki Peninsula, counts for something with the London capitalist'.⁴⁶² It claimed that if his efforts, along with those of another leading investor, did not 'stir up a New Zealand mining boom about three months hence, sundry wagers made down Thames way will go kite high'.⁴⁶³ The warden's court was told that his 'paramount desire was to bring more English capital to Waihi before he died'.⁴⁶⁴ In October, it was announced that he had formed an English company with a capital of £100,000 to develop properties on the line of the Waihi reefs.⁴⁶⁵ In August the following year, the warden recommended that he be granted the Golden Hill Nos. 1 and 4, encompassing 191 acres.⁴⁶⁶ In early 1912, Walker wrote to a friend:

⁴⁵⁶ *Waihi Daily Telegraph*, 26 October 1906, p. 2.

⁴⁵⁷ 'They Say', *Observer*, 11 May 1907, p. 7.

⁴⁵⁸ James Coutts to Under-Secretary, Mines Department, 6 April 1907, *AJHR*, 1907, C-3, p. 12.

⁴⁵⁹ Waihi Correspondent, *Thames Star*, 27 April 1907, p. 2.

⁴⁶⁰ Boyd Bennie to Under-Secretary, Mines Department, 28 March 1908, *AJHR*, 1908, C-3, p. 15.

⁴⁶¹ *Te Aroha News*, 7 April 1908, p. 2; *Observer*, 11 April 1908, p. 5.

⁴⁶² *Observer*, 5 February 1910, p. 5.

⁴⁶³ 'They Say', *Observer*, 12 February 1910, p. 7.

⁴⁶⁴ *Observer*, 26 February 1910, p. 4.

⁴⁶⁵ *Auckland Weekly News*, 27 October 1910, p. 31.

⁴⁶⁶ Waihi Warden's Court, *Auckland Weekly News*, 17 August 1911, p. 36.

I often think of Thames, of Auckland, of that charming isle of the Pacific called New Zealand, and sometimes the longing to cross the seas is strong within me. But I have a mission to perform and I will endeavour to accomplish it “though the very heavens do fall,” so long as your humble servant is not overwhelmed in the general disorder that would assuredly follow such an event. I am what is called hanging on, and I think that in good – very good – time success will come my way.⁴⁶⁷

Later that year Walker celebrated his eighty-sixth birthday in London, where he was seeking capital to develop the Waihi Monumental Gold Estates. He had ‘written to say he is younger than ever’, and would return shortly. ‘Presumably’, the *Observer* opined, he intended ‘to give up roaming and to devote the next 86 years to Waihi development’, and commented that he had ‘a fairly just claim to be considered the “Father of Waihi” ’.⁴⁶⁸

By June 1914, the Gigantic property had amalgamated with Waihi Reefs Consolidated to form a new company.⁴⁶⁹ In the following month Walker returned from London with ‘new schemes for the development of Waihi in his pockets and with his optimism in full working order’.⁴⁷⁰ Having spent over four years in England trying to raise capital, despite being 86 he was still ‘as buoyant in spirit as ever’, as proved by his telling a reporter that, after over 60 years’ experience of mining, ‘I have not finished with the business yet’. He held 14 leases of 100 acres each between Waihi and the coast, and was certain that ‘plenty of capital’ was available in London to develop them ‘provided that the values are proved, and that satisfactory regulations for the working of them can be obtained’. As existing regulations, ‘made in the days of small things’, were ‘the greatest drawback’ to their flotation, he would seek the support of the business community and the union for changes that would ‘tend to encourage the inflow of capital on a large scale’ for Waihi. ‘Nothing on a small scale is of any use to us’, and once he was given ‘sufficient encouragement’ he would ‘take prompt steps to

⁴⁶⁷ Letter from J.W. Walker to an unspecified friend, printed in *Thames Star*, 27 March 1912, p. 2.

⁴⁶⁸ *Observer*, 17 August 1912, p. 4.

⁴⁶⁹ Inspecting Engineer to Under-Secretary, Mines Department, 30 June 1914, *AJHR*, 1914, C-2, p. 21.

⁴⁷⁰ *Observer*, 11 July 1914, p. 4.

prove the value of his leases'.⁴⁷¹ The *Observer* reported his telling 'his friends that if his Waihi scheme comes off he's on velvet for life. Providing for when old age comes on, eh? Old 90 not out'.⁴⁷²

Later that month, he visited Waihi to seek support for obtaining amendments to the Mining Act to enable him to raise English capital for his 14 claims, covering 1,360 acres, known as the Waihi Monumental Gold Estates. Part of 'the Gigantic group', extending eastward to Waihi Beach, these containing two large lodes. Walker explained that he sought 'the sympathy and support' of the borough council, businessmen, and the union in asking the government to modify the regulations. If modified, he had 'the assurance of a group of London investors in mining propositions that they will find the money for the development of my claims'. He intended to petition parliament that he would 'not be compelled to comply with the manning clauses', that the titles would 'hold good', and that the annual rental would be reduced to one shilling per acre.

If these concessions are granted, I undertake within 12 months to commence work and to carry on continuously. In the event of a cessation of operations for a period of six months I agree to forfeit all right and title to the property and all work carried on to the Government. My scheme is to put in an adit level and drive a tunnel right through the group at about sea-level, and to throw out crosscuts right and left at intervals to determine whether the Waihi reef system lives out east and whether pay ore exists in this direction. In places the proposed tunnel will give as much as 900ft of backs. If these developments afford sufficient encouragement my people in London will be quite prepared to find £100,000, or more, if necessary, for the installation of a pumping plant to enable me to test the property at a greater depth. I see no reason why the tunnel should not do for Waihi what the Moanataiari tunnel did for that section of the Thames field through which it was projected. I may add that until the question has been determined by such a scheme as I have outlined I will never be convinced that the gold-producing area of this field is restricted to the ground held by the Waihi and Waihi Grand Junction Gold Mining Companies. Success would mean much to the Dominion as a whole and to Waihi in particular, and I therefore trust that I will have the hearty co-operation of the people here.⁴⁷³

⁴⁷¹ *New Zealand Herald*, 2 July 1914, p. 5.

⁴⁷² 'They Say', *Observer*, 1 August 1914, p. 11.

⁴⁷³ *Auckland Weekly News*, 16 July 1914, p. 56.

His scheme was 'to drive a tunnel the whole distance of two miles from where the reef outcrops at the sea coast, right to the boundary of the Waihi Gigantic Consolidated, so as to thoroughly prospect the country and at the same time avoid the cost of pumping'. He anticipated the Waihi district becoming 'a great centre of payable mines from the township to the coast'.⁴⁷⁴

His reason for seeking a change to the manning clauses was because the number required to be employed in 14 claims 'would be considerably in excess of those actually required' to drive the tunnel.⁴⁷⁵ The council and its staff, the Chamber of Commerce, and the Ohinemuri Mines and Batteries Employees' Union promptly supported his proposal, stressing that 'the present prospects of obtaining any large sum of money in the mining market are very remote and that the only means of raising capital is to give concessions or inducements to the promoters'.⁴⁷⁶ Five petitions were sent to parliament, none being from Walker himself,⁴⁷⁷ though presumably he signed one of them. After the Goldfields and Mines Committee heard evidence from Walker it recommended that the changes requested be made 'in order to meet the necessities of special cases' such as this.⁴⁷⁸ They were, explicitly to deal with his needs.⁴⁷⁹ 'An Act to Amend the Mining Act, 1908', passed in early November, included Section 32 permitting the warden, when no gold was being obtained, to recommend that rent be reduced and labour regulations be modified or suspended.⁴⁸⁰

In the following month, after his application received the support of the Waihi and Paeroa Chambers of Commerce, the borough and county councils, the union, and 'the public of Waihi', the warden recommended that the minister grant the modifications.⁴⁸¹ In February 1915, when the Goldfields Committee considered his application for exemptions from the regulations, he explained that his proposed tunnel would drain the mines cheaply, cut many reefs, and ensure the future prosperity of the field.

⁴⁷⁴ *Auckland Star*, 24 March 1916, p. 7.

⁴⁷⁵ *Auckland Weekly News*, 23 July 1914, p. 56.

⁴⁷⁶ *Auckland Weekly News*, 6 August 1914, p. 56.

⁴⁷⁷ 'Goldfields and Mines Committee', *AJHR*, I-4, p. 2.

⁴⁷⁸ *Auckland Weekly News*, 17 September 1914, p. 54.

⁴⁷⁹ Peter Gilchrist to J.J. Macky, 15 April 1915, Mines Department, MD 1, 14/1514, ANZ-W.

⁴⁸⁰ *The Statutes of the Dominion of New Zealand* (Wellington, 1914), no. 62, pp. 299-300.

⁴⁸¹ *Auckland Weekly News*, 10 December 1914, p. 54.

Although he wanted five years' exemption from the labour requirements, he was granted one year free of conditions and three more of partial exemption. The minister understood there was sufficient local capital available to commence work.⁴⁸² Being granted 'most favourable amended conditions', in April Walker expected to commence work shortly.⁴⁸³ In August, the rents for his 14 claims were reduced from £1,326 5s to £212 4s, for four years.⁴⁸⁴ But although the *Observer* had quoted him as being very confident 'that huge masses of gold will be sunk in Waihi to bring huge masses out of it',⁴⁸⁵ there were two reasons why nothing came of his last 'gigantic' proposal: quite apart from the First World War not being a good time to seek English capital, the ground he was to drive through was 'almost devoid of gold and silver'.⁴⁸⁶

SKILLS

By his own account, Walker became a mine manager in 1869.⁴⁸⁷ In 1875 he was regarded by the *New Zealand Herald's* Thames correspondent as 'without doubt the highest authority on' that field.⁴⁸⁸ Joshua Jackson, a former mining reporter and then investor, mining agent, and sharebroker,⁴⁸⁹ recommended in 1886 that the government should send 'a practical and sensible man, of the stamp of Walker and other experienced managers, to America to inspect the latest machinery and test New Zealand ore using it.'⁴⁹⁰ When Walker collected references for his application for a mine manager's certificate, granted in March 1887, the chairman of directors and secretary of the Kuranui Hill Company described his work for their company and the previous Long Drive one as 'thoroughly efficient in carrying out the extensive operations in the mines and the Directors can

⁴⁸² *Thames Star*, 22 February 1915, p. 5.

⁴⁸³ *New Zealand Herald*, 28 April 1915, p. 5.

⁴⁸⁴ *Te Aroha News*, 9 August 1915, p. 3.

⁴⁸⁵ *Observer*, 11 July 1914, p. 4.

⁴⁸⁶ P.G. Morgan, *The Geology and Mines of the Waihi District, Hauraki Goldfield, New Zealand* (Geological Survey Bulletin No. 26 (Wellington, 1924)), p. 98; see also pp. 75, 186.

⁴⁸⁷ Magistrate's Court, *Thames Advertiser*, 28 July 1888, p. 2.

⁴⁸⁸ Thames Correspondent, *New Zealand Herald*, 27 September 1875, p. 3.

⁴⁸⁹ See *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 2, pp. 469-470; *Observer*, 28 December 1907, p. 5.

⁴⁹⁰ Letter from Joshua Jackson, *Auckland Weekly News*, 10 July 1886, p. 21.

confidently recommend him to any company requiring a competent and experienced mine manager'.⁴⁹¹ Walker received his mine manager's service certificate in 1892, and three years later described himself as a 'mining expert'.⁴⁹²

In 1884, when it was rumoured he had accepted an appointment on an Indian goldfield, the *Thames Advertiser* wrote that he combined 'an extensive practical experience with an amount of technical and scientific knowledge seldom equalled by those concerned with mining pursuits in this colony'.⁴⁹³ Ten years later, it was rumoured that there was a possibility of his 'being appointed to a most remunerative position in South Africa'.⁴⁹⁴ Another ten years later he was in Australia 'examining and reporting on several mining areas' for English investors.⁴⁹⁵ Nearly three years later, when asked to inspect tin deposits on Stewart Island, he decided that was 'a little too far afield for me at my time of life, and I declined the request'.⁴⁹⁶

One notable example of his skill was the scandal over a 'goldfield' near Wellington. Walker had some knowledge of the area, having reported on mines at Terawhiti in 1871.⁴⁹⁷ In October 1883, two directors of the Queen of Beauty Company of North Makara, Benjamin Isen, proprietor of the City Loan, Pawn, and Discount Office in Wellington, and later a publican,⁴⁹⁸ and Phillip Charles Hicks, a prospector,⁴⁹⁹ took ten tons to test at Thames.⁵⁰⁰ The result, about one ounce to the ton, prompted Walker to inspect the mine, to the surprise of some shareholders.⁵⁰¹ His report, sent to a Wellington morning newspaper, was blunt:

⁴⁹¹ Declaration of Thomas Peacock and James Stodart, 12 June 1886; J.W. Walker to Minister of Mines, 6 January 1887; Under-Secretary of Mines to J.W. Walker, 11 March 1887, Mines Department, MD 1, 87/43, ANZ-W.

⁴⁹² *New Zealand Gazette*, 11 February 1892, p. 298, 19 September 1895, p. 1486.

⁴⁹³ *Thames Advertiser*, 2 June 1884, p. 2.

⁴⁹⁴ *Ohinemuri Gazette*, n.d., cited in *Thames Advertiser*, 8 January 1894, p. 2.

⁴⁹⁵ *Thames Star*, 18 October 1904, p. 2.

⁴⁹⁶ Waihi Correspondent, *Thames Star*, 27 April 1907, p. 2.

⁴⁹⁷ J.W. Brodie, *Terawhiti and the Goldfields* (Wellington, 1986), pp. 92, 103-104.

⁴⁹⁸ See advertisement, *Evening Post*, 5 May 1882, p. 2; *Wairarapa Daily Times*, 3 September 1885, p. 2.

⁴⁹⁹ See *Evening Post*, 2 October 1883, p. 2.

⁵⁰⁰ *Evening Post*, 22 October 1883, p. 3; Wellington Correspondent, *Daily Telegraph*, 2 November 1883, p. 3.

⁵⁰¹ *Evening Post*, 22 October 1883, p. 3; Brodie, pp. 276-277.

I yesterday made a careful examination of the two reefs in the Queen of Beauty Mine (?) North Makara.

In the brown vein I found faint colours of gold, probably sufficient to warrant further prospecting.

