

AN OVERVIEW OF MINING IN THE TE AROHA MINING DISTRICT
FROM THE TURN OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY UNTIL THE
START OF THE DEPRESSION

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Abstract: *Apart from the mines owned by Edwin Henry Hardy, mining at Waiorongomai stagnated in the early twentieth century. During its first decade attention largely switched to the Tui district, with new treatment processes promising better results, but, as usual, raising capital was difficult and the government was asked to assist. A mining revival was constantly anticipated, especially by the local newspaper, and for the first time base metals were also investigated. Prospecting encompassed new areas, with the Mangakino Valley and the top of the mountain being investigated more thoroughly than previously.*

In 1913, the battery was destroyed in a fire but was replaced. During that decade and the subsequent one, mining faded away to almost nothing, and only the onset of the Depression caused any revival.

1900 - 1902

All parts of the field stagnated in the early years of the twentieth century, with the exception of Edwin Henry Hardy's mines.¹ In March 1900, 41 leases covered 2,773 acres;² 12 months later, there were only ten, covering 384,³ and mining was restricted to three Waiorongomai claims.⁴ By 30 March 1900, 'very little work' was being done in any of the other mines apart from the Premier, worked by Hardy, and the small Alexandra mine owned by William Morris Newsham.⁵ There was prospecting in four claims, and a few tributers were at work.⁶ At the end of February, Thomas Gavin⁷ and Newsham took over the Loyalty United and within 12 months extracted

¹ See paper on his life.

² *AJHR*, 1900, C-3, p. 212.

³ *AJHR*, 1901, C-3, p. 178.

⁴ James Coutts to Under-Secretary, Mines Department, 8 February 1901, *AJHR*, 1901, C-3, p. 57; Warden to Under-Secretary, Mines Department, 31 March 1901, *AJHR*, 1901, C-3, p. 79.

⁵ See paper on his life.

⁶ *AJHR*, 1900, C-3, p. 90.

⁷ See paper on his life.

30 tons for a return of 27oz 1dwt valued at £67 13s 6d.⁸ After ‘a little prospecting’ was done in the following year,⁹ it was abandoned.

When the council reduced the charge for tramway haulage in August 1900, the *Te Aroha News* once more hoped Waiorongomai would soon have ‘a more promising outlook’ and that ‘a little of the “bustle” of the good old days will appear in the streets’.¹⁰ A bank manager, more perceptively, realized that dairying, not mining, would bring prosperity.¹¹ In February 1901, a Te Aroha resident described the district as ‘very quiet’ with people ‘waiting patiently for better times’.¹² There were occasional reports of new discoveries, as in that June, when a three-foot reef, ‘the richest ever worked in the district’, was found in the Premier. The newspaper in publishing this noted that ‘hitherto the comparative absence of any really rich discoveries’ had checked ‘anything like systematic prosperity’.¹³ The report was baseless, but probably helped to encourage some South Island prospectors to visit and to create the belief in Auckland that mining was ‘looking up’.¹⁴ It was not; in March 1902 the mining inspector, James Coutts, reported very little work being done apart from some prospecting in three claims.¹⁵

ATTEMPTS TO REVIVE TUI MINING

In October 1901, some Paeroa residents formed the Te Aroha Lead and Silver Syndicate to take over the Thames Lead and Silver Mines ground on the eastern side of the Tui saddle.¹⁶ Its secretary, Edwin Edwards, a

⁸ *Te Aroha News*, 1 March 1900, p. 2; *AJHR*, 1901, C-3, pp. 57, 138.

⁹ *AJHR*, 1902, C-3, p. 42.

¹⁰ *Te Aroha News*, n.d., reprinted in *Ohinemuri Gazette*, 25 August 1900, p. 3.

¹¹ Bank of New Zealand, Ohinemuri Branch, Manager’s Notes, in Half-Yearly Balance Books to 31 March 1900, 30 September 1900, Bank of New Zealand Archives, Wellington.

¹² *Thames Star*, 22 February 1901, p. 4.

¹³ *Thames Star*, 18 June 1901, p. 4.

¹⁴ *Thames Star*, 16 September 1901, p. 2; James Russell to Joseph Campbell, 24 October 1901, Letterbook no. 78, p. 248, Jackson and Russell Papers, MS 360, Library of the Auckland Institute and War Memorial Museum.

¹⁵ James Coutts to Under-Secretary, Mines Department, 13 March 1902, *AJHR*, 1902, C-3, p. 42.

¹⁶ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Thames Star*, 31 October 1901, p. 4; James Coutts to Under-Secretary, Mines Department, 13 March 1902, *AJHR*, 1902, C-3, p. 42.

journalist who had become a mining agent,¹⁷ used his *Ohinemuri Gazette* to publicize this venture. Its first report stated it intended to test the galena by ‘the new Carmichael-Bradford desulpherisation process, which invention caused such a sensation in Broken Hill lately’. An Auckland assayer considered Tui ore to be identical to Broken Hill lead sulphides, and test parcels were sent to Melbourne, Adelaide, Dunedin, and Broken Hill to be treated by this process.¹⁸

Shortly afterwards, Edwards’ newspaper reported a ‘very satisfactory return from a parcel of the highly mineralized ore’ and that the syndicate would ‘shortly send a large quantity of the lode to Australia for treatment’.¹⁹ Two days later, the assays were published, showing the ore to be 71 per cent lead with 14oz 5dwt 18gr of silver and 1dwt 15gr of gold to the ton. ‘The galena being in enormous quantities, holding these metals, should under the new desulphurisation process be a regular bonanza - a gift of the Gods’. After deducting the cost of mining and of transportation to Australia, a clear profit of £2 18s 11d per ton, less insurance, was expected. The syndicate intended to acquire adjacent claims containing the galena lode.²⁰ Charles Colclough, ‘an old Southern miner’,²¹ was the first mine manager.²²

An editorial in the *Ohinemuri Gazette* in April 1902 describing the new process and its success with this ore asked ‘When will the people of Te Aroha appreciate the riches at their back door. In a little while it will be “why did we miss it” ’.²³ Soon afterwards, another editorial sought to attract investors’ attention with the headline: ‘The Great Metallic Deposit at Te Aroha’. After providing further details of the ore and its successful treatment, it concluded that if what was ‘written in the scientific journals’, unspecified, was true, ‘re these new and startling processes’, there was ‘a veritable new era in front of Te Aroha’.²⁴ Two months later, after quoting a Sydney newspaper that the process worked satisfactorily and cheaply in Australia, it commented: ‘Five shillings per ton and 100,000 tons ready to

¹⁷ See *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 2, p. 844.

¹⁸ *Ohinemuri Gazette*, 25 October 1901, p. 2, 30 October 1901, p. 3.

¹⁹ *Ohinemuri Gazette*, 11 November 1901, p. 2.

²⁰ *Ohinemuri Gazette*, 13 November 1901, p. 3.

²¹ See *Ohinemuri Gazette*, 18 October 1909, p. 2.

²² *Ohinemuri Gazette*, 30 October 1901, p. 3.

²³ Editorial, *Ohinemuri Gazette*, 23 April 1902, p. 2.

²⁴ Editorial, *Ohinemuri Gazette*, 2 May 1902, p. 2.

mine. The cost of a plant would be barely £2000, and would, considering the ore is worth indeed £5 per ton at the mine, pay for itself in three months'.²⁵

Seven days later, the newspaper published Edwards' article, 'Our Despised Mineral Resources', which, after giving details of all the minerals and the appropriate process, called on the government to assist by providing the plant.²⁶ Considering that only one week previously it had been argued that the cost of erecting one would be quickly recouped, the logic for this call was not explained. This article, reprinted as a leaflet, was sent to the James McGowan, Minister of Mines, and others.²⁷ Edwards also lobbied parliament's goldfields committee.²⁸ McGowan had no knowledge of the new process, and his department considered that, before any plant should be built,

those interested in the matter should explain the process and send a sufficient quantity of ore to enable a practical working-test to be made at Thames School of Mines, when, if the process is found to give the results claimed in the article written by Edwards, the question of the Government assisting in the erection of a plant could be considered.²⁹

Despite this prompt, no ore was sent to for testing, but in November Paeroa residents were invited to inspect one and a half tons of ore at John Kennedy's auction mart and to take small samples if they wished. Kennedy, also a land and commission agent,³⁰ was a member of the syndicate. The council had 'opened up the road to the claim and breaking down' was 'proceeding'. There were 'about 80 tons to grass of ore worth over £5 per ton for lead, copper, silver, and gold', and the property would probably be floated in Wellington 'in a few days'.³¹ As little had been done to develop the

²⁵ *Ohinemuri Gazette*, 16 July 1902, p. 2.