In the clay course I found no gold, and I have no hesitation in asserting that the bar of gold now on exhibition, and represented as being the product of ten tons recently conveyed to and crushed at the Thames, wherever obtained, certainly was not got at the Queen of Beauty, Makara.⁵⁰²

Wellington's evening newspaper considered the matter was of such 'considerable public importance' that it reprinted his letter along with five responses doubting his report and rebutting his claim that the mine was 'a perfect swindle'.⁵⁰³ Hicks announced that he had ordered his solicitors to proceed against him.⁵⁰⁴ Isen attacked Walker, 'known in Wellington as the great mining expert', for having 'been good enough to offer a gratuitous opinion', challenged him to substantiate his claim (and pledge money on the outcome), and implied that he was corrupt:

While at the Thames, Mr Walker was good enough to explain to me that by his coming here and reporting on the mine we should both make money, but, as I was not a mining expert like Mr Walker, I said that if it were good I should make money, and, if not good, the first loss was best. Since his arrival here he has been good enough to make proposals to me, which I respectfully declined, as the previous tests were sufficient to satisfy me, more than Mr Walker could do. The nature of the proposals Mr Walker is acquainted with, and as action is being taken by the company's solicitors against Mr Walker, the public will then be able to learn the nature of these proposals. As Mr Walker is about to take his departure at once ... I hope he will not run away before he has substantiated the gratuitous advice which he has so kindly and disinterestedly given to the public.⁵⁰⁵

⁵⁰² J.W. Walker to Editor, *New Zealand Times*, 1 November 1883, reprinted in *Evening Post*, 1 November 1883, p. 2.

⁵⁰³ Letters from William McLean, George Woodward, B. Isen, Phillip Charles Hicks, and W. George, *Evening Post*, 1 November 1883, p. 2.

⁵⁰⁴ Letter from Phillip Chas. Hicks, *Evening Post*, 1 November 1883, p. 2.

⁵⁰⁵ Letter from B. Isen, *Evening Post*, 1 November 1883, p. 2.

Walker immediately responded, pointing out that he had not been 'bold enough or mad enough to say there is no gold in the blue reef. I said I did not find any – a vastly other thing'. In response to Isen, he pointed out that he had 'not accused him, or anyone else for that matter, of assisting or influencing the result of the crushing'.

Mr Isen's memory or inventive powers, or both, must be in good repair if he attributes to me any proposals I need fear to remember....

If Mr Isen has more money n hand than is absolutely wanted in his business – say £20 to £50 – and is willing to stake it against an equal amount of mine, "Barkis is willing," as under –

Let Mr [Henry Andrew] Gordon, the Government Inspector of Mines, and the representatives of the Press, in the interests of the industry of the industry I desire to protect, be requested to make investigations, and I will lose or win the stakes, according as they pronounce on the evidence as to whether my observation was unwarranted or otherwise.

He considered Hicks needed 'no reply, albeit I am very clear about the *nature of his proposals*', implying corrupt practices. 'In conclusion, I am prepared to lodge my stake, to the tune of £50, in the hands of any reputable Wellington citizen, and shall be happy to meet Mr Isen at the Occidental Hotel at 10 o'clock to-morrow forenoon, to arrange preliminaries'.⁵⁰⁶ At this meeting, attended by a journalist and William McLean, who was 'considerably interested in the mining industry of this district' and had wanted Walker's claim of a swindle investigated,⁵⁰⁷ Walker received them 'with the utmost courtesy':

Mr McLean – I wish to assure you, Mr Walker, that in this matter there is no animus on our side.

Mr Walker – Nor the slightest on mine. There's no necessity for it.

Mr McLean – I am only desirous of finding out if this thing is true or not.

Mr Walker – I am at your service, gentlemen. But before proceeding further, I wish to say that the boat by which I intended to leave Wellington goes at 3 o'clock.

Mr McLean – Mr Isen is here prepared to accept your offer, and to put down £20, you to put down a like amount, and you to pick one gentleman to look after your interests, and he to pick out another.

⁵⁰⁶ Letter from J.W Walker, *Evening Post*, 2 November 1883, p. 2.

⁵⁰⁷ Letter from William McLean, *Evening Post*, 1 November 1883, p. 2.

Mr Walker – Pardon me, I have no interest to look after in this matter....

Mr McLean [after reading from Walker's letter] – Mr Isen is here with the money to put down, and you can go out to the mine with anyone else you propose and he will propose another gentleman, and let the two gentlemen decide what test should take place.

Mr Walker – You are travelling out of my way. I am quite prepared to leave the matter in the hands of any person who knows anything about it.

Mr McLean – Do you know anyone likely?

Mr Walker – I would be almost inclined to put it in the hands of Mr Hicks, your own manager, only I don't wish to put him in a false position.

Mr McLean – Is it necessary you should leave by this boat? Can't you wait for two or three days? We will be prepared to give you something to stay.

Mr Walker – I didn't come here for something to stay. I am not here begging. I see a man is craving an appointment for me to go out to Terawhiti. I didn't ask him.

Mr McLean – I should very much like if you would go.

Mr Walker – But I am not going. It seems to me that I have made enemies enough.

Mr McLean – Well, what course do you suggest?

Mr Walker – What paper does this gentleman represent who is present?

Mr McLean – The EVENING POST.

Mr Walker – Have the papers anyone who knows about mining? I know Mr [John] Chantrey Harris⁵⁰⁸ does, because he is an old Thames man, and if the representatives of the papers went out I am willing to spend a day over it. I abide by what I have said. Is Mr [S. Herbert] Cox⁵⁰⁹ in Wellington at present?

Mr McLean – No, neither is Mr Gordon. Mr Gordon is up at Auckland.

Mr Walker – I will agree to leave my money here up to £50 till Mr Gordon comes back if you like, and you can do what you like about it. I have come some considerable distance, and at some considerable cost, and if I go out of my way to warn people against what I may consider an impudent imposture – a very impudent, hollow imposture – you will excuse me. And I think I have gone far enough, but if these gentlemen fancy they have got too much money I am willing to take part of it. But I can't sacrifice my time in this matter – my business is waiting for me up above. If I put off another boat, when will I get there anyhow?

⁵⁰⁸ See *Bruce Herald*, 15 February 1895, p. 3; *Auckland Star*, 16 February 1895, p. 2; *Otago Witness*, 21 February 1895, p. 13; *Observer*, 29 April 1905, p. 4.

⁵⁰⁹ See paper on the geology of Te Aroha Mountain.

Mr McLean – Would you do this. Would you put your £20 with Mr Ison’s, and let Mr Harris, of the Times, and Mr Blundell, of the POST, pick out some thoroughly competent person in your interest?

Mr Walker – I understand you. To what conclusion?

Mr McLean – Towards this paragraph of your letter. (Read paragraph commencing “Let Mr Gordon,” &c.) Instead of naming Mr Gordon let Mr [J. Chantrey] Harris and Mr [Thomas Henry] Blundell⁵¹⁰ appoint a person to make investigations. They will suggest what form the investigation should assume, and you will win or lose according as they pronounce, whether you were warranted or otherwise in your assertion.

Mr Walker – But not in the form in which Mr Isen put it in his letter. You are not to put upon me the onus of proving that the gold did not come from there. It is a big thing to prove that. But I will pay my £20 down on the terms you have mentioned.

Mr McLean – On the other hand, Mr Isen will pick out some person to assist Mr Harris.

Mr Walker – But I object to any assistance. I want to put my foot on that. This thing has been assisted too much already.

Mr McLean (to Mr Isen) – You will be perfectly satisfied with these terms, too, I suppose, Mr Isen?

Mr Isen – I know nothing whatever about mining, and I only want to have the thing put fair and square, so that the public may not say when they have done about me in this matter.

Mr Walker – Mr Isen, I want to ask you one question. I think I have told you already that I hold you blameless in this matter in my mind.

Mr Isen – But look, Mr Walker, when your letter appeared in the papers everyone stuck me up in the streets and said, “Walker makes you out to be a thief.”

Mr McLean – But do you agree to these terms?

Mr Isen – Yes. I quite agree.... The money to go to the Benevolent Institution.

Mr Walker – Oh no! I don’t come here to support your institutions.

Mr McLean – Never mind. We will devote it in any way we like.

Mr Walker – Excuse me; I am not going to devote my money to any local institution.

Mr McLean – Very well. We won’t let the matter fall through for that.

When an agreement was signed that the two journalists, Harris and Blundell, were to appoint ‘some competent person’ to test the blue reef, at

⁵¹⁰ See *Evening Post*, 28 May 1894, p. 2.

the company's expense, McLean, not being a lawyer, wondered whether it was in the correct form.

Mr Walker – It doesn't want a lawyer. This is no catch-bet [‘a bet made with the intention of snaring a gullible punter’].⁵¹¹ There are three in it – the public, Mr Isen, and myself.

On the agreement being read over, Mr Walker objected to that portion in which reference was made to suspicion being thrown on Mr Isen and others, and said – There are wicked people in this world, and it is within the range of possibility that some evil-disposed person plugged in gold in these people's dirt unknown to them. But I have no hesitation in sticking to the proposition laid down to start with, that the result of that crushing is very little, if at all, indebted to the clay course at Makara.⁵¹²

When the company declined to have only ‘a few dishes of stuff’ tested, instead proposing that two tons be crushed, Harris and Blundell agreed to their proposal but refused to incur ‘the responsibility of such a delicate and onerous undertaking’.⁵¹³ After Walker left Wellington, Isen complained that he had not revealed the identity of the guilty party.⁵¹⁴

The second crushing produced virtually no gold, and tests by another expert indicated that the bar of gold was characteristic of Thames ore.⁵¹⁵ The experts considered that Walker ‘was justified in saying what he did about the cake of gold asserted to have been the product of the stuff taken from the Queen of Beauty’.⁵¹⁶ After these revelations, ‘one or two of the originators’ of the swindle ‘disappeared’, and the man who made the original crushing at Thames was at the end of the year ‘on his way to China as the steward of a sailing vessel, and others of his confreres have let for happier hunting grounds’.⁵¹⁷ This was Hicks: after prospecting on adjacent land at North Makara and being one of those investing in Robinson's Freehold Company in November,⁵¹⁸ he suddenly left the colony.⁵¹⁹ As for

⁵¹¹ Green, p. 206.

⁵¹² *Evening Post*, 2 November 1883, p. 2.

⁵¹³ *Evening Post*, 3 November 1883, p. 2.

⁵¹⁴ *Evening Post*, 5 November 1883, p. 3.

⁵¹⁵ *Auckland Weekly News*, 10 November 1883, p. 14; *Thames Star*, 13 November 1883, p. 2; Brodie, pp. 278-279.

⁵¹⁶ *Evening Post*, 17 November 1883, p. 2.

⁵¹⁷ *New Zealand Times*, 30 December 1883, p. 2.

⁵¹⁸ *Evening Post*, 17 November 1883, p. 2, advertisement, 7 November 1883, p. 3.

Isen, he became convinced that Walker was right. At a meeting of the company in the following January, during a discussion about sampling the blue lode,

The Chairman pointed out that “Long Drive” Walker had held out hopes that the brown lode might pay.

A shareholder remarked that he did not think Mr Walker knew much about either body of stuff.

Mr Isen – Oh, yes he did. He proved that.⁵²⁰

At the beginning of 1895, Walker was ‘given a hearty welcome by his old Wellington friends who well remembered the way in which he exposed for them the famous Makara mining swindle some ten years ago’.⁵²¹

ASSISTANCE TO MINING AND MINERS

‘Obadiah’ called Walker the ‘father of the No Liability movement’, but provided no details,⁵²² and no other reference to this alleged parenthood has been traced. He was appointed to an 1870 committee formed to convince the government either to reduce or to remove the charge for miners’ rights.⁵²³ In 1877, he was elected to the committee of the Thames Mechanics’ Institute, reflecting his interest in creating a skilled workforce, and he was a member of the Thames Miners’ Accident Relief Committee.⁵²⁴ He later had close contact with the Thames Miners’ Union in an effort to find solutions to problems facing the industry, as in 1898, when he attended an executive meeting to discuss ways to reduce government charges.⁵²⁵

As all the subsidized prospecting parties he had been involved with in Australia and New Zealand had failed, in 1878 Walker argued that money allocated to them would be better spent constructing tracks to assist prospectors.⁵²⁶ In 1887, he suggested that a competent person be sent to America to discover how ore was so successfully treated there, and wanted

⁵¹⁹ Indexes to Papers Past and Births Deaths and Marriages.

⁵²⁰ *Evening Post*, 28 January 1884, p. 2.

⁵²¹ *Observer*, 12 January 1895, p. 3.

⁵²² ‘Obadiah’, ‘Shares and Mining’, *Observer*, 31 August 1895, p. 16.

⁵²³ *Thames Advertiser*, 15 October 1870, p. 3.

⁵²⁴ *Thames Advertiser*, 4 May 1875, p. 3, 24 July 1877, p. 3.

⁵²⁵ *Thames Advertiser*, 1 March 1898, p. 2.

⁵²⁶ *Thames Advertiser*, 4 April 1878, p. 3.

the latest machinery introduced into New Zealand ‘despite the opposition of the vested interests of owners of antiquated and costly reduction plants’. He provided details of American roller plants, comparing them with ‘the haphazard, helter, skelter treatment we are so proud of’ in the colony’s inferior stamp mills.⁵²⁷

In 1898, during discussions about finding work for unemployed miners, he referred again to his long experience with tributing and cautioned about the prospects of men tributing in the old Thames mines.

The gentlemen in Auckland, who discussed matters with the deputies from the Miners’ Union, suggested stipulations for ousting tributers, at will, on giving certain compensations, wages, etc. This proposition wants a lot of thinking about. Does it mean that, in the event of a rich discovery, that *then* the owners may resume possession, ousting the tributers on a “compensation” – wages basis? If this matter of providing bread for men, women and children were less serious, we might find time for getting a lot of fun out of this proposal. I have turned it upside down, and outside in, but fail to see where the other fellow (the tributer) comes in.

My worthy old friend, Samuel Cochrane Macky [a legal manager],⁵²⁸ finds salvation in a “sliding scale.”⁵²⁹ Sliding scales are intended to provide against the workman becoming a millionaire. Sliding scales are unfair and unworkable, here or elsewhere, unless “subsistence money” is paid while the men are earning nothing, and an extra allowance paid for permanent dead work.

Tributing the ‘wretched upper surface blocks’ at Thames would not provide a living: ‘Ask any thinking miner’. His hope was to successfully develop the deep levels.⁵³⁰ One month later, he emphasized the need for both capital and intelligence:

My advice is to encourage Mr J[ohn] Bull; if you wish to secure his assistance (capital), and I agree with you, in that it will be wise and necessary to import the intelligence for the ore-treatment. Now, regarding this “intelligence,” I wish it distinctly understood that I mean no disrespect to the home-made article.