²⁶ Edwin Edwards, 'Our Despised Mineral Resources', *Ohinemuri Gazette*, 23 July 1902, p. 2.

²⁷ Jackson Palmer to James McGowan (Minister of Mines), 20 August 1902, with enclosure, Mines Department, MD 1, 02/1064, ANZ-W.

²⁸ *Ohinemuri Gazette*, 6 October 1902, p. 2.

²⁹ James McGowan to Jackson Palmer, 8 September 1902, Mines Department, MD 1, 02/1064, ANZ-W; *Ohinemuri Gazette*, 8 October 1902, p. 2.

³⁰ See *Ohinemuri Gazette*, 5 September 1896, p. 4, 14 October 1896, p. 3, 18 December 1901, p. 2; *Hauraki Plains Gazette*, 12 June 1940, p. 3.

³¹ *Ohinemuri Gazette*, 28 November 1902, p. 2.

mine or prove the process was appropriate, Wellington investors were not tempted.

In December, another half ton of ore from the Kia Ora lead and silver mine was displayed in Paeroa before being sent to Wellington. Reportedly, this ore had been 'most favourably criticized by local experts and mining men', all unnamed, for it contained over 60 per cent lead and five per cent copper plus some gold and silver. There was 'an enormous deposit', and 'processes such as the Payne, Elmore, and Carmichael-Bradford' were 'likely to bring this class of ore into great prominence and enrich the lucky owners of the three claims'. There was 'a face opened up about 15ft wide on the main lode and over 700ft backs'. (There were now three processes 'likely' to succeed, the first one enthused over presumably having been deemed unsuitable after all.) Shareholders hoped 'to get their claims profitably to work early next year'.³²

In mid-February 1903, Edwards called a meeting of his syndicate, 'business important'.³³ Frederick Cock, a farmer and local agent for the Northern Steamship Company,³⁴ was in the chair. It was agreed their claim should be amalgamated 'on even terms' with the neighbouring Kia Ora Syndicate one. An offer from the Australian Metal Company to buy up to 5,000 tons was discussed, and Cock, Kennedy and Edwards were instructed to seek further information.³⁵ Because this company had a different process, three months previously the under-secretary put it in touch with Edwards.³⁶ If replies were satisfactory, 50 tons would be sent at once, the proceeds to be divided equally between the original promoters and the new shareholders. Matthew Delaney, a hotelkeeper,³⁷ was elected treasurer, and Edwards secretary, of what was to be known as the Kia Ora Lead and Silver Mines, and it was hoped to form a company shortly.³⁸

³² *Ohinemuri Gazette*, 10 December 1902, p. 2.

³³ *Ohinemuri Gazette*, 11 February 1903, p. 3.

³⁴ See *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 2, p. 854; *Ohinemuri Gazette*, 14 April 1913, p. 2.

³⁵ *Ohinemuri Gazette*, 18 February 1903, p. 3.

³⁶ Under-Secretary, Mines Department, to Manager, Australian Metal Company, 12 November 1902, Mines Department, MD 1, 02/1064, ANZ-W.

³⁷ See *Thames Advertiser*, 26 October 1877, p. 4, Licensing Court, 5 March 1879, p. 3; *Waikato Times*, 18 May 1882, p. 3, 27 February 1894, p. 9; *Waikato Argus*, 11 March 1897, p. 2; *New Zealand Herald*, 31 March 1919, p. 8.

³⁸ *Ohinemuri Gazette*, 18 February 1903, p. 3.

In March, the *Ohinemuri Gazette* thought it would ‘do the hearts of the shareholders in the Te Aroha lead claims good to know that lead has advanced to £12 13s 9d per ton - a rise of £1 2s - and copper to £69 12s 6d during the past fortnight’, a rise that would pay the cost of transport to Australia.³⁹ The increased value caused several more lead claims to be taken up, one by another Paeroa syndicate. The first assignment was due to go to Sydney in early April, and ‘on present prices this should pay handsomely’.⁴⁰ Despite all the public optimism, the continued call for assistance implied financial difficulties. In March, the *Ohinemuri Gazette* suggested that the government offer a bonus of £25,000 to anyone erecting a plant to treat these refractory ores successfully,⁴¹ implying that the earlier report that one could be erected for £2,000 was inaccurate. The following month, Edwards led a deputation to McGowan requesting assistance with transporting the ore. Cock assured him ‘the ore was almost inexhaustible. The syndicate had been to considerable expense, and had had trial tests made. It was quite possible that it might develop into something good for the public as well as for the shareholders’. The manager had to admit it was still at the trial stage.⁴² The government agreed to pay for transporting ore by rail to Auckland, but would not meet the cost of storage.⁴³

The first parcel, of 50 tons, required ‘no picking, being all about 60 per cent lead’.⁴⁴ Edwards accompanied it to Sydney in June.⁴⁵ ‘Obadiah’, noting the attempt to resuscitate the Tui district, considered ‘the recent advances in the price of lead should help to make this venture a profitable one’,⁴⁶ and the *Ohinemuri Gazette* opined that if the ore turned out ‘as expected Te Aroha will truly get a big shove ahead’.⁴⁷ The process used to test the ore was not the Carmichael-Bradford one. Edwards wrote to Cock enthusing

³⁹ *Ohinemuri Gazette*, 9 March 1903, p. 2.

⁴⁰ *Ohinemuri Gazette*, 25 March 1903, p. 2.

⁴¹ *Ohinemuri Gazette*, 20 March 1903, p. 2.

⁴² *Ohinemuri Gazette*, 8 April 1903, p. 2.

⁴³ Edwin Edwards to Minister of Mines, 13 May 1903 (telegram); Minister of Mines to Edwin Edwards, 13 May 1903 (telegram); Memorandum by Inspector of Mines, 13 May 1903, Mines Department, MD 1, 03/530, ANZ-W.

⁴⁴ *Ohinemuri Gazette*, 17 April 1903, p. 2; see also *Auckland Weekly News*, 21 May 1903, p. 26.

⁴⁵ *Ohinemuri Gazette*, 15 June 1903, p. 2.

⁴⁶ ‘Obadiah’, ‘Shares and Mining’, *Observer*, 6 June 1903, p. 20.

⁴⁷ *Ohinemuri Gazette*, 6 July 1903, p. 2.

about a burner and furnace that had given a most satisfactory trial; Frank Cotton, an Australian, had invented it.⁴⁸

If we had a plant of this sort on the hill at Te Aroha, we should - instead of sending a lot of valueless extraneous matter over hills and dales to Sydney at a cost of £5 per ton - be simply sending that which would be of value - every ounce of it - to the ultimate reduction works.... I think, looking into the future ... we must half smelt the stuff in New Zealand and have the "matte" separated here or elsewhere.

Cotton, 'a splendid fellow', had perfected his process over 12 years, and was 'quite assured of success', although 'a little time would help' to get the best result. A plant to 'produce 10 or 12 tons per diem' could be erected 'for about £250'.⁴⁹

Upon his return, Edwards stated, as no 'ore-floor' in Sydney could crush and sample the shipment 'in the usual way', after much discussion with the original consignees the ore was shipped to Frankfort-on-Main for treatment. Edwards had inspected the Dapto smelting works, which should be able to treat their complex ores just as well as Germany.

Railway and steamer freights to Australia will have to be considerably reduced in order to pay New Zealand ore producing companies to send parcels for treatment. He is of opinion that it would be well if it could be possible to erect a concentrating plant at Te Aroha. If this were done, instead of sending parcels of ore mixed with gangue, or mullock, of no value, the matte only being extracted in New Zealand, there would be a tremendous saving in freights, bags, and handling.⁵⁰

It is clear that the ore should have been selected and did not have the high value claimed when being bagged for export.

In August, a leading Auckland merchant, Thomas Morrin, who had been a large investor in Thames and Waihi mining,⁵¹ 'on account of a London syndicate' was granted a four-month option over the Kia Ora, Te

⁴⁸ See *Ohinemuri Gazette*, 8 January 1904, p. 2.

⁴⁹ *Ohinemuri Gazette*, 6 July 1903, p. 3.

⁵⁰ *Ohinemuri Gazette*, 15 July 1903, p. 2.

⁵¹ See *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 2, pp. 660-661; *Observer*, 17 December 1881, p. 216, 5 December 1915, p. 4.

Aroha, and Dividend, all owned by the Paeroa syndicate.⁵² Another large parcel was to be treated at Mt Lyell, in Tasmania. Assays of ‘general dirt’ gave ‘an average of over £6 per ton’, and Morrin planned to spend £2,000 on development. Should a good market be obtained in London, ‘a very large amount of capital’ would be provided.⁵³

The results of the Mt Lyell tests were not published, and nothing was heard about the syndicate’s work until a January 1904 report provided a good example of the difficulties of operating an under-capitalised mine containing complex ores of unproven value without an agreed treatment or a certain market. Although it had ‘been uphill work’, the committee (Cock, Kennedy, Edwards, and Charles Short, a Paeroa coach proprietor),⁵⁴ had ‘not been idle in shareholders’ interests’. Hopefully the returns from Germany and London would solve ‘the vexed question’ of the refractory ores. The newspapers printed Edwards’ letter to James Coutts:

“During the last year a good deal of dead work has been done in the “Kia Ora” and “Dividend” sections of the mine under the able management of Mr C.A. Cornes. The work has been desultory owing to the extremely bad weather, felt more fully on these high ranges where indeed the rainy season is almost always with us, even when it is sunshine in the valley. I took 20 tons of ore to Sydney in July last personally and investigated the means of treatment at Dapto and Lake Illawara myself. I found that with the deductions made by the American firm running this reduction works that the equation was all in their favour, so arranged to ship my parcel to Frankfort-on-Main, Germany, where there is an up-to-date plant, and they are presumed to be fair and honest in their dealings. Here let me say, once and for all, that shippers of ore to foreign parts are absolutely in the hands of the consignees. From this parcel no certain returns have been received. Our own assays made by the Bank of New Zealand assays have run highly payable, I may say. During the year Mr Thomas Morrin has been given an option over the three claims, constituting the syndicate’s property; and a good sized trial parcel (about four tons) has been sent by that gentleman to London for special volumetric treatment,- that is to say that *all* the products of the ore, which are many, including lead, copper, gold, silver, cinnabar, cobalt,

⁵² *Ohinemuri Gazette*, 2 September 1903, p. 2.

⁵³ *Ohinemuri Gazette*, 11 September 1903, p. 2; A Correspondent, *Thames Star*, 16 September 1903, p. 4.

⁵⁴ See *Thames Star*, 7 February 1896, p. 3, 15 July 1903, p. 2, 28 December 1905, p. 2; *Auckland Weekly News*, 4 August 1910, p. 24.

etc, etc, (indeed with the blende which produces radium) may be realised. During my visit to Sydney I worked a while at a furnace at the Sydney Technical School on this ore.... We smelted samples in Mr Frank Cotton's furnace with great success.... To sum up the position. The immense deposit of galena at Te Aroha - not indeed confined to our three claims - is hampered in its reduction to £ s d, by (1) cost of winning, (2) cost of transit and (3) lack of local means to subtract the valueless gangue, so as only to leave the mass of mere metal technically termed the matte. The cost of winning, I suppose, we cannot reduce with white labour. Indeed, no man under existing circumstances could be offered less than 9s per day to work on this almost perennially wet mountain. The cost of transit is now absurd and bans the entire proposition. The wire tramway, removed without any sense of the position, brought the ore down for 1s 3d per ton. It cost us £4 per ton nearly, *verb sap* [no further explanation needed].⁵⁵ This wire line can be replaced for about £600 or even less, and considering that there is about a half million tons of this galena in sight - without either sinking or pumping, absolutely level free,⁵⁶ is it not worth while spending this? But yet again. Why should we send away a lot of worthless mullock with our valuable minerals. My proposition is as follows: That a small furnace should be erected upon Cotton's - or some similar - process on the mountain. This process is what the cream separator is to the dairy farmer. All the matte or valuable stuff is extracted; the residuum is cast aside. This matte is exported, until such time as we are up to German methods of saving all by-products. *Then Te Aroha will pay*. In mining the old adage, "A little more and oh how much; a little less, and oh how sad," applies. It is up to the Mines Department to help in this. Here I must thank the Hon. Mr McGowan for his assistance in free railway freight, not forgetting also the slight help from the Ohinemuri County Council.

"The gist of the whole matter is lack of capital. That the ore is there any person can see. There is a mountain of glittering mineral worth from £3 to £100 per ton. Before this century has far advanced that noble mountain that watches the fertile Thames Valley will eclipse many and many a now flourishing mine. But who shall reap the benefit? Is the pioneer, as usual, to be the martyr?"

To avoid this fate, Edwards asked McGowan for further assistance; 'without absolutely promising', he responded 'that if the matter was laid before him in writing, he would do all he could to help in the matter of

⁵⁵ *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary*, 5 ed. (Oxford, 2002), vol. 2, p. 3521.

⁵⁶ As printed.

reinstating the wire tramway'.⁵⁷ Coutts recorded that two men had been employed in the early part of the year, but that since the parcel had been sent to Sydney 'little or no work' had been done.⁵⁸

The ore sent to London arrived in January 1904. If found to be satisfactory, 'no difficulty' was 'anticipated in getting the necessary funds. The news cabled out some days ago, that a method of extracting zinc white (paint) from zinc waste' had been discovered, added 'considerable value to' the ore.⁵⁹ In March, Morrin was told that as 'the buyers' and the sellers' assayer' differed over the value of the galena a third had been called in.⁶⁰ No value was revealed either for this or for the shipment sent to Germany, and during 1904 and 1905 the mines remained unworked.⁶¹ They also went unmentioned in the press until late February 1906, when a Te Aroha correspondent considered there was 'every probability' of the Kia Ora 'recommencing operations in the near future, owing to the big rise in lead, zinc, and kindred metals'. Edwards, the acting manager, made 'preliminary arrangements, for a very influential syndicate' was 'likely to take the matter in hand'.⁶² As this private syndicate was a continuation of the original one, the number and names of its members are not known, although it appears the membership remained the same apart from William McWatters, a storekeeper and baker,⁶³ joining.⁶⁴

In June 1906, another six months' protection was granted on Edwards' request 'to enable capital to be raised'. He claimed that 'at different times' parcels had been 'treated with satisfactory results' and that he still hoped to erect a plant.⁶⁵ That month an expert from Broken Hill inspected the

⁵⁷ *Ohinemuri Gazette*, 8 January 1904, p. 2; *New Zealand Herald*, 9 January 1904, p. 6.

⁵⁸ James Coutts to Under-Secretary, Mines Department, 14 March 1904, *AJHR*, 1904, C-3, p. 45.

⁵⁹ *Auckland Weekly News*, 21 January 1904, p. 41.

⁶⁰ *Ohinemuri Gazette*, 21 March 1904, p. 3.

⁶¹ *AJHR*, 1905, C-3, p. 87.

⁶² Te Aroha Correspondent, *Thames Star*, 28 February 1906, p. 2.

⁶³ See *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 2, p. 851.

⁶⁴ Bank of New Zealand, Paeroa Branch, Balance Book, 31 March 1905, Report on Advances; Paeroa Branch, Manager's Memoranda Book 1902-1914, entry for 31 October 1908, Bank of New Zealand Archives, Wellington; Te Aroha Warden's Court, Plaints 1904, 9/1904, BBAV 11572/3a, ANZ-A.