⁵²⁷ Letter from J.W. Walker, *New Zealand Herald*, 24 January 1887, p. 3.

⁵²⁸ See *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 2, p. 465; *New Zealand Herald*, 3 November 1914, p. 7.

⁵²⁹ Letter from S.C. Macky, *Thames Advertiser*, 20 June 1898, p. 4.

⁵³⁰ Letter from J.W. Walker, *Thames Advertiser*, 23 June 1898, p. 4.

Many of such have possibly a cock-sure remedy for our trouble. Indeed, sometimes I fancy that I know a little about it myself. Nevertheless, it is better to make a certainty by bringing here a man who has acquired the necessary experience elsewhere, and at other people's expense.⁵³¹

In 1902, after recommending tributing in unworked ground as a 'partial and temporary' relief for unemployed miners, he argued that long-term solutions required capital and labour to 'unite cheerfully and give to "filthy lucre" a fair share of the spoils as an inducement to join the firm'. He promised to 'touch more or less lightly in future articles' on 15 issues:

1. Miners Unions – their uses and abuses.
2. Tribute System – their uses and abuses.
3. Hours of Labor – at and under surface.
4. Rates of pay for same.
5. "Bank to Bank" proposal.
6. Contract system – freedom of.
7. Preference to Union men – compulsory.
8. Protection to mines – uses and abuses.
9. Areas – limits for leases.
10. Boy labor.
11. Grading of men according to working ability.
12. Employment of non-union hands.
13. Drainage of mines and methods of assessments.
14. Concessions for introductions of electric power, and light, and similar works for public benefit.
15. The introduction, encouragement and application of foreign capital where such is necessary and indispensable in the development of our country's resources.⁵³²

Two days later, he explained his views on some of these points in a letter about the union:

On this subject I do not profess to be an authority to any extent, having only followed the lines of its proceedings and history since its troubles started, but as an old miner, and now an outsider on the shelf, I venture to remark as follows:- The Thames Miners' Union, like other trades unions, was doubtless formed with the usual two leading objects in view: First, as a friendly benefit society; and second, to secure for labor a fair day's pay for a fair day's work. Working along these most commendable and praiseworthy lines, there could no outside trouble arise in connection with No. 1 object. Any possible worry would be only a mere family affair with which the community need not interfere. But in fixing up No. 2 object the contract is more involved, inasmuch as two parties are concerned. In earlier days, when labor combinations were refused increased pay, it was open to

⁵³¹ Letter from J.W. Walker, *Auckland Weekly News*, 23 July 1898, p. 20.

⁵³² Letter from J.W. Walker, *Thames Star*, 11 September 1902, p. 3.

them to “strike,” and in like manner when employers failed in obtaining concession from labor it was capital’s turn to kick. It locked its street door, leaving labor on the outside. Neither of these moves gave satisfaction, and so we have changed all that. We now have such things adjudicated by Conciliation Boards, with final appeal to Judge Cooper, and thereby the matter in dispute is supposed to be settled and disposed of. But is it? Well, in some cases possibly yes, by a judicious compromise whereby each party is partially reconciled, and neither is much damaged. This cheerful result comes off all right occasionally, particularly where the matter in dispute is not complicated. Unfortunately recent union claims were surrounded with much debatable considerations. Allow me here to refer to some of those considerations, and in doing so I will only treat those of miners and their particular claims and grievances.

He mentioned recent applications, which he declined to assess because they had been settled by both board and judge.

My perplexities, however, only start at this stage. I am not saying that eight good shillings is either too much or too little for eight hour’s good work by a good miner. Much will depend on what is meant by “a good miner” and a good day’s work. There are varieties of miners, but all shillings are of equal value, and therefore the mine owner is liable to get either too much or too little for his money, and in either case it cannot be considered quite a level fair deal. Then boy’s pay is graded according to age, regardless entirely of their working capacity. Are these reasonable propositions? Of course not.

Nor could the arbitration system ‘fix these complications and at the same time please all hands’. He understood that the union not only wanted higher wages but also an end to contracts, with all work being done by wages men and only union men, selected by the union, employed.

Did miners really make these demands? If they did so then I am driven to think that the miner of to-day must lack the fibre, independence, and self respect of the boys of the old brigade. The miner men of my time preferred contract work, where his skill and his will ensured his efforts, bringing their equi-stereotyped rate of day’s-pay as being only suitable for unskilled hands. Then whatever is the matter now? I will not believe that the new race is inferior in any respect to their progenitors. I know they are not. Then how account for sane men making such one-sided and absurd suggestions. We have all heard about putting the cart before the horse, and also about the tail wagging the dog. That’s

just about it. The matter as it now stands is unfortunately too serious for these stale jokes, but I have sat me down to say what I see, and what I think about, the matter, and I beg all the level heads among our miners to also sit down and exercise their abundant common sense towards putting business on an equitable working basis, calculated to promote permanent progress instead of being made parties to topsy-turvy delusions in which the mining industry in some considerable measure owes its present depressed condition.

He hoped 'to forgive those I innocently torture', for he was writing 'more in sorrow than in anger'.

Finally, I have my own notions of how, where, and when the Miners Union might make itself a power in the State, immensely benefit its members individually, and collectively, and be instrumental in promoting just what we are all chasing. But some months ago I ventured in this direction to write to an old friend on this same subject, and all in good faith. But, alas! I suppose I was misunderstood, anyway I will give no more advice on this head now, or perhaps until I am asked for it.⁵³³

He continued to comment on the future of mining and to both criticize and work with the union, as shown by his attempts to float his 'gigantic' proposals at Thames, Te Aroha, and Waihi. He did not get involved, at least publicly, in disputes between miners and the authorities, the only exception being when one warden, Harry Kenrick, was attacked in 1880;⁵³⁴ he told a meeting that a petition supporting Kenrick should be organized and was appointed to a committee to arrange a public meeting of support.⁵³⁵

When he turned 77, in 1904, Walker was described as showing 'no sign of abating his remarkable vigor and enterprise, and is keener than ever on furthering the interests of mining'.⁵³⁶ Although by then living in Auckland, he kept 'closely in touch with all mining matters pertaining to Thames and Waihi'.⁵³⁷

THE GOVERNMENT AND THE MINING INDUSTRY

⁵³³ *Thames Star*, 13 September 1902, p. 2.

⁵³⁴ See paper on Harry Kenrick.

⁵³⁵ *Thames Advertiser*, 15 July 1880, p. 3; *Thames Star*, 17 July 1880, p. 2.

⁵³⁶ *Thames Star*, 23 November 1904, p. 2.

⁵³⁷ *Thames Star*, 6 January 1905, p. 3.

Like all miners, Walker expected that the government should assist their industry, especially when it was in decline. In January 1887, he wrote to the press about Professor Frederick Douglas Brown's lecture to Thames miners, a government initiative.⁵³⁸

I presume his mission is to teach us how to exhaustively treat our gold and silver ores. But seeing that, according to his own showing, he himself proposes merely a course of experiments, and has no positive personal knowledge of our requirements, I fail to see how we are likely to derive any material help through his means, unless he can influence the Government to furnish means to provide for our requirements as well as also guessing at what those requirements really are.

Whilst he approved of making the experiments and would 'gladly assist whatever the result will be', Brown had told them nothing new in saying that there was good gold throughout the peninsula; the question was, how to extract it?

There is supposed to be a Mining Department, with a Minister at its head. There is also surely a staff of officers supposed to be more or less useful, as also, doubtless, more or less ornamental. We seldom see them or hear of them. We never, hardly ever, see what they do in our line, unless in the manufacture of amended mining Acts that are no amendments, and regulations that are most irregular and inapplicable, and which, even if either or both, "no fellow can understand anyhow." This matter is really too serious for joking. Don't you think that if our location is really so rich and our business so very important, as Professor Brown and all authorities affirm, that it is about time the Mining Department seriously started to take some interest in the business? My idea of some of the duties of such department include such trifles as providing all plans and specifications of all the latest improvements in all mining implements, machinery, explosives, modes of working – underground and surface – modes of treating various classes of valuable ores, new ropes for winding and methods of conveyance of ores, and of transmission of power by electricity; also that on goldfields there should be made a detailed thorough examination and geological survey, and plans showing not merely the lines of reefs but clearly defining the limits of the various belts of auriferous strata through which these reefs traverse, and also the position of all non-productive

⁵³⁸ See paper on prospectors' and miners' skills.

and doubtful country-rock in their respective sequence throughout the district. The value and importance of such mapping are beyond all calculation, but all that has ever been done and published is comprised in the result of a three-weeks' flying visit of Mr Herbert Cox, whose effort in this direction is good as far as it goes; but it stops at the threshold, and merely touches a vital subject, which should have been exhaustively expounded many years ago, and which if completed in due time would have been the means of saving hundreds of thousands of pounds wasted in strata known to be non-auriferous. The Mining Department should be kept promptly posted in all scientific and mechanical time, labour, and money economizing appliances perfected and adopted throughout the world, and should take measures to secure the introduction of same into this country regardless of first cost, and without any red-tape circumlocution.

Some months ago, the minister had been asked 'to send a competent man to America to collect information. Had this been done as requested, our agent would have been now returned, and the necessary knowledge in our possession at a cost less than will be incurred groping here for it in the dark, and with but little chance of success'. He was 'still of opinion that unless a special agent be even now sent off as indicated, we shall flounder about to little purpose, and remain a stagnant laughing-stock, a community of Micawbers. It was old Nero who thrummed his family cremona while his old shoeshop went to blazes. We take after him in our small way'.⁵³⁹ Later that year, Walker was part of a deputation to the minister seeking government aid to erect a testing plant at Thames.⁵⁴⁰

Although Walker claimed in 1898 that he was neither for nor against the government, in the following year it was rumoured that he would stand for the Ohinemuri seat.⁵⁴¹ He did not, but if he had, he would have opposed the Liberal government. In 1876, he had supported Sir George Grey's political rival, who held one of the two Thames seats.⁵⁴² In December 1897, he wrote from London to a friend that 'New Zealand's mines and men' were 'not at all popular in London now', as returns were poor compared with other countries.

⁵³⁹ Letter from J.W. Walker, *New Zealand Herald*, 24 January 1887, p. 3.

⁵⁴⁰ *Auckland Weekly News*, 9 April 1887, p. 21.

⁵⁴¹ Letter from J.W. Walker, *Thames Advertiser*, 23 June 1898, p. 4; *Ohinemuri Gazette*, 14 June 1899, p. 2.

⁵⁴² *Thames Advertiser*, 3 November 1876, p. 3.

The record was weak enough already, but the information coming to hand from New Zealand is to effect that Mr Seddon's Ministry propose "cutting the painter" that connects us to London by the infliction of divers devices, in the shape of rents, taxes, pains, and prohibitory penalties all along the line, in addition to the monstrous charges under which mining already groans, and barely survives. You can assure the public that unless the proposed legislation is abandoned,⁵⁴³ there will be no more English money sent to develop your mines. It certainly is the duty of the newspapers, of all shades of politics, to try to save our country from this impending calamity. Of course, it may be, and I am inclined to believe, actually is the case, that these disturbing rumours are rumours merely, and that Mr Seddon has more "savvy" than to dream of making such schemes law. But, the mere idea that even the proposal of such retrograde measures was possible is sufficient to alarm that very shy bird, "capital." Do our miners know what the withdrawal of English money means to them, and to the industry to which we are all indebted for our daily bread? If they don't know now they soon will, unless they take the most effectual means they can to stop this kind of legislation. People here are loud in denunciation of the whole country. It is only here, on the spot, that anyone can gauge the depth and intensity of the scorn and disgust expressed regarding the proposed new mining legislation. I sincerely wish I had the "Divine afflatus," "the gift of the gab," the opportunity and confidence to "stump" Auckland province, denouncing such suicidal proposition.⁵⁴⁴

When he returned to New Zealand early in the following year, he claimed that in England 'a feeling of unrest and disgust prevailed at the mining laws of our Colony, which were bristling with penalties and exactions on every hand'.⁵⁴⁵ Its mining legislation was 'having a very bad effect on the introduction of capital', English investors believing the government was trying 'to discourage instead of encourage' them to invest. He felt that the legislation 'was such that the very ground was being taken from under my feet. The people at Home think nothing of New Zealand at

⁵⁴³ This proposed legislation became the massive Mining Act, passed in November 1898: *Statutes of New Zealand: Session 1898* (Wellington, 1898), pp. 139-205. For this Act plus summaries of relevant legal cases, see Robert Gilkison, *The Law of Gold Mining in New Zealand* (Dunedin, 1905), pp. 67-280.

⁵⁴⁴ Letter from J.W. Walker to 'a friend in Auckland', 10 December 1897, printed in *New Zealand Herald*, 24 January 1898, p. 5.

⁵⁴⁵ *Thames Advertiser*, 25 February 1898, p. 1.

the present time; in fact they simply ignore us'. They believed it was a 'one-horse show', presumably meaning the Waihi mine, and said there was 'no encouragement given for the introduction of capital into the colony to develop its mineral resources, and that heavy taxes are imposed upon, and every possible obstacle' placed in their way,⁵⁴⁶

In a June letter about how to find work for unemployed miners, Walker was critical of James McGowan for suggesting that young men 'clear out'.

But "clearing out" does not sound like a progressive policy. "Clearing out" never made any country, barring the clearing out of those who "left their country for their country's good." Moreover – what *is* the matter with *this* country anyhow? There is *nothing* wrong with the country. The trouble is with the men who are responsible for its backward condition. And at this stage I feel that if I am not "rushing in where Angels fear to tread," at least I am a long way out of my element in touching politics at all.

I quite understand how much easier it is to denounce a wrong than to discover a remedy – and I will therefore presume no further in criticizing our laws and our lawmakers than just so far as it, and *they*, effect the industry by means of which I scratch up sustenance for myself and those for whose existence I have become responsible. I am neither *for* the present Government nor am I "*agin it*," - so there!

I am *for* the Government that shows a disposition and ability towards the development of the resources of this country, and on the shortest possible notice – and I am very decidedly in opposition to the men and the Government, who are incapable of understanding that this section of New Zealand is almost entirely, and only, a mineral country, and that, therefore, as such it requires, and will pay for, fostering legislation.

In 1887 I spent several weeks among the mountain mining territories of Utah and Montana in America.