⁶⁵ Te Aroha Warden's Court, Mining Applications 1906, 22/1906, BBAV 11289/18a, ANZ-A.

ground ‘with a view to flotation’,⁶⁶ but was not heard of again. In October, the *Ohinemuri Gazette* reported that ‘the great advance in the price of lead and copper’ was ‘causing a little stir in Te Aroha’. Lead had ‘very nearly doubled in price during the past four years, and kindred metals have also advanced. Several of the claims taken up some years ago have been repegged’.⁶⁷ One week later lead had reached £19 17s 6d per ton, and copper £97 10s: ‘this should be good news for the Te Aroha people’.⁶⁸ Edwards attempted to sell the mines to Auckland and Gisborne syndicates, the vendors to receive cash and a quarter interest in any new company,⁶⁹ but nothing came of these negotiations.

In January 1907 another six months’ protection was granted ‘pending further tests and for time to raise capital’. This time, Edwards admitted the ores had ‘defied all efforts at economical treatment’. Samples were being treated in Broken Hill and London, and he was still trying to find a process, claiming success with a new one used in Auckland.⁷⁰ But in April the warden commented that the syndicate had failed to find one despite trying ‘both far and near’.⁷¹ A sample of the complex ores sent to the Christchurch Exhibition in that year won a gold medal, assays revealing it was worth over £30 per ton.⁷² Later assays revealed the ore consisted of eight per cent copper, 2 per cent silica, 17 per cent lead, ten per cent iron, and 14 per cent sulphur, plus 10oz of silver and 18dwt of gold to the ton. As ‘in any other part of the world such a mine would be vigorously developed’, the *Thames Star* hoped an ‘influential syndicate’ would obtain an option and test what was ‘undoubtedly a promising proposition’.⁷³ By October a Thames syndicate was formed to send a trial shipment to Dapto to ascertain both its true value and whether it was ‘amenable to that treatment’.⁷⁴ As nothing further was heard of this initiative, it must have failed.

⁶⁶ *Ohinemuri Gazette*, 27 June 1906, p. 3.

⁶⁷ *Ohinemuri Gazette*, 8 October 1906, p. 2.

⁶⁸ *Ohinemuri Gazette*, 15 October 1906, p. 2.

⁶⁹ Bank of New Zealand, Paeroa Branch, Manager’s Memoranda Book 1902-1914, pp. 141, 196, Bank of New Zealand Archives, Wellington.

⁷⁰ Te Aroha Warden’s Court, Mining Applications 1907, 5/1907, BBAV 11289/19a, ANZ-A.

⁷¹ Warden to Under-Secretary, Mines Department, 17 April 1907, *AJHR*, 1907, C-3, p. 49.

⁷² *Te Aroha News*, 13 April 1907, p. 2.

⁷³ *Thames Star*, 7 May 1907, p. 2.

⁷⁴ *Thames Star*, 29 October 1907, p. 2.

At the end of 1907, a prospecting party had ‘a rather uphill battle’ because of the ‘physical configuration of the country’ combined with ‘the want of a track’.⁷⁵ No more was heard of these prospectors. After a miner had the claims forfeited to him in September 1908 because no work had been done for four years,⁷⁶ there was no mining of any significance. In mid-1909 a local syndicate, about which nothing is known, considered sending some ore to the Waiomu smelter,⁷⁷ but did not do so. Not until the Auckland Smelting Company started work in the late 1940s was the area mined again,⁷⁸ despite portions being held by a series of owners. In 1922, the mining inspector noted that the Tui Special Quartz Claim had ‘been held by different persons for the past 14 years, and very little money has been spent in actual mining to prove’ its value.⁷⁹

1903 - 1909

At Waiorongomai, mining ‘may be termed dead’, the warden reported in May 1903. Only ‘one to two small holdings’ were doing ‘a little work, principally carried on by the owners’, and ‘the only real mining’ was being done by Hardy.⁸⁰ In August, according to a newspaper wit, ‘Mention Te Aroha and the average man thinks of baths, soda-water, a mountain and refractory ores - happy if he has bathed in the first, drunk the second, climbed the third, and avoided the last’.⁸¹ As usual, miners lacking capital applied for government assistance with small-scale prospecting, and were refused.⁸² During 1903 a ‘limited’ amount of prospecting discovered ‘nothing

⁷⁵ ‘Waiorongomai (Contributed)’, *Thames Star*, 30 December 1907, p. 1.

⁷⁶ Te Aroha Warden’s Court, Mining Applications 1908, 20, 21/1908, BBAV 11289/19a, ANZ-A.

⁷⁷ *Thames Star*, 1 June 1909, p. 2.

⁷⁸ See paper on this company.

⁷⁹ Matthew Paul to Warden, 4 August 1922, Te Aroha Warden’s Court, Mining Applications 1922, 11/1922, BCDG 11289/1a, ANZ-A.

⁸⁰ Warden to Under-Secretary, Mines Department, 18 May 1903, *AJHR*, 1903, C-3, p. 145.

⁸¹ Own Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 20 August 1903, p. 45.

⁸² For example, *New Zealand Mines Record*, 16 December 1903, p. 208.

of importance'.⁸³ Hardy, the only man extracting gold, worked half the area leased, and most other claims were 'more or less protected'.⁸⁴

During 1902, the number of mining leases had increased to 19, covering 1,070 acres,⁸⁵ but in the following year there were only seven, covering 183 acres.⁸⁶ Some Auckland investors had a passing interest in 1904 in 100 acres near Waiorongomai, below the buck reef, for an allegedly gold-bearing reef had been discovered there when blasting out the channel of the river.⁸⁷ Early the following year a Te Aroha syndicate planned to put down a bore, as had 'frequently been advocated'. The unnamed 'experts' who recommended boring believed the reefs 'most probably' existed there.⁸⁸ There were no reports of boring, and no later attempts to test the flat land.

Another optimist wrote in October 1904 that the outlook was 'very promising, and besides the known payable reefs which have proved so remunerative in the past, new country' was to be opened up.⁸⁹ Five months later, one visitor incautiously described the Waiorongomai mines as 'progressing very satisfactorily' and containing 'an almost unlimited quantity of gold bearing quartz'.⁹⁰ But quality as well as quantity was required, as illustrated by an assay made for James McGuinness, the local Catholic priest, a few days earlier: his sample returned 15 grains, valued at 2s 10d.⁹¹ The lack of work for miners (and others) meant that men were leaving the district to find employment.⁹² Despite these realities, the *Te Aroha News* continued its tradition of discerning success where none existed, writing in July that mining was 'looking a little brighter'.⁹³ The

⁸³ James Coutts to Under-Secretary, Mines Department, 14 March 1904, *AJHR*, 1904, C-3, p. 45.

⁸⁴ Warden to Under-Secretary, Mines Department, 6 June 1904, *AJHR*, 1904, C-3, p. 101.

⁸⁵ *AJHR*, 1903, C-3, p. 236.

⁸⁶ *AJHR*, 1904, C-3, p. 45.

⁸⁷ *Thames Star*, 26 August 1904, p. 1.

⁸⁸ *Thames Star*, 24 February 1905, p. 4.

⁸⁹ *Thames Star*, 7 October 1904, p. 1.

⁹⁰ J.W. Duffus, 'The Thames Valley', *Auckland Weekly News*, 16 March 1903, p. 16.

⁹¹ Thames School of Mines, Assay Book 1898-1907, entry for 8 March 1905, School of Mines Archives, Thames.

⁹² George Kenny (Resident Medical Officer, Te Aroha) to Acting Superintendent, Tourist Department, 6 April 1905, Tourist Department, TO 1, 1901/121/31, ANZ-W.

⁹³ *Te Aroha News*, 11 July 1905, p. 2.

warden was more objective, writing that all claims other than Hardy's Mines were doing 'very little work, the want of means being the obstacle'.⁹⁴

Andrew Tait Walker Allan, a local miner who invented a gold saver in 1906,⁹⁵ caused excitement by claiming 'excellent alluvial prospects' had been found for which his invention was particularly suited.⁹⁶ The *Te Aroha News* stated it opened up 'great possibilities', for with 'a machine for economically dealing with large quantities' of ore the mountain would 'doubtless clear itself of any charges of low commercial value. And who can yet say that in this machine there is not the possibility of a prosperous gold mining run in the district'.⁹⁷ This grasping at possibilities was foiled by the absence of alluvial gold.