While there I became so impressed with the facilities and energies that everywhere lent encouragement to the speedy and successful developments of the mineral resources of that country, that I wrote from there (Montana) a letter to Mr James Russell, of Auckland, suggesting that "the *then* Minister for Mines for New Zealand should be sent to serve an apprenticeship in America, to the end that he should, and could, learn there how the N.Z. national debt could be paid."

⁵⁴⁶ *Auckland Weekly News*, 26 February 1898, p. 23.

He was 'at this day, more than then, confirmed in the strength and truth' of these opinions, and could 'only account for the apathy and neglect' of ministers 'by the assumption that they require a course of travel to fit them for their harness'. There was '*nothing the matter with our country*'.

If you want my advice, here it is – “Send Cadman away to Montana.” That’s all. The rest will follow in due course as sure as fate – or eggs. Don’t forget.

Aye! But the *meantime*. Well, for instance, a good road (rail, if you please) to Waiomu. Start a custom mill in a central position there, capable of treating the ores peculiar to that particular section. There is plenty of gold around there, but you want to learn how best to treat it. Start a line of rail from Paeroa to Waihi, with a branch to Waitekauri to control these sections. It is not at all necessary to linger 15 or 20 years over these little matters. Both may be finished well within the next two years if Government go at it in good earnest.

The Hon. Cadman professes to be cocksure that the Waihi-Paeroa railway is most urgently necessary and indispensable for the development of the Ohinemuri district. He is also assured that the line would be a paying section. But he asks, “Where is the money to come from?” Well, really, I am unable to state whether, and where, *he* may be able to raise money for that particular purpose. But I can give you a piece of information on this subject. Namely, that with Government sanction, I know just where and how to find the needful, and that within eighty days a start shall be made, and completion guaranteed before the end of A.D. 1900.⁵⁴⁷

In the following month Walker repeated and developed some of these arguments:

In 1887 I wrote to Mr James Russell, from Montana, recommending that the then Minister for Mines “be sent to America, in order that he might there learn how to pay New Zealand’s national debt,” meaning, by the judicious fostering of our mining industry. I used that form of language in all sincerity, and since then I have seen no reason to change my mind. I am as fully convinced now as then that our mineral resources are practically as rich and important (in proportion to the extent of our territory) as are those of any other auriferous country, and that all we require to realize them is sufficient capital and intelligence for their speedy development.

⁵⁴⁷ Letter from J.W. Walker, *Thames Advertiser*, 23 June 1898, p. 4.

He provided details of successful ‘mine-fostering’ in Western Australia and of great output in South Africa. ‘The question naturally arises: When, where, and how do we in New Zealand come in? I confess that at the present moment we are very much “indisposed,” and in need of special remedy’. After explaining the fading of the Thames field and the need to move away from unco-ordinated small companies, he referred to the difficulties in ‘up-country fields’ in ‘obtaining satisfactory extraction from the different varieties of complex ores, which increasing depth must bring to one and all of them’.

There is no concealing the fact that the consideration of these matters demand instant action on the part of the Government, otherwise we may look for very dull times. We don’t ask the Government to spoon-feed our mining business. It needs none such. But I look to them to form roads and bridges, and otherwise do, as in other lands is done, at public cost, towards opening the country, and making such laws and regulations as will best facilitate economic mining, and encourage the introduction of foreign capital to assist therein, without which we are absolutely helpless.⁵⁴⁸

In August, responding to the news that the government would neither construct a railway to Waihi nor ‘offer facilities for its construction by a private company’, Walker wrote that, as ‘available timber fuel in the district’ would barely last two years, the government’s attitude was ‘far from being reassuring’. This line was of ‘vital importance’, because the fuel needed to dewater the mines was ‘simply unattainable’ locally. ‘It will require the best part of two years to complete the railway, therefore it must be started at once unless we wish to witness the collapse of business in the most thriving and most promising district in New Zealand’.⁵⁴⁹ Two months later he again urged the government to construct this line.⁵⁵⁰

Walker did not criticize the Mining Act of 1898, presumably because he decided that some of his earlier fears of its hampering foreign investment were exaggerated, but did continue to attack the Liberal Party’s labour legislation and mining laws. In 1903 he commented that ‘no Englishman will send his money here to be handled by the operatives’.⁵⁵¹ At the end of

⁵⁴⁸ Letter from J.W. Walker, *Auckland Weekly News*, 23 July 1898, pp. 12-20.

⁵⁴⁹ Letter from J.W. Walker, *New Zealand Herald*, 18 August 1898, p. 6.

⁵⁵⁰ *Auckland Weekly News*, 21 October 1898, p. 19.

⁵⁵¹ *Auckland Weekly News*, 2 April 1903, p. 32.

that year, in assessing the needs of Waihi he repeated that the government should 'formulate an equitable mining code whereby Messrs Capital and Labour can amicably join hands on level terms'.⁵⁵²

HIS FINANCES AFTER HIS 1884 BANKRUPTCY

In January 1887, the Bank of New Zealand sued over a dishonoured promissory note for £26 12s 2d.⁵⁵³ The records of his Auckland solicitor, James Russell, who in the 1890s was also president of the Auckland Chamber of Mines,⁵⁵⁴ reveal his financial struggles from 1888 onwards. In March 1888, when Walker requested that £250 be placed in his National Bank account, Russell assumed 'you mean this money to come out of Mr [Thomas] Russell's loan' and required 'adjustment of figures between yourself and the Union Company' before the money could be transferred.⁵⁵⁵ Late the following month, a transfer to Walker of 800 shares in the Union required him to pay £20 12s 6d in calls, stamp duty, and the registration fee.⁵⁵⁶ James Russell's letter of late June revealed how Thomas Russell, who with Walker had floated the Waihi Company, was assisting him:

I am this day in receipt of a letter from Mr T. Russell, London, in which he asks me to obtain from you an acknowledgement of the amount you owe him & he makes up his a/c thus:

First advances £300 up to 12 Jany / 88

12 Jany new advance 25

Draft through National Bank from Auckland 300

625

Less amount chargeable to Promoters 150

475

This balance of £475 was due by you on May 4th / 88, which will bear interest at 6%.

Russell had sent an authority authorizing the deduction of 'the sum due out of any money of yours' which came into his solicitor's hands 'from

⁵⁵² Letter from J.W. Walker, *New Zealand Herald*, 14 December 1903, p. 3.

⁵⁵³ Thames Magistrate's Court, *Plaint Book 1884-1887*, 16/1887, BACL 13737/13a, ANZ-A.

⁵⁵⁴ *British Australasian*, 14 October 1897, pp. 1832-1834.

⁵⁵⁵ James Russell to J.W. Walker, 9 March 1888, Letterbook no. 36, p. 567, Jackson and Russell Papers, MS 360, Library of the Auckland Institute and War Memorial Museum.

⁵⁵⁶ James Russell to J.W. Walker, 25 April 1888, Letterbook no. 37, p. 21, Jackson and Russell Papers, MS 360, Library of the Auckland Institute and War Memorial Museum.

sale of shares or otherwise', and asked Walker to sign it.⁵⁵⁷ As Walker's response (which has not survived) indicated to James Russell that he misunderstood the debt, he wrote to 'My dear Walker' to set out the position more clearly:

Before you left Auckd you recd fr Union Co	£150: 0: 0
In England up to Jan 12 you received from Mr Russell	£300 0
0	
On Jany 12 from Mr Russell	£25 0
0	
Draft on Mr Russell through National Bank	<u>£300 0</u>
<u>0</u>	
	Total £
775:0:0	
Deduct amount chgd by Union Co as not being payable by you	
£150: 0: 0	
Deduct amount chargeable to the promoters in England £ 150:0:0	
	<u>300</u>
	Balance due Mr Russell <u>£475:0:0</u>

You forget that you received in Auckland the sum of £150 from the Union Company, & that in London Mr Russell paid you £300, instead of £150, which was all that was left of the £300 you were to get for your expenses.⁵⁵⁸

When Walker responded that he had only received £25 in London, his reply was forwarded to Thomas Russell.⁵⁵⁹ Four days later, the directors of the Union Company resolved to allow him 14 days to pay his calls of '£177: odd'.

This is understood to be a final decision on their part, and I cannot hold out any hope that any extension of time will be granted.... The shares are saleable here at 5/- but I would recommend you to come to Auckland & see Mennie⁵⁶⁰ in reference

⁵⁵⁷ James Russell to J.W. Walker, 22 June 1888, Letterbook no. 37, p. 374, Jackson and Russell Papers, MS 360, Library of the Auckland Institute and War Memorial Museum.

⁵⁵⁸ James Russell to J.W. Walker, 9 July 1888, Letterbook no. 37, p. 463, Jackson and Russell Papers, MS 360, Library of the Auckland Institute and War Memorial Museum.

⁵⁵⁹ James Russell to J.W. Walker, 17 July 1888, Letterbook no. 37, p. 498, Jackson and Russell Papers, MS 360, Library of the Auckland Institute and War Memorial Museum.

⁵⁶⁰ Presumably James Milne Mennie, a biscuit manufacturer at Thames from 1874 to 1884 and then in Auckland: see *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 2, pp. 326-327, 880.

to them instead of selling – he and Hean⁵⁶¹ might perhaps arrange finance.⁵⁶²

The next time Walker's solicitor wrote to him about his finances was in June the following year, after Thomas Russell inquired about the security on Walker's shares:

Mr Russell will accept your figures as being correct as to the amount due you to him. If you are unwilling to transfer your shares to my name I will give you an understanding that they are held by me as security for the amounts you acknowledge to be due to Mr R. £325 & I will send you a blank transfer to sign.⁵⁶³

In December 1890, James Russell was offended by Walker's offer to meet a debt:

Is the sum of £150 final – if so I am sorry, for it means “war” - & I dislike quarrelling with my friends especially when I think & am of opinion that the person I am quarrelling with is to a certain extent right – I think you have some equity on your side, but I also think you have a lot to be thankful for, and so say I, and so say all of us Waihi shareholders – the people in London have treated us right loyally & we are repaying them by taking advantage of our position here – Now I hope you will not force an unpleasantness, but let us all row in the same ship with good humour – Taking everything into consideration ... I think you should gracefully hand over this disputed property – and I am sure you will think so too on reflection.⁵⁶⁴

⁵⁶¹ Probably David Hean, former inspector of the National Bank of New Zealand, then in retirement in England who was brought to New Zealand in 1890 to report on the financial position of the Bank of New Zealand: see *Parnell Electoral Roll, 1887*, p. 10; N.M. Chappell, *New Zealand's Banker's Hundred: A history of the Bank of New Zealand 1861-1961* (Wellington, 1961), p. 136.

⁵⁶² James Russell to J.W. Walker, 21 July 1888, Letterbook no. 37, p. 541, Jackson and Russell Papers, MS 360, Library of the Auckland Institute and War Memorial Museum.

⁵⁶³ James Russell to J.W. Walker, 26 June 1889, Letterbook no. 40, p. 76, Jackson and Russell Papers, MS 360, Library of the Auckland Institute and War Memorial Museum.

⁵⁶⁴ James Russell to J.W. Walker, 15 December 1890, Letterbook no. 44, p. 429, Jackson and Russell Papers, MS 360, Library of the Auckland Institute and War Memorial Museum.

In 1901, Walker commented that he had been ‘rich’ and ‘in affluent circumstances’ in 1891.⁵⁶⁵ At the beginning of the latter year, Thomas Russell asked Walker to pay what he owed him.⁵⁶⁶ When Walker asked whether this had anything to do with his taking up spare ground at Waihi, he was told it did not, his solicitor explaining that Russell ‘was in need of money – indeed he has made the same demand of myself, quite lately, & for the same expressed reason, so I hope this is satisfactory to you. Moreover I intend with your permission to let the matter rest until Mr Russell arrives when he can attend to his own business’.⁵⁶⁷ At the beginning of April Walker was informed that Russell was not coming to New Zealand for some time, and wanted his money at once.⁵⁶⁸ Walker queried whether this request was related to an agreement between himself, Thomas Morrin,⁵⁶⁹ and James Russell, and was told it was not.⁵⁷⁰ In his next letter, the latter was pleased to have learnt that Walker would settle Russell’s demand, and asked him to do so immediately. ‘Referring to the claim which you put forward against myself & Mr Morrin I hope you will be able to produce some agreement upon the matter’, because Morrin could not provide anything definite. ‘I could I think raise £500 by a security of the 2000 shares you transferred’, if Walker wanted this arranged.⁵⁷¹ Walker did; a week later, he was told that the National Bank had advanced him £500 to meet Russell’s ‘bill’ on the basis of these 2,000 shares in the Waihi Company.⁵⁷² Once this was settled, another creditor demanded his money back. ‘You will see he is not inclined to let matters rest. I made no arrangement as to time

⁵⁶⁵ *Thames Star*, 20 March 1901, p. 4.

⁵⁶⁶ James Russell to J.W. Walker, 7 January 1891, Letterbook no. 44, p. 494, Jackson and Russell Papers, MS 360, Library of the Auckland Institute and War Memorial Museum.

⁵⁶⁷ James Russell to J.W. Walker, 17 January 1891, Letterbook no. 44, p. 567, Jackson and Russell Papers, MS 360, Library of the Auckland Institute and War Memorial Museum.

⁵⁶⁸ James Russell to J.W. Walker, 1 April 1891, Letterbook no. 45, p. 267, Jackson and Russell Papers, MS 360, Library of the Auckland Institute and War Memorial Museum.

⁵⁶⁹ See *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 2, pp. 660-661.

⁵⁷⁰ James Russell to J.W. Walker, 9 April 1891, Letterbook no. 45, p. 320, Jackson and Russell Papers, MS 360, Library of the Auckland Institute and War Memorial Museum.

⁵⁷¹ James Russell to J.W. Walker, 15 April 1891, Letterbook no. 45, p. 362, Jackson and Russell Papers, MS 360, Library of the Auckland Institute and War Memorial Museum.

⁵⁷² James Russell to J.W. Walker, 22 April 1891, Letterbook no. 45, p. 419, Jackson and Russell Papers, MS 360, Library of the Auckland Institute and War Memorial Museum.

when he advanced the money so I suppose he has a right to call up the amount'.⁵⁷³

That there were no further letters from this solicitor demanding payments indicates that Walker's finances were in good shape. Indeed, according to his testimony of ten years later, he was then 'in affluent circumstances'. A large shareholder in the Waihi Company, he later sold some of its shares for 2s each, but when a call of 5s was made on his Grand Junction shares he 'had to give a bonus of 2500 shares to get money on the balance to pay his call. His shares were locked up as security for the advance'.⁵⁷⁴ Walker had difficulties meeting other commitments. At the start of 1890, he had 'bad' debts owing to A. & G. Price of Thames.⁵⁷⁵ By March 1893, his 'bad and doubtful' debts to this firm had risen to £28 6s 9d, and remained at that amount in 1894.⁵⁷⁶ In October 1897, £2,500 was cabled to him from London but was not credited to his account until the Bank of New Zealand's 'position' was 'made absolutely secure'.⁵⁷⁷ Two months later his overdraft of £929 with the National Bank had been paid off.⁵⁷⁸ The following year, he was granted a temporary overdraft limit of £300.⁵⁷⁹

In January 1904, he sold Wairakau Farm for £12,750, just over £6 per acre, and his stock for £2,160. He had a first mortgage over the stock and a second mortgage over the farm; it was arranged that the cattle be paid for in instalments of £500.⁵⁸⁰ In March 1905, Joseph May and William

⁵⁷³ James Russell to J.W. Walker, 15 June 1891, Letterbook no. 46, p. 57, Jackson and Russell Papers, MS 360, Library of the Auckland Institute and War Memorial Museum.

⁵⁷⁴ Warden's Court, *Thames Star*, 20 February 1901, p. 4.

⁵⁷⁵ A. & G. Price, Letterbook 1889-1891, p. 980 (1 January 1890), A. & G. Price Archives, Thames.

⁵⁷⁶ A. & G. Price, Letterbook 1891-1893, p. 77 (1 March 1893); Letterbook 1893-1895, p. 987 ('Book Debts 1894'), A. & G. Price Archives, Thames.

⁵⁷⁷ Bank of New Zealand, Thames Branch, Manager's Index of Credit Reruns 1894-1898, p. 72, entry for 5 October 1897, Bank of New Zealand Archives, Wellington.

⁵⁷⁸ National Bank, Inspector's Report on Auckland Branch, 13 December 1897, National Bank Archives, Wellington.

⁵⁷⁹ Bank of New Zealand, Thames Branch, Manager's Index of Credit Reruns 1894-1898, p. 39, entry for 18 July 1898, Bank of New Zealand Archives, Wellington.

⁵⁸⁰ *Auckland Weekly News*, 7 September 1905, p. 21, 21 December 1905, p. 24.

Dibble,⁵⁸¹ who had purchased the farm to rear poultry, were unable to pay the instalment of £500 due in January, and wished him to postpone all payments by one year, thereby requiring them to pay £500 in January 1906, £1,000 in January 1907, and the balance in January 1908. By 1905 the value of buildings, implements, and machinery had increased to £2,290.⁵⁸² By June 1905, when the farm was offered for sale for £12,500 'or any reasonable offer', the only mortgage on it was to the South British Insurance Company.⁵⁸³ Walker was, with difficulty, paid for his cattle before May and Dibble went bankrupt.⁵⁸⁴

As Walker did not make a will, the size of his estate is unknown. When his first wife died in 1906, she left £948 2s 5d, to be shared amongst eight children and grandchildren.⁵⁸⁵ Some or all of her estate may have been her own money, held separately from her husband. They lived comfortably, although in the absence of any details of what Walker left it is not possible to know how much money he made out of a lifetime devoted to mining. Clearly he could afford to make several trips to England and live there for months and even years.

VOLUNTEERING AND SHOOTING

The *Cyclopedia of New Zealand* stated that Walker 'was a volunteer in Auckland for a number of years, and has been a leading rifle shot in both New Zealand and Australia'.⁵⁸⁶ In 1871, and probably earlier, he was an honorary member of the Thames Scottish Volunteers, and in October 1874

⁵⁸¹ See *New Zealand Herald*, 10 October 1891, p. 6; advertisement, *Auckland Star*, 6 July 1901, p. 2; *Dominion*, 24 October 1919, p. 6; *Northern Advocate*, 14 February 1920, p. 2, 18 February 1920, p. 6.

⁵⁸² Jackson and Russell to J.W. Walker, 7 March 1905, Letterbook no. 85, pp. 636-637, Jackson and Russell Papers, MS 360, Library of the Auckland Institute and War Memorial Museum.

⁵⁸³ Jackson and Russell to Thomas McIndoe, 21 June 1905, Letterbook no. 86, Jackson and Russell Papers, MS 360, Library of the Auckland Institute and War Memorial Library.

⁵⁸⁴ *Auckland Star*, 14 August 1906, p. 5; *Auckland Weekly News*, 21 December 1905, p. 24, 16 August 1906, p. 32.

⁵⁸⁵ Interstate Probates, BBAE 1591/33; Testamentary Register 1906-1908, folio 17, BBCB 4208/6, ANZ-A.

⁵⁸⁶ *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 2, p. 834.

he enrolled as a full member.⁵⁸⁷ His length of service was referred to in an obituary as being ‘a number of years’.⁵⁸⁸

His involvement in shooting matches in Australia has not been traced, but in 1871 he reportedly had ‘the reputation of being the crack shot of Victoria’.⁵⁸⁹ A Dunedin newspaper understood he had taken ‘a high position in one of the Australian intercolonial rifle matches’.⁵⁹⁰ For a time after he arrived in New Zealand mining took precedence over his shooting, but he retained his interest. In July 1871, at the monthly parade of the Thames Scottish Volunteers, a letter he had written ‘was received with marked approval’.⁵⁹¹

I hereby challenge Captain [Nathaniel Young Armstrong] Wales,⁵⁹² champion shot of New Zealand, or any other man in New Zealand, to shoot a rifle match for £50 to £230 a side on the following conditions: - Rifle, any rifle; distance and shots, 10 each, at 200, 300, 400, 500, 600, 700, 800, 900, and 1,000 yards; position, any position firing from a level surface; targets, in every respect to be similar to those used in small-bore international and intercolonial matches; marking, by disc and flags, and the usual conditions generally adopted in the above-named matches. I will be agreeable to shoot at Auckland, Wellington, or Otago. The highest aggregate scorer to be the winner. I will give you £25 as a guarantee that I mean business.⁵⁹³

He offered to meet Wales’ travelling expenses should the match be held in the North Island.⁵⁹⁴ William Kennedy accepted his challenge on behalf of the Otago Volunteers, but it was declined by Wales for reasons he explained:

I do not claim to be a small bore shot, and must decline to compete against any person with a weapon I do not possess, am

⁵⁸⁷ *Auckland Weekly News*, 29 July 1871, p. 12; Thames Scottish Rifles, Nominal Roll as at June 1875, Army Department, ARM 41, 1882/1v, ANZ-W.

⁵⁸⁸ *New Zealand Herald*, 24 March 1916, p. 7.

⁵⁸⁹ *Auckland Weekly News*, 2 September 1871, p. 7.

⁵⁹⁰ *Otago Daily Times*, 31 August 1871, p. 7.

⁵⁹¹ Thames Correspondent, *Daily Southern Cross*, 28 July 1871, p. 3.

⁵⁹² See *Otago Daily Times*, 4 November 1903, p. 6, 12 November 1903, p. 4.

⁵⁹³ J.W. Walker to T.L. Murray, printed in *Daily Southern Cross*, 28 July 1871, p. 3, and *Otago Daily Times*, 31 August 1871, p. 7.

⁵⁹⁴ *Daily Southern Cross*, 20 July 1871, p. 3.

not acquainted with, and which is unquestionably superior to the Enfield; and, further, I will not accept a money challenge from any person; but I am quite willing to accept a challenge from Mr J.W. Walker to fire a simultaneous friendly match, at any ranges from 200 yards to 600 yards, inclusive, with Government rifles, Government ammunition, targets, and conditions as at Wimbledon meeting of 1870.⁵⁹⁵

An unnamed Thames volunteer argued that ‘if Mr Walker means business he ought to be a little more explicit as to whether Wimbledon rules and regulations are to be adhered to’ because the challenge as worded implied a choice of weapons and the use of various mechanical aids.

I understand Mr Walker challenged ten of the Thames Volunteers to shoot for five pounds a-side. I shall be very glad to make one of ten to fire against Mr Walker – Government rules of course. Mr Walker will be none the worse to have some practice with the local cracks before encountering higher game; indeed, he will find some hard nuts to crack.⁵⁹⁶

In reply, Walker repeated

that in all things throughout the match I submit to the regulations in force in the international and intercolonial matches. What more can I say? “T.V.” might have spared me the suspicion of mechanical rests, or other unsportsmanlike trickery. If “T.V.” doubts my being in earnest let him post his money, and he will ascertain whether or not I mean business. Captain Wales, “T.V.,” of whoever may accept, will certainly have choice of weapons, and so shall I; each shall choose what suits him. “T.V.” will pardon me if I hold my own opinion about the effect of the preliminary practice he prescribes; but if he should get his “ten men” together, I [shall] deal with him on his own terms.⁵⁹⁷

Instead of Wales, Corporal David Christie of the East Taieri Volunteers,⁵⁹⁸ a skilled shooter,⁵⁹⁹ took up Walker’s challenge, ‘the event to

⁵⁹⁵ N.Y.A. Wales to T.L. Murray, 11 August 1871, printed in *Daily Southern Cross*, 24 August 1871, p. 2.

⁵⁹⁶ Letter from ‘A Thames Volunteer’, *Thames Advertiser*, 29 July 1871, reprinted in *Otago Witness*, 19 August 1871, p. 3.

⁵⁹⁷ Letter from J.W. Walker, *Thames Advertiser*, 30 July 1871, reprinted in *Otago Witness*, 19 August 1871, p. 3.

come off in Dunedin'.⁶⁰⁰ It was to be held in November, for a stake of £300, Walker raising 'the whole of the money stake on his side himself'.⁶⁰¹ Shot over two days, the contest had been 'a topic of engrossing interest amongst the members of the Volunteer force' in Dunedin beforehand, and about 300 men watched the match. 'Various rumours had been current of the extraordinary scoring of both of the competitors when practicing, and each found supporters willing to back their opinions to a considerable extent. A fair amount of money has been staked on the result of the match, the betting being even, but Christie being the favourite'. Each man was to have 'ten shots each at 200 and every succeeding hundred up to 1000 yards, any rifle or ammunition, and any position'. Scheduled to commence at noon, Walker was one hour late arriving, the first of several delays.

Conditions of an intercolonial small-bore match which took place in Melbourne in 1867 were produced by Mr Walker as the conditions under which the present match was to be fired. A clause in this ran as follows:- "The marksman to be allowed two assistants on the mound to shelter him; no others admitted to the mound." Mr Christie having stated his intention of not using the mounds which had been erected, this clause was pointed out by Mr Walker and his umpire as making it compulsory on the part of each marksman to use the mounds. The other side objected to this, and so much time was occupied in its discussion with no result that there seemed a strong probability that the match would not take place. A new cause of dispute next arose, it being shown by the regulations of the International Rifle Association, 1871, that the back sight on Mr Walker's weapon was the first of a number of sights (No. 20) which had been disallowed. On Mr Walker asking what objection Mr Christie could have to shoot from the mounds, he replied that they were neither level nor sufficiently firm, and that he would rather fire from the ground, and further stated that he would not have taken exception to Walker's sight if he had not first objected to his (Christie's) firing from the ground. It was also urged, on behalf of Christie, that the clause in the rules did not necessarily imply that the mounds should be used by both marksman, and if, as alleged, it was compulsory to fire from mounds, why was not one erected at 200

⁵⁹⁸ East Taiari Volunteers Capitation Rolls, Army Department, AAYS 8790, ARM 41/59, 1906/1g, 1906/1h, ANZ-W.

⁵⁹⁹ For example, *Otago Daily Times*, 20 June 1866, p. 5, 6 February 1868, p. 5.

⁶⁰⁰ *Otago Daily Times*, 31 August 1871, p. 7.

⁶⁰¹ *Auckland Weekly News*, 2 September 1871, p. 7; *New Zealand Herald*, 7 November 1871, p. 2, letter from T.L. Murray, 9 November 1871, p. 2.

yards? After much more discussion, in which many of the bystanders joined unasked, and one of whom received a merited rebuke, a compromise was effected, Wallace consenting to change his sight, and Christie to fire from the mounds.

Walker won the shooting from 200 yards by 3 points, 'the interest began to be apparent, the number of spectators, too, having considerably increased. Christie's friends were not at all disconcerted at the result of the firing at this range, it being anticipated by them that Walker would score the most at the short distances. At 300 yards, the result was a tie, and it became evident that the men were not ill-matched'. Walker won the 400 yards by 40 to 36, and at 500 won by 38 to 37. At 600 yards, 'a cap on Christie's rifle missed fire at the fifth shot in this range, Walker immediately claiming that it should be scored as a miss, but Christie was allowed to fire it under protest'. Walker won at this distance by 36 to 32. After shooting ended on the first day, the *Otago Daily Times* commented that

The shooting has, on the whole, been very good, considering the disadvantage of having to fire in a strong and changeable wind. The weapons used were both muzzle-loaders.... The appliances used by Walker are many, and his careful manner in loading and adjusting the sights of his weapon was the subject of much remark.⁶⁰²

On the second day, 'the contestants practiced on the long ranges till twenty minutes to one o'clock, when there was a general adjournment of those then present to the booths for refreshment'.

When the firing was about to commence, Walker objected to the surfaces of the mounds being sloped, instead of being level; and they were consequently made as level as could be. Immediately afterwards, Walker raised the objection, that of the two friends of Christie, who acted as a wind-screen in sheltering him and his gun, one of them stood on the ground in front of the mound; whereas by the rules, the two should be upon the mound. There was then a further delay in enlarging the mound to enable those sheltering the person firing to get upon it. Walker's action in raising these objections was strongly commented upon by some, and as strongly answered by him.

⁶⁰² *Otago Daily Times*, 21 November 1871, p. 2.

The scoring at the 700 yards range was Walker 37 and Christie 36, putting the latter 13 points behind. Then Christie won the next range by 34 to 31 and the 900 yards range by 36 to 28.

When Walker made his misses, there were bursts of applause, which the greater number of those present – the assemblage then numbering some 600 or 700 persons – appeared to regard as ungenerous, and quickly suppressed. It was stated that the misses which Walker made arose, in the first instance, from the sight being off his rifle, and, in the second, from neglect to place the bullet in the weapon.

On the final range, the total score was for a short time equal before Walker won that round by 30 to 27, winning the competition by 310 to 305.