In June 1906, a Te Aroha correspondent saw possibilities in base metals. 'For a good many years there has never been a man to be seen on the hills (that is a genuine prospector or miner), all the old tracks being practically grown over with fern and underscrub'. Tui had been held back because zinc prevented the ore being treated successfully, but 'another strong syndicate', presumably the Kia Ora, holding the property had 'great faith in overcoming past difficulties'. From Te Aroha to Stoney Creek, small claims were being repegged 'instead of one syndicate holding the whole hillside for speculative purposes'.⁹⁸ Similar 'signs of a revival' were reported by another correspondent, 'active operations' being 'anticipated at an early date'.⁹⁹ There were the usual hopes that the successes of the past would be repeated, and the usual rumours that prospectors from elsewhere might explore the mountain.¹⁰⁰

There certainly was more pegging out: 17 mining leases, covering 925 acres, were held in early 1907.¹⁰¹ Correspondents continued to detect 'some stir in mining matters, more especially in the line of the galena lodes'.¹⁰² The *Te Aroha News* accepted that the complex ore was costly to treat, but hopes were 'not yet dead by any means, as recent numerous applications for

⁹⁴ Warden to Under-Secretary, Mines Department, 22 May 1906, *AJHR*, 1906, C-3, p. 93.

⁹⁵ See paper on prospectors' and miners' skills.

⁹⁶ *Thames Star*, 12 March 1906, p. 2.

⁹⁷ *Te Aroha News*, n.d., reprinted in *Thames Star*, 18 July 1906, p. 2.

⁹⁸ Own Correspondent, 'Te Aroha Notes', *Ohinemuri Gazette*, 20 June 1906, p. 2.

⁹⁹ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 21 June 1906, p. 43.

¹⁰⁰ *Thames Star*, 27 July 1906, p. 2, 25 August 1906, p. 2.

¹⁰¹ *AJHR*, 1907, C-3, p. 113.

¹⁰² Te Aroha Correspondent, *Ohinemuri Gazette*, 30 January 1907, p. 2.

prospecting licenses' proved. Some prospectors were searching for silver rather than gold, and 'the discovery of a bountiful mine of any metal would be welcome'. 'Rich patches' were still to be found, 'for the hillside had been 'in reality only lightly scratched over' in the old days. It repeated rumours of an overseas process that would use Tui ore as a flux and save a greater percentage of gold, and hoped it would be introduced.¹⁰³ As always, the government was asked to assist miners without capital. For example, Richard Thomas Jansen, a farmer and labourer turned amateur miner,¹⁰⁴ after failing to raise the £20 needed to purchase a single-stamp crushing plant for his unsuccessful Success mine,¹⁰⁵ appealed to it for help. 'The existence of such a small crushing plant, free for the use of the public, might even induce others to try their hand at prospecting',¹⁰⁶ a sympathetic local correspondent wrote. The government was not sympathetic.¹⁰⁷

Although by early 1908 22 mining leases covered 1,043 acres,¹⁰⁸ according to the warden nothing of any importance happened during 1907, which he explained by the problem of how to treat the ore.¹⁰⁹ There was the illusion of a revival in 1908, interest being sparked off by yet another rumour that a prospector had 'unearthed a rich gold-bearing reef in the upper reaches of Waiorongomai'.¹¹⁰ Men were exploring the Mangakino Valley,¹¹¹ and Matthew Paul, the new mining inspector, on the basis of 'reliable information received' argued that an improved track would open up

¹⁰³ Editorial, *Te Aroha News*, 23 March 1907, p. 2; reprinted, unacknowledged and with slight variations, in *Thames Star*, 26 March 1907, p. 1.

¹⁰⁴ See *Te Aroha News*, Magistrate's Court, 7 March 1885, p. 7, 12 September 1885, p. 2, 25 December 1886, p. 2; Piako County Council, *Waikato Argus*, 23 January 1900, p. 4, 21 May 1900, p. 4.

¹⁰⁵ *Te Aroha News*, 5 March 1907, p. 2, 23 March 1907, p. 2.

¹⁰⁶ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Thames Star*, 6 April 1907, p. 1.

¹⁰⁷ See papers on financing miners, company formation, and private lives in the Te Aroha district.

¹⁰⁸ *AJHR*, 1908, C-3, p. 95.

¹⁰⁹ Warden to Under-Secretary, Mines Department, 19 February 1908, *AJHR*, 1908, C-3, p. 45.

¹¹⁰ *Te Aroha News*, 19 May 1908, p. 2.

¹¹¹ Thomas Gavin to Minister of Mines, 27 September 1908, Mines Department, MD 1, 08/1023, ANZ-W.

a good mining area, for sulphide ore had found there previously.¹¹² As this ore could now be treated, a subsidy to enable horses to use this track was granted.¹¹³

During 1908 enthusiasts continued to dream of great wealth. One informed the *Te Aroha Mail* that there was ‘no doubt that with less extravagant experimentalizing and more thrifty commonsense methods’ gold would be found. ‘The boom that this would give the district would extend to the whole of the Dominion, so that instead of being a thriving dairying and pastoral centre, and a favorite tourist resort, Te Aroha would become a town of world renown’.¹¹⁴ A Waiorongomai correspondent insisted that there were

indications that things in general and gold mining in particular, are about to move in this locality. We have frequent visits from mining men of all descriptions; wild-catmen, I am thankful to say, are conspicuous by their absence. Most of those at present at work on the hill are practical men and understand their business, and they are putting both time and money in their respective holdings.¹¹⁵

Exaggerations continued to be made about what was happening and what would happen. One commentator claimed ‘mining magnates and experts are plentiful as bees and that for Te Arohaites good times are coming’.¹¹⁶ The *Te Aroha News* claimed ‘practical and reliable men’ were mining, ‘men who cannot be “got at” for a few pounds, men who have been connected with mining all their lives, so to speak, and who we have never known to have been mixed up with any unclean thing or wild cat’. A few prospectors were ‘busy along the range’.¹¹⁷ A Thames mine manager visiting in late September reported ‘considerable activity’ and ‘a decided improvement’, with prospecting in three mines and three more to start work ‘before long’; Auckland capital was being invested.¹¹⁸

¹¹² Matthew Paul to Under-Secretary, Mines Department, 20 October 1908, Mines Department, MD 1, 08/1023, ANZ-W.

¹¹³ *New Zealand Mines Record*, 16 November 1908, p. 169.

¹¹⁴ A.B., reported in *Te Aroha Mail*, n.d., reprinted in *Thames Star*, 5 May 1908, p. 2.

¹¹⁵ Waiorongomai Correspondent, *Te Aroha News*, 5 September 1908, p. 2.

¹¹⁶ ‘Lynx’s Observations’, *Te Aroha News*, 17 September 1908, p. 2.

¹¹⁷ *Te Aroha News*, 24 September 1908, p. 2.

¹¹⁸ *Thames Star*, 24 September 1908, p. 4.

Although Paul wrote in October that ‘recently quite a revival’ had set in, few men were employed: 13 in Hardy’s Mines, seven in Waiorongomai Mines, and five in the Bendigo.¹¹⁹ There was a gradual increase after this date, about 35 being employed by mid-November.¹²⁰ One month later, the *Te Aroha News* reported that, whilst ‘from month to month’ the number had increased, there was ‘no “boom” on - and we don’t desire to see one - everything is being pushed along slowly but surely, and with such capable and practical managers as we have at present ... we feel confident that something good will come out of it all. The money available is being well spent and nothing is wasted’.¹²¹

That the underlying problems remained was illustrated when Thomas Gavin applied to work two claims with two men while they broke out ore for experimental treatment at Waiomu.¹²² ‘Old Timer’ had the traditional old timer’s explanation that mining was unsuccessful because there were ‘no miners here of the stamp that we had at the Thames in the early days. Even if we had only 100 men like them, the face of our mountain would very soon look like a rabbit burrow’.¹²³ His delight in the impact of rabbits makes it likely he was the ‘Old Miner’ who wrote two years later about the wonderful miners of early Thames: ‘I feel sad to think we have few miners here of the stamp of those early self-reliant diggers. If we have but one hundred men like them, the face of our mountain would soon look like a rabbit warren, and it is my firm belief that reefs would be found equal in richness’ to those at Thames.¹²⁴

The warden reported not only the usual ‘encouraging’ prospecting but also that only in Hardy’s Waiorongomai Mines¹²⁵ and Murphy’s Find¹²⁶ did some development take place.¹²⁷ No returns were recorded for 1908.¹²⁸ The following year began with hopes of an era of prosperity being created by

¹¹⁹ Matthew Paul to Under-Secretary, Mines Department, 20 October 1908, Mines Department, MD 1, 08/1023, ANZ-W.

¹²⁰ *Te Aroha News*, 31 October 1908, p. 2, 3 November 1908, p. 2, 17 November 1908, p. 2.

¹²¹ *Te Aroha News*, 15 December 1908, p. 3.

¹²² Warden’s Court, *Te Aroha News*, 27 August 1908, p. 2; see also 3 June 1909, p. 2.

¹²³ Letter from ‘Old Timer’, *Te Aroha News*, 18 August 1908, p. 3.

¹²⁴ Letter from ‘Old Miner’, *Te Aroha News*, 10 November 1910, p. 2.

¹²⁵ See paper on Edwin Henry Hardy.

¹²⁶ See paper on Denis Murphy.

¹²⁷ Warden to Under-Secretary, Mines Department, 1 April 1909, *AJHR*, 1909, C-3, p. 42.

¹²⁸ *AJHR*, 1909, C-3, p. 68.

'legitimate' mining.¹²⁹ At the start of June, a Te Aroha correspondent cited 'a feeling amongst mining men that we are on the eve of prosperous times. It is said the outlook of some of the Waiorongomai claims is exceptionally good'.¹³⁰ Although it was claimed later that month that mining was 'looking particularly bright', the only example cited was the Silver King, soon to be known as the Bendigo.¹³¹ The managing director had broken down some quartz from a ten-foot reef 'which showed free gold', and a battery was planned.¹³² By the end of the month the reef had 'greatly improved in value' and 200 tons were stacked for treatment. 'A rib of quartz' about three feet wide had been discovered 'making right into a large body of ore over 20ft in width, known as the Moa reef'.¹³³ One assay of the 'rich sulphide ore' was as high as £60 per ton, and 'something good' was expected when the cross reef hit the Moa lode;¹³⁴ this was not to be.¹³⁵

A whisper 'from a most reliable quarter' that prospects were 'better than ever' was reported on 1 July: 'The stone being taken out pans out very well indeed, and what is more cheering, there is plenty of it. There is a good time in store for us. Let it be soon'. More prospectors were rumoured to be testing the 'upper reaches of Waiorongomai', and 'now and again a stray mining expert' was seen 'hovering around'.¹³⁶ The *Te Aroha News* stressed that 'places with far less promise and prospects have developed into payable gold-bearing areas'.¹³⁷ But there was nothing but promises and prospects: only four mines were at work, and no ore had been sent down.¹³⁸ Fossicking produced occasional excitement, as when finding 'a very rich loose stone' prompted an unsuccessful effort 'to find the reef from whence it came'.¹³⁹ In October, when it was rumoured that a company 'backed by English capital'

¹²⁹ Waiorongomai Correspondent, *Te Aroha News*, 18 February 1909, p. 2; see also 29 May 1909, p. 2.

¹³⁰ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Thames Star*, 1 June 1909, p. 2.

¹³¹ See paper on the Bendigo Battery.

¹³² *Thames Star*, 26 June 1909, p. 2.

¹³³ *Thames Star*, 1 July 1909, p. 1.

¹³⁴ *Thames Star*, 9 July 1909, p. 1.

¹³⁵ See paper on the Bendigo Battery.

¹³⁶ Waiorongomai Correspondent, *Te Aroha News*, 1 July 1909, p. 3.

¹³⁷ *Te Aroha News*, 8 July 1909, p. 2.

¹³⁸ County Clerk to Minister of Mines, 1 September 1907, Piako County Council, Letterbook 1908-1910, p. 414, Matamata-Piako District Council Archives, Te Aroha.

¹³⁹ *Te Aroha News*, 18 September 1909, p. 2.

had been formed to work some claims, a Thames newspaper commented that the district appeared 'to be coming more into favor'. As many refractory lodes were 'highly payable' and with 'improved gold saving appliances now available', there was no reason why the district 'should not again come to the fore' and Te Aroha experience another boom.¹⁴⁰ However, despite 'vigorous prospecting' in two mines and the re-occupation of several old claims, nothing apart from 'encouraging results' were reported.¹⁴¹

EXPLORING THE TOP OF THE MOUNTAIN

Much interest was taken in the explorations of an experienced prospector, William Morris Newsham, and Elijah Brokenshire, a farmer and contractor who mined periodically.¹⁴² They prospected between Tui and the Pick and Dish claims at the top of the mountain, and when they began work 'in real earnest' in August 1909 the *Te Aroha News* repeating its ritual incantation that the outlook was 'very encouraging'.¹⁴³ 'Incessant rain' made prospecting difficult, but reports of finding a reef assaying as high as £250 a ton meant the Ohinemuri County Council agreed to make a track to their find.¹⁴⁴ After disputes over boundaries delayed work for a year, in 1911 a Sydney company took up an option,¹⁴⁵ which lapsed after more ore was tested. In 1912, Newsham, now assisted by Frank Chalton, a farmer and experienced prospector,¹⁴⁶ found reportedly good ore. Tests proved that samples had high quantities of lead, zinc and copper but were 'most erratic in value', and all mining engineers 'reported unfavourably'.¹⁴⁷ The ground

¹⁴⁰ *Thames Star*, 14 October 1909, p. 2.

¹⁴¹ Warden to Under-Secretary, Mines Department, 20 May 1910, *AJHR*, 1910, C-3, p. 40.

¹⁴² See *Te Aroha News*, 10 April 1886, p. 2, Piako County Council, 21 October 1909, p. 2, 17 August 1911, p. 2; Piako County Council, *Waikato Times*, 4 November 1893, p. 7; *Ohinemuri Gazette*, 7 September 1895, p. 7; *Auckland Weekly News*, 13 June 1896, p. 20; *Observer*, 8 May 1929, p. 15.

¹⁴³ *Te Aroha News*, 10 August 1909, p. 2.

¹⁴⁴ *Te Aroha News*, 4 September 1909, p. 3, 9 September 1909, p. 2, Warden's Court, 28 October 1909, p. 2, 16 November 1909, p. 3.

¹⁴⁵ *Te Aroha News*, 28 January 1911, p. 2, 4 February 1900, p. 2, 4 March 1911, p. 2.

¹⁴⁶ Matthew Paul to Under-Secretary, Mines Department, 24 February 1912, Inspector of Mines, BBDO 18634, A902, S113, ANZ-A; *AJHR*, 1910, C-14, p. 188.

¹⁴⁷ Matthew Paul to Under-Secretary, Mines Department, 28 March 1928, Mines Department, MD 1, 10/9/50, ANZ-W.

was abandoned until another unsuccessful attempt was made to prospect it in the mid- to late-1920s.¹⁴⁸

1910 - 1920

Early in 1910, 'nice gold-bearing specimens' were still being discovered at Waiorongomai, and a month later several 'very encouraging' prospects were found.¹⁴⁹ A Waiorongomai correspondent noted the occasional visit of one mine owner, 'and judging by his pleasant smiles and the twinkle in his eye, there is something choice in store for us all. Oh! let it be soon'.¹⁵⁰ By September, another correspondent wrote that Waiorongomai residents 'have but increased their stock of enthusiasm' and their expectations were 'becoming stronger' because of the promising developments in the Bendigo and Seddon, near Butler's Spur. When 'a mining magnate, representing English capital, visited' and obtained samples of the various lodes, he declared these 'were the richest of any mining district he had visited. When the desired machinery was available for treating the refractory ores Waiorongomai would, he said, be one of the largest gold-producing centres in the dominion'.¹⁵¹ Having thus raised expectations to unrealistic heights, this unnamed magnate departed, and the steady decline continued.