Large odds were laid upon Walker during the early part of the day, the number of points which he gained over his opponent on the previous day being no doubt the chief reason for this. However, as his lead was gradually lessened at the long distance ranges, the spirits of Christie's backers revived again, and the betting, towards the close of the day, was in many instances even. This was particularly the case when a tie between the competitors was recorded. Each succeeding shot, in fact, appeared to influence this part of the proceeding. As on the previous day, each contestant was remarkable for the accuracy of fire, some of the bull-eyes made being nearly in the very middle of the target. Walker was especially noticeable for his carefulness in loading, and the length of time he occupied, as compared with Christie, in taking aim. We have heard that at the conclusion of the match Walker offered to compete with Christie for £1000 a-side, but that the latter has not accepted the challenge.⁶⁰³

After Walker's victory, the Scottish Volunteers held a banquet in his honour and presented him with a 'handsome tea service of plate' bought with the subscriptions of the Thames public.⁶⁰⁴ The *Thames Advertiser* reported a 'great deal of pleasurable excitement and gratulation' because Walker was 'pitted in a single match against the pick of the whole colony'.⁶⁰⁵

⁶⁰³ *Otago Daily Times*, 22 November 1871, p. 2.

⁶⁰⁴ *Auckland Weekly News*, 2 December 1871, p. 13, 16 December 1871, p. 4.

⁶⁰⁵ *Thames Advertiser*, n.d., cited in *New Zealand Herald*, 27 November 1871, p. 2.

Considerable ill feeling was expressed both before and after the match. On 16 November, four days before the match, Walker had sent a letter to Thomas Leitch Murray,⁶⁰⁶ the commanding officer of the Thames Scottish Volunteers:

You will doubtless have heard of my arrival here this day week. The fellows here have been most kind, and have paid me every attention. I have good health, and don't feel very funky, notwithstanding that up to this moment I have carefully been prevented from having any practice, except at 400, 500, and 600 yards. Christie is in daily practice at a full range, twelve miles from town, on his own land. Only this morning have they started to fit up a target and mounds; they will possibly finish to-day, and if it keeps good weather (which I am afraid it will not) I may have two days' practice, unless some new obstacle is thrown in my way. I certainly expected that, after coming a thousand miles to meet my man, I might have been spared the trouble of building targets and mounds, but such has been my lot – rather an unfortunate one, as neither in Melbourne, Sydney, Grahamstown, nor Auckland could I find accommodation for practice – but I little dreamt of being put in the hole here. Yesterday, Kennedy coolly recommended me to fire the match off on Christie's private range. I have met Christie twice, and am certain he is entirely blameless; he is a smart and a very nice young gentleman. My friend Kennedy is merely a "good general." The outside public here are full of useless sympathy for me. I will try and win without it, but in any case have nothing to be thankful for.⁶⁰⁷

After reprinting this letter, the *Otago Daily Times* wanted 'those who had charge of arrangements' to respond to Walker's claims, 'otherwise they will remain under the imputation that they treated Mr Walker unfairly'. It understood that no difficulties were placed in his way: 'Far from that being the case, the impression was current in Dunedin, at the conclusion of the match, that had it not been for the too generous act of Mr Christie in supplying his opponent with powder, when his own was finished, the results of the contest might have been different'.⁶⁰⁸ In December, William Kennedy,

⁶⁰⁶ See *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 7, pp. 96-97; *Thames Advertiser*, 27 March 1873, p. 3, 28 April 1881, p. 2, 9 May 1881, p. 3, 26 August 1881, p. 2; *Thames Star*, 19 January 1900, p. 2; *Observer*, 8 September 1926, p. 6.

⁶⁰⁷ J.W. Walker to T.L. Murray, 16 November 1871, printed in *Thames Guardian*, 27 November 1871, reprinted in *Otago Daily Times*, 9 December 1891, p. 2.

⁶⁰⁸ *Otago Daily Times*, 9 December 1871, p. 2.

having read Walker's letter, responded to its, 'to say the least, grossly inaccurate statements'. Walker's charges were 'not only groundless' but betrayed 'a total disregard for all facts'. He listed the four charges:

Ist. That he had been "carefully prevented" from practicing except at 400, 500, and 600 yards. 2nd. That he had to build targets and mounds for himself. 3rd. That "I coolly recommended him to fire the match off on Christie's private range," and 4th. That I am "a good general."

As to the first, Mr Walker surely knows that there was no mention in the agreement, which was drawn up by himself, about the providing by me or any one else of a range for him to practise at; and certainly I was not aware that it was my duty to do so. I did not, however, nor did any one in Dunedin, carefully "prevent him from practicing." On the contrary, I told him that Mr Christie offered to allow him to practise on Mr Christie's own range; or that, if he liked, he could practise on the Green Island range. Moreover, if he wished he could have practiced up to 800 yards on the Anderson's Bay range. Neither of these offers, however, seemed to have pleased him, and Mr Christie generously allowed him to actually practise at the range where the match was fired off. Who then prevented him practising?

The second charge is just as false. He knows well enough that I had put up both the targets and the mounds; and, to give dispatch to the work, I had eight men on the ground at six o'clock on the Thursday morning before the match was fired. Mounds, too – not desired by Mr Christie, and which Mr Christie consented to fire the match from. I may also state that there was no mention of mounds in the arrangement.

The third charge is simply, to write plainly, an untruth. I neither recommended nor requested him to fire all the match on Christie's private land.

The fourth charge is that of my being "a good general," and considering the nature of the other charges he has made, need not be replied to. But I may state that, had it not been for Mr Christie's generosity and Mr Walker's "generalship," the match would have ended in a way less satisfactory to Mr Walker than it did. I hereby challenge Mr Walker to name one article in the agreement (written by himself) that I did not carry out to the very letter. I do hope in conclusion that Mr Walker will not be "carefully prevented" by any one from becoming more courteous in his demeanour and more truthful in his statements in the future than he has been in the past.⁶⁰⁹

⁶⁰⁹ Letter from William Kennedy, *Otago Daily Times*, 11 December 1871, p. 3.

In his response, Walker pleaded 'guilty of having charged Kennedy with most contemptible conduct towards me, but I deny having connected the Otago Volunteers with him in the matter', for they were 'neither mentioned nor inferred' in his letter to Murray, 'and have as little to do with the question as the "Heathen Chinees" '. In response to Kennedy's statements about providing a range for practice,

I now state that in electing to shoot in Otago, Kennedy, on Christie's behalf, before I left Auckland, undertook to make all necessary provision for affording me every opportunity to get myself in shooting form; and that I carried from him an introductory letter charging Capt. Copeland to undertake the management of the whole affair. If Mr Copeland will publish the letter, I need say no more about Mr Kennedy's veracity.

Mr Christie's range, whether offered or not, was useless to me. He might as well have offered me the use of a range in old Ireland, as that or the Green Island range. I do not think there is a complete range and targets within twenty miles of Dunedin.

Kennedy's assertion that at Anderson's Bay I practiced up to 800 yards is simply not [true]. Every shooting man in your force knows that I only stated the bare truth, and they also must know that Kennedy cannot understand what he is writing about. I could not practise any position at 200, 300, or 700 yards, and beyond that there is no range. Moreover, the target plates were broken and unserviceable for all ranges. Kennedy speaks of Mr Christie's generosity in having allowed me to practise at the match range. The said range was finished on the 17th November, and that afternoon both Christie and I started to practise on it. Kennedy was also there, and but for his interference, I should have been able to go once over the range before being called on to shoot for my money. I neither asked nor required Mr Christie's or Mr Kennedy's permission to practise then and there. If there was any generosity to spare, I confess I did not observe it.

That Mr Kennedy undertook to provide a range, and failed to do so, thereby preventing me from having practice, needs no further proof.

As for his statement that he had to build both targets and mounds,

Major Atkinson, Captains Copeland and McFarland, and every man on the ground, knew that, from daylight till dark, I was personally and continually busy measuring the ground, fetching and erecting the targets, and building the mounds, and otherwise facilitating the work from the commencement to its completion. And I will now inform all concerned that Captain McFarland

refused for some time to deliver to me the order to draw the stakes unless I paid the costs incurred in building the range.

He reiterated that Kennedy had suggested shooting the match on Christie's private range. 'He did so on the flags [flagstones] at the door of Dodson's Empire Hotel, on the evening of the 16th November, about 8 o'clock, in presence of some half dozen gentlemen, who will, doubtless, remember my rather vulgar reply'. And he repeated his 'candid opinion' that Christie was 'a good shot, and a gentleman; *but* that Kennedy was *merely* a good general'.

Messrs Christie and Copeland informed me that they were quite willing to postpone the match for a week, and to double the stakes, in accordance with a proposition I had made, but that "Mr Kennedy declined to forego any advantages that my want of practice gave their side, and, in fact, merely took a narrow pounds, shillings, and pence view of the contest."

These, Sir, are the plain facts of the matter, and I care nothing for Mr Kennedy's opinion, good or bad.

If, during the contest, I was less than courteous to any one (other than Mr Kennedy), I am sorry for it. Some excuse, however, may be found in the fact that I was very heavily handicapped.

The Echo has accused me, among other crimes, of being "a man of science, an associate of Yankees, and a Highlander." But as I am not at present standing my trial for either, I shall reserve my defence.⁶¹⁰

When this letter had been published previously in the *Thames Advertiser*, 'Argus' responded, and the *Otago Daily Times* was requested to publish his letter defending his friend Kennedy, whom he had known 'intimately' for 19 years in both Victoria and Otago.

During all that time, both as a business man and also in private life, he has always been looked upon as a respectable citizen, and respected by a large circle of citizens and acquaintances. Therefore, I think it is ungentlemanly on Mr J.W. Walker's part to show such an uncharitable feeling, aye, and with such bad grace.... Knowing full well Mr Kennedy was far away in another island at the time, and could not defend himself in any of the above charges, he thought proper to bring them before a Thames public. I would therefore suggest to Mr J.W. Walker that the next time he wants to vindicate his cause, or exonerate himself before

⁶¹⁰ Letter from J.W. Walker, *Otago Daily Times*, 1 February 1872, p. 3.

the public on any of the charges preferred against him by Mr Kennedy ... he will do so in a more courteous and gentlemanly manner, and find more becoming and suitable language to do than “all rot”, &c.⁶¹¹

The *Thames Advertiser* commented that, ‘considering the way in which Mr Walker was assailed from Dunedin, considerable latitude ought to be allowed to him’. It had received ‘another letter in the same strain’ from ‘Impartial’, but considered publishing one was sufficient.⁶¹² In May, extracts from his letters to S. Clayton were published in Dunedin:

In these letters Mr Walker states that on his offering to accept any challenge made by Mr Christie, conditional on the match being shot in the Province of Auckland, £1000 – the amount proposed – was immediately raised on the Thames alone, and that £5000 could have been raised if wanted. Speaking as to a match, he says that Otago “can have it on for a hatful of money;” and adds, “Don’t let any one talk, unless he is prepared to bet. Close on any of them for any sum, from £250 to £2500 a-side. To whoever comes here, I will allow £25, travelling costs, and provide target and mounds, all approved of, and open for practice a month prior to firing. Nothing shall be wanting in order that the men may have their merits tested fairly.” Also, “A gentleman told me that his friends in Dunedin informed him that Christie had sent me a challenged, and I had not accepted. Let him just try me.” Subsequently he writes, “I am much surprised that I have never received the £1000 challenge.” He also states that, having entered upon the management of a mine, shooting at Dunedin is out of the question, and that he is willing to shoot [against] Captain Macfarland, or any other competitor, on fair level terms at Grahamstown, or in Auckland, for from £250 to £2,500 a side, and would pay travelling expenses, fix target and mounds to his satisfaction, and give any reasonable term for practice on the match range. He further says, “I gave one challenge to all New Zealand, and won: I now content myself waiting for some aspiring competitor to prove that I am not the cock shootist of New Zealand.”⁶¹³

⁶¹¹ Letter from ‘Argus’, *Thames Advertiser*, n.d. [12 January 1871?], reprinted in *Otago Daily Times*, 2 February 1872, p. 3.

⁶¹² *Thames Advertiser*, n.d. [12 January 1871?], reprinted in *Otago Daily Times*, 2 February 1872, p. 3.

⁶¹³ Extracts from letters from J.W. Walker to S. Clayton, printed in *Otago Witness*, 11 May 1872, p. 14.

The *Otago Daily Times* was critical of his latest challenge:

“Cock-a-doodle-doo-o-o!!!” crows the self-styled “cock shootist of New Zealand,” Mr J.W. Walker, as with his rifle in one hand and a bundle of bank-notes in the other, he shouts defiance to all and sundry. His bank-notes, indeed, are more characteristic of him than his shooting. He flourishes them vauntingly before him, and will have nothing to do with any one who is unprovided with them, or who declines to shoot for money. Last August he challenged Captain Wales, but that gentleman, in his reply, said – “I will not accept a money challenge from any person.” Mr Walker, on the contrary, with characteristic vulgarity, says – “Don’t let any one talk, unless he is prepared to bet.” By so expressing himself, he shuts out Captain Wales, and others who have the same objection to shooting for money, from competing with him, which is a nice way of getting rid of dangerous antagonists. But this is not all. Mr Walker issues a challenge to fire with the small-bore only, whereas the Volunteers of New Zealand are almost wholly unacquainted with that weapon, which, as Captain Wales said in the letter from which I have quoted above, “is unquestionably superior to the Enfield.” Like a professional duelist in days now happily gone by, Mr Walker manoeuvres so as to use only the weapon with which he is acquainted and his antagonist unacquainted. He would not accept Captain Wales’s offer to fire with Government rifles and Government ammunition. Probably Mr Walker may say that he is as unacquainted with the Government rifle as the Volunteers are with the small-bore. Well, be it so; that will only show the advantage he enjoyed in the last match, and which, to equalize matters, he should forego in the next one. But above all, let him drop his excessively offensive style of thrusting his money into people’s faces, and learn at the same time to speak like a gentleman. Otherwise no gentleman “shootist” will enter the lists against him, any more than a gentleman, though skilled in the use of his fists, would accept a challenge from a prize-fighter.⁶¹⁴

In the following month, Walker presented a small-bore rifle as a prize to be competed for by members of the Thames Rifle Association.⁶¹⁵ Three months later, he presided at a meeting of Scotsmen that accepted a challenge from 15 New Zealand-born men to a rifle match.⁶¹⁶ In late September, the *Otago Daily Times* published another of his letters with the comment that

⁶¹⁴ *Otago Daily Times*, 7 May 1872, p. 2.

⁶¹⁵ *Daily Southern Cross*, 14 June 1872, p. 2.

⁶¹⁶ *Thames Advertiser*, 16 September 1872, p. 3.

this 'cock shootist' had issued 'another gallinaceous challenge to Otago', an erudite joke about poultry:⁶¹⁷

I have done no more shooting, and am almost afraid I never will. I am forty-five next month, and my sight is going anyhow; so if Christie or any other man wants to give me a turn I hope they will look smart. I am fully employed, and could not on any account leave here; *but* should any small bore man fancy a trip to Auckland, I will have a go at him; and if your people choose to make a double event, I have a big bore novice open to try conclusions with the best man you can send. Now there is a chance for you aspirants. As for stakes, I am afraid to mention money, or the Otago papers will be down on me again, so I will leave that to be settled on your side. Your Southern friends last match asserted that at the long ranges Mr Christie was far the better man. Well, I am willing to shoot him at 8, 9, 10, 11, and 12 hundred yards, 20 shots at each, for the old stakes, more or less, and he is welcome to shoot on or off the mounds, and I will use no objectionable foresight, shooting from a level surface. The good weather is coming, so send us a couple of good men with it, and blame me if they are not treated fairly and beaten fairly. With respect to stakes in the large-bore match, ranges, and number of shots, I also leave an open question, merely stating now that my man is equal to anything up to 700 yards, and to a few hundred pounds. Cock-a-doodle, how is that, umpire? Hooray for the North! If you fellows don't show in answer to this, I intend to sell or raffle my shooting irons, and to join the Baptists or the Mormons – I have not settled which. Give my warmest wishes to all old friends and foes.

He added a postscript: 'My last letter was certainly never intended for publication, but if you think this one will lead to business the papers are welcome to it, with my thanks for the former charitable remarks on my character, which I will endeavour to survive'.⁶¹⁸ Accordingly, this private letter was published, first in the *Otago Daily Times* and then in the *Thames Advertiser*.⁶¹⁹

The following year, Walker was elected vice-president of the Thames Rifle Association.⁶²⁰ Later that year, he was a member of the committee

⁶¹⁷ *Concise Oxford Dictionary*, 5 ed. (Oxford, 1964), p. 412.

⁶¹⁸ J.W. Walker to S. Clayton, n.d., printed in *Otago Daily Times*, 28 September 1872, p. 2, and *Thames Advertiser*, 8 October 1872, p. 3.

⁶¹⁹ *Thames Advertiser*, 8 October 1872, p. 3.

⁶²⁰ *Thames Advertiser*, 28 March 1873, p. 3.

raising money to send Thames shooters to join the New Zealand team for the Victorian Rifle Association's competitions in Melbourne.⁶²¹ One month later, despite being the champion small-bore shot in New Zealand, he was beaten, just, in a friendly match with the champion large-bore shot at the Tararu range. The *Thames Advertiser* commented that his 'scoring, considering how long he has been out of practice, was really wonderful', and it hoped he would be a member of the team going to this intercolonial rifle contest.⁶²² He not only went but was appointed its captain.⁶²³ He was 'in splendid uniform, and gradually advanced in rank and importance as the firing progressed, until at the close he was known as "Colonel Walker" '. Although some prizes were won, the team did not do very well; Walker himself did not shoot.⁶²⁴

In 1875, he was on the reception committee for a New Zealand-wide shooting competition held at Thames.⁶²⁵ Immediately afterwards there was talk of his participating in a small bore rifle competition with Christie and others,⁶²⁶ but it was not held. In July, after being informed by a friend of an international competition to be held in America, he convened a meeting in Thames to discuss New Zealand sending a team and was joint secretary of a committee charged with inducing the government to fund a trip to Philadelphia,⁶²⁷ a request that was declined. This was his last involvement with rifle shooting. The *Observer* later described him as having been one of the smartest shots with a small-bore rifle in Australasia, 'winning sundry important single-handed matches, and captaining a team of twenty-eight New Zealanders who toured the Australian capitals', who won 'everywhere'.⁶²⁸ He was known as both 'Smallbore Walker' and 'the Colonel'.⁶²⁹

FAMILY LIFE

⁶²¹ *Thames Advertiser*, 29 September 1873, p. 2.

⁶²² *Thames Advertiser*, 23 October 1873, p. 2.

⁶²³ *Thames Advertiser*, 28 October 1873, p. 2.

⁶²⁴ *Thames Advertiser*, 5 December 1873, p. 3.

⁶²⁵ *Thames Advertiser*, 21 January 1875, p. 2, 23 January 1875, p. 3, 25 January 1875, p. 3.

⁶²⁶ *Thames Advertiser*, 30 January 1875, p. 3.

⁶²⁷ *Thames Advertiser*, 26 July 1875, p. 2, 31 July 1875, p. 2.

⁶²⁸ *Observer*, 23 April 1904, p. 17, 11 July 1914, p. 4.

⁶²⁹ *Thames Advertiser*, 12 July 1880, p. 3, 15 November 1883, p. 2.

In 1854, when aged 27, Walker married Margaret Wilkie Dow, the 18-year-old daughter of James Foote Dow, of Langlands Foundry, Melbourne, and June, née Taylor; Dow, an engineer, was originally from Scotland.⁶³⁰ They would have nine children, two of whom died before their mother; with all these children to cope with, and her husband earning good salaries, she was able to employ at least one servant.⁶³¹ She would die at Tararu in May 1906 while her husband was in England attempting to raise capital. Her death followed a ‘very painful illness, which she bore with exemplary fortitude’; it was uterine cancer combined with a form of dropsy, and she took six months to die, aged 70.⁶³² Although Walker must have known of the nature of his wife’s illness, he chose to remain abroad for 18 months rather than be by her side, and did not return until four months after her death.⁶³³ One obituary stated that, ‘by her unostentatious acts of charity, her probity and kindness she had endeared herself to all sections of the community’.⁶³⁴ She was ‘much respected’, said another obituary.⁶³⁵ Was it significant that her tombstone in the Tararu cemetery, erected ‘in loving memory’ of Walker’s wife (not ‘beloved wife’), bore a quotation from *Proverbs* that mentioned only her children: ‘Her children arise and call her blessed’ (*Proverbs*, 31. 28).⁶³⁶ Were they making a point? And he was not buried with her.

Shortly after returning to New Zealand after his wife’s death, Walker visited Waihi with his eldest daughter before going to Te Aroha. ‘Mr Walker’s trip to the Old Country seems to have given him fresh energy’, the Waihi newspaper reported.⁶³⁷ Seven months later, at the end of May 1907, it published surprising news: ‘Waihi residents will be interested to know

⁶³⁰ *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 2, p. 834; Death Certificate of Margaret Wilkie Walker, 17 May 1906, 1906/358, BDM; John Hetherington, *Melba: A biography* (London, 1967), p. 17.

⁶³¹ *Thames Advertiser*, 11 April 1874, p. 2.

⁶³² Death Certificate of Margaret Wilkie Walker, 17 May 1906, 1906/358, BDM; *Black’s Medical Dictionary*, ed. C.W.H. Havard, 36 ed. (London, 1990), p. 61; *Thames Advertiser*, 17 May 1906, p. 2.

⁶³³ *Thames Advertiser*, 29 September 1906, p. 4.

⁶³⁴ *Thames Advertiser*, 17 May 1906, p. 2.

⁶³⁵ *Auckland Weekly News*, 24 May 1906, p. 25.

⁶³⁶ Headstone of Margaret Wilkie Walker, Tararu Cemetery, Cemetery Records, DO1.32, row 9, no. 58, microfilm.

⁶³⁷ *Waihi Daily Telegraph*, 26 October 1906, p. 2.

that “Long Drive” Walker has just been married to Miss Edwards, an Auckland lady, late of Thames, and has taken her with him for a trip to the Old Country. The bridegroom is an octogenarian, and the bride’s age is given as 28 years’.⁶³⁸ The *Observer* reported that his marriage ‘to a lady not many years out of her teens, and his departure upon a honeymoon trip to the Old Country, has naturally made a little stir among his friends. For “Long Drive” owns up to being somewhere in the vicinity of eighty, though he doesn’t look it, by many degrees’.⁶³⁹ It gave the name of the new bride as ‘Miss Edwards, of Auckland, formerly of the Thames’; presumably she was the Emily Edwards who was living there in 1905.⁶⁴⁰ In its next issue, the *Observer* explained that it had copied the information from the Waihi newspaper but had since been informed by Walker that the story was baseless. ‘We regret the error into which we have inadvertently fallen, and which we can well believe has caused much annoyance to the parties concerned’.⁶⁴¹ As issues of the *Waihi Daily Telegraph* for early June are lost, any apology it made has been lost.

In March 1912, news was received from London that

“Long Drive” Walker, who is striding quickly into his eighties, contemplates a honeymoon. He was always renowned for his courage from the ancient days when he poked daylight through a big hill at Thames. Maybe he continues to be juvenile and matrimonially inclined, because he has never rested. He has the enthusiasm of a school boy, and is as keen on a float now as he was half a century or more ago.... He is showing no signs of wear. Probably his quiet, almost religious behaviour, is responsible for his vigorous desire to be as other young men are and to again set up the domestic gods.⁶⁴²

This time the rumours were true, for in 1911, at the age of 85 he had married Josephine Mary Evans, 42 years his junior.⁶⁴³ She was a nurse, the daughter of a farmer in North Wales. In November 1918, she remarried (as

⁶³⁸ *Waihi Daily Telegraph*, 30 May 1907, p. 2.

⁶³⁹ *Observer*, 8 June 1907, p. 5.

⁶⁴⁰ *Observer*, 8 June 1907, p. 8; *Thames Electoral Roll 1905*, p. 20.

⁶⁴¹ *Observer*, 15 June 1907, p. 8.

⁶⁴² *Observer*, 16 March 1912, p. 5.

⁶⁴³ Marriage Certificate of John Watson Walker, April-June 1911, British BDM (ancestry.co.uk); Death Certificate of John Watson Walker, 23 March 1916, 1916/739, BDM.

Maria Josephine), her second husband being 33 years-old to her 37 years; he was an insurance agent in Whangarei.⁶⁴⁴

His children's lives are briefly summarized:

James Dow, the eldest son, was born in Richmond, Melbourne, in 1854.⁶⁴⁵ He was a miner in the Kuranui mine while his father was manager, in 1877 breaking his leg when trucking.⁶⁴⁶ Three years later, when managing the Kuranui battery for his father, his arm was broken in an accident.⁶⁴⁷ His death at 51 was caused by dust and gas in the mines.⁶⁴⁸

The second son, John Walker, was born in Melbourne in 1856, dying there in 1861.⁶⁴⁹

Walter Ferguson, born in Victoria in 1859, married in 1892, when he was a 33-year-old miner.⁶⁵⁰ He worked for his father as a shift boss, and was appointed mine manager of the Rising Sun at Owharoa in 1896.⁶⁵¹ He died in 1910.⁶⁵²

George was born in Melbourne in 1867, and died there in the same year.⁶⁵³

Samuel Wilson was born there in 1869, dying there in the following year.⁶⁵⁴

The youngest son, William Thomas Fenton, was born in 1873.⁶⁵⁵ In 1932, the *Observer* included 'Bill' in its 'Men of Note in NZ Mining', when he was pursuing 'the golden quest along the Thames foreshore. Searching for

⁶⁴⁴ Marriage Certificate of Maria Josephine Walker, 7 November 1918, 1918/6065, BDM.

⁶⁴⁵ 'Life lines', p. 2.

⁶⁴⁶ *Auckland Weekly News*, 2 June 1877, p. 8.

⁶⁴⁷ *Auckland Weekly News*, 20 November 1880, p. 13.

⁶⁴⁸ *Thames Star*, 4 November 1905, p. 2; A.W. Sawyer, handwritten recollections, n.d. [1940s], W.G. Hammond Papers, folder 34A, MS 134, Library of the Auckland Institute and War Memorial Museum.

⁶⁴⁹ 'Life lines', p. 3.

⁶⁵⁰ Marriage Certificate of Walter Ferguson Walker, 12 December 1892, 1892/2903, BDM.

⁶⁵¹ A.W. Sawyer, handwritten recollections, n.d. [1940s], W.G. Hammond Papers, folder 34A, MS 134, Library of the Auckland Institute and War Memorial Museum; *Observer*, 7 November 1896, p. 9; *Ohinemuri Electoral Roll 1896*, p. 58.

⁶⁵² Death Certificate of Walter Ferguson Walker, 1910/6288, BDM.

⁶⁵³ 'Life lines', p. 4.

⁶⁵⁴ 'Life lines', p. 4.

⁶⁵⁵ Birth Certificate of William Thomas Fenton Walker, 10 October 1873, 1873/37606, BDM.

lost gold leads and rich tailings, he sunk a shaft and struck two ancient copper pennies'.⁶⁵⁶

His eldest daughter, Annie Isabel, born in Maldon, Victoria, in 1860, in 1883 married a surveyor, George Henry Arthur Purchas,⁶⁵⁷ when Walker operated his hotel at Te Aroha.⁶⁵⁸ The *Observer* reported that 'the Te Aroha "knight of the theodolite" has been caught at last. Neither lockets nor chains would satisfy the *ci-donant* dressmaker, but a plain gold guard'.⁶⁵⁹ Like his brothers-in-law, in the 1890s onwards he was active in mining, managing mines at Waitekauri, Western Australia, and Victoria.⁶⁶⁰

Alice Jane was born in Victoria in October 1863; she would never marry.⁶⁶¹

Helen was born at Maldon in 1864; she would marry a warden's court clerk in 1894.⁶⁶²

Edith Florence, born in 1871,⁶⁶³ in 1880 fell 30 feet off a perpendicular ladder, leading to an aerial tramway, in the Moanataiari Company's yard, adjacent to her home. She was concussed from falling on her head and injured her back, but quickly recovered.⁶⁶⁴ In 1905, when aged 32, she married a commercial traveller.⁶⁶⁵

⁶⁵⁶ *Observer*, 18 August 1932, p. 13; p. 27 has further details of his mining career.

⁶⁵⁷ See *Te Aroha News*, 13 September 1884, p. 2; *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 7, p. 58; *New Zealand Herald*, 5 July 1933, p. 12.

⁶⁵⁸ 'Life lines', p. 3; Marriage Certificate of Annie Isabel Walker, 21 November 1883, 1883/3388, BDM; *Thames Star*, 21 November 1883, p. 2.

⁶⁵⁹ *Observer*, 7 July 1883, p. 256.