The *Te Aroha News* refused to recognize reality. 'Revival in Sight' was the headline of a January 1911 article claiming prospects were 'bright for revival of the good old mining days', providing details of the good prospects in the Pick and Dish, and concluding that there was 'every prospect' mining was 'about to take a new lease of life'.¹⁵² One week later, another article headlined 'The Mining Revival' claimed that although only 'preliminary steps' had been taken, these had 'been made with certainty and determination'. The owners of the Pick and Dish were congratulated on their 'astonishing good prospects' and because their claim being likely to be

¹⁴⁸ For a brief description of this portion of the field, see J.F. Downey, *Gold Mines of the Hauraki District, New Zealand* (Wellington, 1935), p. 251; see also Te Aroha Warden's Court, Mining Applications 1909-1910, 142, 149/1909, 56/1910, BBAV 11289/20a; Mining Applications 1911, 1/1911, BBAV 11289/21a, ANZ-A; Matthew Paul to Under-Secretary, Mines Department, 5 November 1913, Mines Department, MD 1, 15/1185, ANZ-W.

¹⁴⁹ *Te Aroha News*, 12 February 1910, p. 2, 17 March 1910, p. 2.

¹⁵⁰ Waiorongomai Correspondent, *Te Aroha News*, 23 April 1910, p. 3.

¹⁵¹ Waiorongomai Correspondent, *Te Aroha Mail*, 10 September 1910, p. 2.

¹⁵² *Te Aroha News*, 28 January 1911, p. 2.

floated as a company. The syndicate that had taken over Hardy's Mines was expected to start extracting gold immediately, and new treatment methods enabling the economic processing of low-grade ore would create a boom:

It means a big thing for the district, for there is nothing like mining activity for imparting vigour and vitality. Business would go ahead by leaps and bounds. The town would simply hum, for gold mining carries in its train a hundred other industries that would inevitably spring up in Te Aroha and here make their home.¹⁵³

When members of the Australian Institute of Mining Engineers visited in February, reportedly they spoke 'highly' of specimens from the four Waiorongomai mines being worked.¹⁵⁴ In April the *Te Aroha News* provided more details of progress: 'we should shortly expect to "boom" '.¹⁵⁵ The following month, the *Te Aroha Mail*, in an editorial headlined 'Our Golden Gully', shared the hopes for 'good results from Waiorongomai shortly. No field has ever raised more confident expectations, and few, probably, have been more elusive'. It blamed lack of success on inadequate treatment, for it was 'the misfortune of the field' that it opened before cyanide was discovered. It expected the Bendigo to succeed, hoping not for a boom 'but for a reasonable revival'.¹⁵⁶ When the Bendigo Battery opened in August that year, Walter Greening, mine manager for Hardy's Mines,¹⁵⁷ at the obligatory luncheon forecast Waiorongomai as 'one of the finest mining districts of any country.... He looked forward to seeing a great town ... on the Waiorongomai flat, with Te Aroha a suburb of Waiorongomai (applause)'.¹⁵⁸

In the same month, in an apparent reference to mining, the *Observer* commented 'That the people of Te Aroha will now have to exist on their sulphur-tainted mineral waters. Opinions on the subject are likely to be sulphurous, too'.¹⁵⁹ On one evening in early January 1913 a fire totally destroyed the battery. 'As the only means of quenching the fire was a bucket

¹⁵³ *Te Aroha News*, 4 February 1911, p. 2.

¹⁵⁴ *Te Aroha News*, 7 February 1911, p. 2.

¹⁵⁵ *Te Aroha News*, 8 April 1911, p. 2.

¹⁵⁶ Editorial, *Te Aroha Mail*, 2 May 1911, p. 2.

¹⁵⁷ See paper on Hardy's Mines.

¹⁵⁸ *Te Aroha News*, 31 August 1911, p. 3.

¹⁵⁹ 'They Say', *Observer*, 26 August 1911, p. 7.

brigade the building together with its valuable machinery was completely destroyed'.¹⁶⁰ The fire had a 'firm hold' when discovered, and because of 'a scarcity of water, very little could be done to save' it. The bridge connecting it with the tramway was also totally destroyed: 'as the flames were rapidly extending across the bridge, it was decided to cut it in half, which action ... saved greater destruction to the tramway'. The plant, recently purchased by the Waitawheta Gold Prospecting Company, was estimated to be worth £2,000. The police investigated the cause, as 'no fire was used about the premises' during the day.¹⁶¹ Nothing further was heard about the police investigation; popular opinion blamed an arsonist.¹⁶²

After the Waitawheta Company rebuilt the battery and tramway bridge in early 1914, a local correspondent stated that 'present indications' indicated Waiorongomai would 'soon assume its old-time importance',¹⁶³ unfortunately phrased considering its lack of importance. A small amount of prospecting and mining continued, without success.¹⁶⁴ The *Te Aroha News* blamed the war for postponing the mining it claimed was reviving before its outbreak.¹⁶⁵ According to one mining agent, high rents caused several claims to be surrendered after it started.¹⁶⁶ An Auckland solicitor, when attempting to raise capital to work two claims,¹⁶⁷ wrote in January 1915 that, because Waiorongomai was 'a failure and the most disappointing of all the Auckland Gold Mining Districts', no more capital could be obtained until money became 'easier' once the war ended. No work was being done, for 'the experience of two Companies during the past three years was of

¹⁶⁰ *Burrator Weekly News*, 11 January 1913, printed in Ted Axford, *A Childhood in Te Aroha 1907-1913* (Wellington, 1992), p. 78.

¹⁶¹ Te Aroha Correspondent, *New Zealand Herald*, 9 January 1913, p. 8.

¹⁶² Information provided by David Calder Hardy, Paeroa, in telephone conversation, 16 August 1994.

¹⁶³ Te Aroha Correspondent, *New Zealand Herald*, 14 February 1914, p. 5.

¹⁶⁴ For example, see declaration of G.J. Parker, 14 August 1914, Correspondence of Royal Commission on the Hauraki Mining District, 1914: Minutes of Land Tenures Commission, 1914, p. 121, Lands and Survey, LS 77/2, ANZ-W.

¹⁶⁵ *Te Aroha News*, 16 August 1920, p. 2.

¹⁶⁶ J.J. Macky to Under-Secretary, Mines Department, 26 April 1915, Mines Department, MD 1, 14/1514, ANZ-W.

¹⁶⁷ Te Aroha Warden's Court, Mining Applications 1910, 17, 88/1910, BBAV 11289/20a; Mining Applications 1915, 2, 4, 6/1915; Mining Applications 1916, 32, 40/1916, BBAV 11289/22a, ANZ-A.

such a disappointing and utterly depressing nature that the wonder is that any man or body of men should have the courage to put their money into this unfortunate Field'.¹⁶⁸

Occasionally it was rumoured mining might resume. In November 1916, a Waiorongomai correspondent wrote that 'the welcome news that the mines are again to be worked seems almost incredible after the long spell of quietude'.¹⁶⁹ In 1917, five prospectors, employed by three companies, were the only men at work.¹⁷⁰ In July 1918, the mining inspector considered it was 'very doubtful if the owners of the mines held under protection could at the present time raise sufficient capital to warrant resuming operations', and it was unlikely any miners could be obtained before the war ended.¹⁷¹ As Waiorongomai had 'never had a fair trial', he was 'quite convinced that some day a rich deposit will be discovered'.¹⁷² Because some mining persisted, the minister refused to let the council remove the tramway rails. In response, the chairman described the industry as 'dead' and said no mining was likely 'for some time to come'.¹⁷³

THE 1920s

Although hopes were expressed after the war that mining would resume,¹⁷⁴ nothing of any significance occurred during the 1920s, although occasionally some amateurs prospected.¹⁷⁵ In 1920, an 'old Waihi resident' who inspected Waiorongomai considered there was 'some prospect of a

¹⁶⁸ Percy Spencer to Under-Secretary, Mines Department, 23 January 1915, Mines Department, MD 1, 23/4/54, ANZ-W.

¹⁶⁹ Waiorongomai Correspondent, *Te Aroha News*, 1 November 1916, p. 3.

¹⁷⁰ *AJHR*, 1918, C-2, p. 31.

¹⁷¹ Matthew Paul to Under-Secretary, Mines Department, 25 July 1918, Mines Department, MD 1, 21/2/4, ANZ-W.

¹⁷² Matthew Paul to J.A. Pond, 29 May 1918, Inspector of Mines, BBDO 18634, A902, MM138, ANZ-A.

¹⁷³ Piako County Council, *Te Aroha News*, 19 June 1918, p. 3.