⁶⁶⁰ *Thames Advertiser*, 1 May 1895, p. 2, 13 March 1897, p. 3, 25 February 1898, p. 4, 28 February 1898, p. 4, 1 March 1898, p. 4; *Ohinemuri Gazette*, 23 February 1898, p. 2; *Auckland Weekly News*, 14 May 1898, p. 18; *New Zealand Mines Record*, 16 March 1903, p. 349; *New Zealand Herald*, 5 July 1933, p. 12.

⁶⁶¹ Thames Baptism Register 1874-1880, no. 837, Anglican Archives, Auckland; *New Zealand Herald*, 24 March 1916, p. 7.

⁶⁶² 'Life lines', p. 4; Marriage Certificate of Helen Walker, 11 July 1894, 1894/2172, BDM.

⁶⁶³ Birth Certificate of Edith Walker, 20 September 1871, 1871/18470, BDM.

⁶⁶⁴ *Thames Advertiser*, 1 March 1880, p. 3.

⁶⁶⁵ Marriage Certificate of Edith Florence Walker, 1 March 1905, 1905/4785, BDM.

In 1875, Amy Constance Evelyn was born; in 1905, she married a solicitor.⁶⁶⁶

In 1902, Walker had 'three sons and five daughters surviving'.⁶⁶⁷ By the time of his death 14 years later, two more sons had died, leaving William as the survivor.⁶⁶⁸ Neither his unmarried daughter (Alice) nor his second wife was looking after him when he died at his daughter Annie's house in Auckland.⁶⁶⁹ He remained in close contact with his daughters even after they were married, for instance travelling to England with some of them in 1904.⁶⁷⁰

Although both Walker and his first wife had Anglican funerals and she made the Anglican clergyman at Thames her executor,⁶⁷¹ only three of their daughters were baptized into this church, very belatedly. The one born in 1863 was not baptized until 1879, and those born in 1871 and 1875 were not baptized until 1890.⁶⁷² No other baptisms have been traced, although those born in Victoria may have been baptized there. When Walter Ferguson married in 1892, it was in the Catholic Church in Thames; he was noted on the certificate as being a Protestant, and none of his family were witnesses,⁶⁷³ implying disapproval of his 'mixed marriage', to use the contemporary phrase.

The most prominent member of his extended family was his niece (by marriage), Nellie Melba, the famous Australian soprano, the daughter of David Mitchell and Walker's sister-in-law, Isabella Ann Dow.⁶⁷⁴ In 1892, the *Observer* wrote that it was 'not generally known that Madame Melba ...

⁶⁶⁶ Birth Certificate of Amy Constance Evelyn Walker, 7 October 1875, 1875/3396; Marriage Certificate of Amy Constance Evelyn Walker, 15 November 1905, 1905/3070, BDM.

⁶⁶⁷ *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 2, p. 834.

⁶⁶⁸ *New Zealand Herald*, 24 March 1916, p. 7.

⁶⁶⁹ *New Zealand Herald*, 24 March 1916, p. 1.

⁶⁷⁰ *Ohinemuri Gazette*, 23 March 1904, p. 2.

⁶⁷¹ Death Certificate of John Watson Walker, 23 March 1916, 1916/739, BDM; Thames Burial Register 1894-1907, no. 445, Anglican Archives, Auckland; Testamentary Register 1906-1908, folio 17, BBCB 4208/6, ANZ-A.

⁶⁷² Thames Baptism Register 1874-1880, no. 837; Thames Baptism Register 1889-1900, nos. 178, 179, Anglican Archives, Auckland.

⁶⁷³ Marriage Certificate of Walter Ferguson Walker, 12 December 1892, Marriage Register 1881-1906, no. 232, Catholic Church Archives, Thames.

⁶⁷⁴ Hetherington, pp. 15-17.

is a niece of a mining manager at the Thames, well known in connection with the floating of new companies on the English markets'.⁶⁷⁵ It was not that much of a secret, at least in later years, as the relationship was noted in the press on several occasions.⁶⁷⁶ In 1906, he 'saw a good deal of his niece' when in London.⁶⁷⁷ Three years later, the *Observer* claimed that he regarded 'his niece, Madame Melba, as one of his most valuable mascottes. Didn't she help him to float the Grand Junction?'⁶⁷⁸ In 1932 it wrote that Melba was 'said to have taken an interest in the flotation, many well-known financiers following her lead'.⁶⁷⁹ A history of Thames recounted that, when he told her, over lunch, of his difficulties in floating (in this version) the Waihi Company, 'she took up a menu and on the back she wrote a number of important names, and at the bottom she signed her own.... Her kindly help resulted in Walker finding all the support he needed'.⁶⁸⁰

HEALTH, AND DEATH

Walker was described as 'a big handsome man' and 'tall, lithe, distinguished-looking'.⁶⁸¹ An obituary referred to his 'stalwart form', and considered that 'a constitution of iron' helped him live to a 'great age'.⁶⁸² Just before his death, doctors described him as 'a tall man of good build about the chest & shoulders but not so well built about the legs', and being 'in good physical condition' for 'a man of his years'.⁶⁸³

In 1900, to escape a fire he had to jump out of window in the Auckland Club, hurting his ankle.⁶⁸⁴ His injuries may have been worse than that, for a month later the *Te Aroha News* was 'pleased' to see him 'once more in our midst. He is rapidly recovering from the injuries received at the recent

⁶⁷⁵ *Observer*, 17 September 1892, p. 4.

⁶⁷⁶ For example, *Ohinemuri Gazette*, 10 October 1902, p. 2; *Thames Star*, 3 October 1906, p. 4; *Observer*, 16 March 1912, p. 5, 1 April 1916, p. 4.

⁶⁷⁷ *Thames Star*, 3 October 1906, p. 4.

⁶⁷⁸ 'They Say', *Observer*, 15 May 1909, p. 7.

⁶⁷⁹ *Observer*, 18 August 1932, p. 27.

⁶⁸⁰ John Grainger, *The Amazing Thames* (Wellington, 1951), p. 128.

⁶⁸¹ *Observer*, 17 August 1912, p. 4, 18 August 1932, p. 27, with photograph.

⁶⁸² *Observer*, 1 April 1916, p. 4.

⁶⁸³ Avondale Asylum, Committed Patient Case Files 1916, YCAA 1026/50, ANZ-A.

⁶⁸⁴ *Thames Star*, 19 May 1900, p. 2.

fire'.⁶⁸⁵ Even into his eighties, he kept good health. In 1909, it again expressed its pleasure to see 'our old friend' in Te Aroha again, 'looking well and hearty'. Walker spoke 'well of the Te Aroha Baths and drinking waters',⁶⁸⁶ though the paper resisted the temptation to claim that these were the cause of his longevity. When celebrating his eighty-sixth birthday three years later, he told a friend that he was 'younger than ever'.⁶⁸⁷

At the age of 89, on 5 March 1916 he was admitted to the Auckland hospital suffering from dementia, but was discharged 'relieved' on the following day.⁶⁸⁸ Immediately after his discharge, he was admitted to the asylum because of senility.⁶⁸⁹ When admitted he had abrasions on his legs and arms and a black eye. His wife had admitted him because 'he has been acting in a strange manner he wanders about mindlessly by himself. Is violent at times. Suffers from a kind of fit'. The attack had lasted for a month. Although he was assessed as being possibly epileptic or suicidal (he had threatened to commit suicide), he was not considered to be dangerous to others. His behaviour was put down to senile decay combined with alcohol; his wife could not control him. The medical officer who examined him upon admission noted that he 'behaved in a rational manner and his conversation was quite rational. He is somewhat upset on account of being brought here. I should think he would be inclined to resent control'. In contrast, a second doctor described him as incoherent, and recorded him giving his occupation as 'blackguard'.⁶⁹⁰ When he was discharged on 13 March, after the superintendent interviewed his wife, he was recorded as being in 'good health & condition'.⁶⁹¹

Ten days later he died, not at his own home but at his eldest daughter's, from heart failure.⁶⁹² His obituaries, as so often, took most of their information about his early life from the *Cyclopedia of New*

⁶⁸⁵ *Te Aroha News*, n.d., cited in *Thames Star*, 18 June 1900, p. 2.

⁶⁸⁶ *Te Aroha News*, 1 July 1909, p. 3.

⁶⁸⁷ *Observer*, 17 August 1912, p. 4.

⁶⁸⁸ Auckland Hospital, Register of Admissions and Discharges 1915-1917, folio 77, YCAB 15266/2a, ANZ-A.

⁶⁸⁹ Avondale Asylum, Register of Admissions 1915-1917, no. 5330, YCAA 1021/6, ANZ-A.

⁶⁹⁰ Avondale Asylum, Committed Patient Case Files 1916, no. 5330, YCAA 1026/50, ANZ-A.

⁶⁹¹ Avondale Asylum, Register of Admissions 1915-1917, no. 5330, YCAA 1021/6, ANZ-A.

⁶⁹² Death Certificate of John Watson Walker, 23 March 1916, 1916/739, BDM.

Zealand.⁶⁹³ The *Observer* described his life as ‘a very full and long one’, marked by ‘ceaseless activity’.⁶⁹⁴

PERSONALITY

One journalist described Walker as known to ‘large circles of acquaintance, from the smallest school miss in Waihi to Madame Melba in Paris; from “the boots” in Tanner’s hotel to his Royal Highness the Duke of Edinburgh; not to mention the members of the stock exchanges of the world, and “the boys so far away” in the interior of Africa’.⁶⁹⁵ A Thames miner recalled him as ‘strong & hearty’, and a ‘goer’ who was ‘never Idle’. He was ‘a fine Fellow to all the kids around our end – full of Fun – & generous – to the youngsters here.... Right to the last of his days – Mr Walker was a very brisk – smart looking man’.⁶⁹⁶

The *Observer*’s obituary described him as ‘a big man in every sense of the term; dogged, pertinacious, domineering’.⁶⁹⁷ This suggested that he had a ‘hard’ side, which may have been experienced by his first wife, who died while he stubbornly remained in England on a futile effort to raise capital. His letters, especially when abusing others, suggested that on at least some occasions, such as the disputes over shooting matches, he displayed arrogance. Unlike some obituaries, his did not record that he was of a charitable disposition, and his only known act of charity was a ‘handsome donation’ of a hundred Grand Junction shares to the Thames hospital in 1897.⁶⁹⁸

He was once convicted of an offence: in June 1880, he was fined one shilling for failing to register his dog.⁶⁹⁹

He also had a sense of humour, which has been seen in some of his letters to the newspaper cited earlier. Another example of his humour was in the *Observer*’s response to a person who wrote to it in 1905 about a

⁶⁹³ Especially *New Zealand Herald*, 24 March 1916, p. 7.

⁶⁹⁴ *Observer*, 1 April 1916, p. 4.

⁶⁹⁵ ‘A Tramp, Esq.’, ‘Casual Ramblings’, *Auckland Weekly News*, 18 May 1895, p. 38.

⁶⁹⁶ A.W. Sawyer, handwritten recollections, n.d. [1940s], W.G. Hammond Papers, folder 34a, MS 134, Library of the Auckland Institute and War Memorial Museum.

⁶⁹⁷ *Observer*, 1 April 1916, p. 4.

⁶⁹⁸ Secretary, Thames Hospital Board, to J.W. Walker, 7 September 1897, Letterbook 1896-1901, p. 157, YYBP 14067/1b, ANZ-A; *Thames Star*, 7 September 1897, p. 2.

⁶⁹⁹ Police Court, *Thames Advertiser*, 15 June 1880, p. 3.

particular wine, probably of local provenance: ‘Evidently, you have not indulged much in the so-called “wine.” “Long Drive” Walker once suggested that the Government should purchase it and present it to the Boers. He declared that it would have done more damage than the dynamite shells’.⁷⁰⁰ Walker did know something about wine. When ‘A Tramp’ visited his cottage at Opitini a few years after he had left, a mine manager was sure there would be ‘a cellar somewhere about the premises’; although Walker ‘called it a dairy’, the guide did not ‘think it was cow’s milk he placed in it’.⁷⁰¹ That he could defend himself fiercely, even verging on the libelous, was illustrated by his partly humorous response to being over-charged for drainage of his Don Pedro mine.⁷⁰²

CONCLUSION

Walker prided himself on being a ‘practical’ miner, and was one of many experienced miners who discounted the views of experts who doubted that their sanguine proposals would produce the payable ore they believed to exist in ground they were developing.⁷⁰³ In practice, despite his skills as a mine manager and mining engineer, Walker could not find good gold where it did not exist, and all three of his ‘gigantic schemes’ at Thames, Te Aroha, and Waihi failed for this reason. He did not want his proposals dealt with ‘from a geological point of view’,⁷⁰⁴ but how could geology not be relevant? How practical was it to argue that raising capital to test unworked ground that geologists argued was most unlikely to contain ore was dealing with the possibilities ‘in a practical and not a theoretical manner’?⁷⁰⁵ He was correct in arguing that large areas worked by large and well resourced companies were required once the early bonanzas were over, but all the capital and skills available could not create good ore, as Walker and so many investors discovered, to their cost.

Appendix

⁷⁰⁰ ‘Our Letter Box’, *Observer*, 15 July 1905, p. 24.

⁷⁰¹ ‘A Tramp’, ‘Casual Ramblings’, *Auckland Weekly News*, 26 September 1896, p. 38.

⁷⁰² Letter from J.W. Walker, *Thames Advertiser*, 7 May 1886, p. 2.

⁷⁰³ For example, editorial, *Thames Star*, 21 June 1901, p. 2.

⁷⁰⁴ *Thames Star*, 22 June 1901, p. 4.

⁷⁰⁵ *Thames Star*, 22 June 1901, p. 4.

Figure 1: 'Blo' [William Blomfield], 'THEIR LITTLE JOKE

Hon. James McGowan [Minister of Mines]: Well, now, if I give you all this land for your Thames Prospecting Scheme, what will you do?

J.W.W.: My name's Walker, sure enough.

Hon. James: Ah, I see, but surely you will go for a LONG DRIVE?

(*Observer*, 7 September 1901, p. 16.)

Figure 2: 'Blo', 'Long Drive'. 'What we want is more capital for the goldfields. I think I'll run Home and raise it'. (*Observer*, 16 January 1904, p. 5.)



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Hon. James McGowan : Well, now, if I give you all this land for your Thames Prospecting Scheme, what will you do?

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"LONG DRIVE."

*"What we want is more capital for
the goldfields. I think I'll run Home
and raise it."*