¹⁷⁴ For example, *Te Aroha News*, 28 July 1919, p. 2.

¹⁷⁵ For example, E. Devey to Director, Thames School of Mines, 22 March 1922, Inward Correspondence on Assays 1921-1922; Thames School of Mines, Assay Book 1919-1927, entry for 3 July 1922; Director, Thames School of Mines, to T.P. Baker, 12 January 1925, Outwards Correspondence 1923-1925, School of Mines Archives, Thames; Letter from 'Pioneer', *Te Aroha News*, 24 July 1924, p. 4.

revival of activities. Two or three properties showing more or less promise are claiming attention, and in addition a certain amount of prospecting is being carried on'.¹⁷⁶ Any hopes of extending the Aroha Gold Mines' low level tunnel ended in 1920 and 1921, when its timber was removed for sale.¹⁷⁷ Even the *Te Aroha News* doubted that a brief 1921 rush into the foothills at Mangaiti would find the gold rumoured to have been discovered years earlier by a deceased member of one of the families involved.¹⁷⁸ From 1922 to 1925, no miners were employed.¹⁷⁹ In 1925, one experienced mining commentator, John McCombie,¹⁸⁰ wrote that the mines were 'all deserted, and the place presents a scene of wild desolation'.¹⁸¹ As usual, the government was asked to assist through providing tracks and subsidies for the optimists.¹⁸²

In January 1927, the mining inspector detected 'distinct indications of a revival'.¹⁸³ He was probably referring to renewed work on the former Pick and Dish, now named the Peter Maxwell, by George Ernest Hyde, a mining engineer.¹⁸⁴ Starting in September 1926, over a year Hyde sent samples, most with low values, to the Thames School of Mines.¹⁸⁵ There were all the usual optimistic reports, although Hyde did admit his crosscut at first

¹⁷⁶ *Daily Telegraph* (Waihi), 9 October 1920, p. 2.

¹⁷⁷ For details, see Inspector of Mines, BBDO 18634, A902, M6, ANZ-A.

¹⁷⁸ *Te Aroha News*, 12 August 1921, p. 2, 16 September 1921, p. 2, Warden's Court, 30 September 1921, p. 2.

¹⁷⁹ *AJHR*, 1923, C-2, p. 10; 1924, C-2, p. 10; 1925, C-2, p. 11, 1926, C-2, p. 10.

¹⁸⁰ See paper on Billy Nicholl.

¹⁸¹ John McCombie, 'Random Recollections: Te Aroha Goldfield', *Auckland Star*, 7 November 1925, p. 21.

¹⁸² *Te Aroha News*, 12 February 1925, p. 4.

¹⁸³ Matthew Paul to Under-Secretary, Mines Department, 24 January 1927, Mines Department, MD 1, 10/7/23, ANZ-W.

¹⁸⁴ See *Auckland Weekly News*, 18 February 1913, p. 36, 13 March 1913, p. 48; James Park to Under-Secretary, Mines Department, 19 January 1916, Mines Department, MD 1, 16/76; G.E. Hyde to Under-Secretary, Mines Department, 21 February 1928, Mines Department, MD 1, 10/9/50; G.E. Hyde to Auckland Smelting Company, 5 October 1952, Mines Department, MD 1, 23/2/1218, Part 2, ANZ-W.

¹⁸⁵ Thames School of Mines, Assay Book 1919-1927, entries for 28 September 1926, 11 October 1926, 12 October 1926, 15 October 1926, 1 November 1926, 9 November 1926, 16 November 1926, 31 January 1927, 21 March 1927, 28 March 1927; Assay Book 1927-1932, 20 April 1927, 29 July 1927, 16 August 1927, School of Mines Archives, Thames.

headed away from the reef,¹⁸⁶ but before the mine was adequately opened up Hyde's syndicate collapsed when funds were exhausted.¹⁸⁷ Others did further prospecting in the abandoned ground without finding ore of sufficient value to tempt investors.¹⁸⁸

Three miners were employed in the Peter Maxwell claim in 1926 and two in 1927, but none in any other part of the district, and nobody mined in 1928 and 1929.¹⁸⁹ Others prospected occasionally, without success. Indeed, in March 1929 a party prospecting the mountain supplied the *Te Aroha News* with the proverb for the week: 'All is not gold that glitters'.¹⁹⁰ There were no further reports of any serious attempts to find gold until the Depression forced unemployed men onto the abandoned goldfield in 1931.¹⁹¹

CONCLUSION: REQUIEM FOR WAIORONGOMAI MINING?

In January 1931, Albert Augustine Adams published a poem, 'Waiorongomai', about its decline. Born to Henry Hopper and Eliza Adams in 1878,¹⁹² his childhood was spent there, and from 1916 to 1930 he owned some Tui claims.¹⁹³ His verse implied that the field might be abandoned forever:

'Twas the sound of waters in the distance,
And that's the reason why
The Maoris, when they named you,
Called you Waiorongomai.

But the sound that I remember,

¹⁸⁶ *Te Aroha News*, 30 March 1927, p. 8, 8 April 1927, p. 5, 20 April 1927, p. 8.

¹⁸⁷ *AJHR*, 1927, C-2, p. 22, 1928, C-2, p. 21.

¹⁸⁸ Downey, p. 251.

¹⁸⁹ *AJHR*, 1927, C-2, p. 13, 1928, C-2, p. 11, 1929, C-2, p. 12, 1930, C-2, p. 12.

¹⁹⁰ *Te Aroha News*, 25 March 1929, p. 4.

¹⁹¹ See papers on mining during the Depression years and on prospectors and investors in the 1930s.

¹⁹² Birth Certificate of Albert Augustine Adams, 6 February 1878, 1878/652, BDM.

¹⁹³ See Te Aroha Warden's Court, Mining Applications 1916, 6, 8-12, 23, 24, 26, 45/1916, BBAV 11289/22a; Mining Applications 1918-1920, 9, 10/1918, 2, 3, 15, 16/1919, 21/1920, BCDG 11289/1a; A.A. Adams to Matthew Paul, 12 March 1921, Inspector of Mines, BBDO 18634, A902, M20; M.H. Wynyard to J.F. Downey, 23 June 1930, Inspector of Mines, BBDO 18634, A902, M85, ANZ-A.

In my youth of long ago,
Was the sound of crushing stampers,
Vanners shaking to and fro.

We always got a little Gold,
But – the crushings they were poor;
And the Gold we won 'twas lost again
In looking for some more.

Silent the stamps and grinding pans,
And again the wild birds sing,
Most of the miners are on shift
Awaiting – “Four Knock Ring.”¹⁹⁴

Appendix

Figure 1: ‘Block IX Aroha G[old] M[ining] Record’, n.d. [early twentieth century], SO 45829, University of Waikato Map Library [because of its size, this map is reproduced on two pages].

Figure 2: G.E. Harris, ‘Map of Te Aroha Mining Area (Based on an old map in the Warden’s Office, Te Aroha) Showing Claims, Reefs, &c’, 1912, in John Henderson, assisted by John Arthur Bartrum, *The Geology of the Aroha Subdivision, Hauraki, New Zealand: Geological Survey Bulletin (New Series) No. 16* (Wellington, 1913), in portfolio at end of book.

Figure 3: ‘Sketch Plan of Prospecting Areas applied for by J.J. Macky’, 22 December 1906, Te Aroha Warden’s Court, Mining Applications 1907, 1/1907, BBAV 11289/11289/19a, ANZ-A [Archives New Zealand/T Rua Mahara o te Kawanatanga, Auckland Regional Office; used with permission.

Figure 4: Plan of ‘Peter Maxwell Claim, Tui Property, Te Aroha’, attached to E.J. Scoble and Hugh Crawford to Under-Secretary, Mines Department, 2 June 1936, Mines Department, MD 1, 10/9/25, ANZ-W [Archives New Zealand The Department of Internal Affairs Te Tari Taiwhenua]; used with permission.

¹⁹⁴ Albert Augustine Adams, ‘Waiorongomai’, *Te Aroha News*, 12 January 1931, p. 5; the ‘four knock ring’ referred to the signal to send a cage down a mine shaft, which never happened on this field.

Figure 5: J.S. Hill, Waiorongomai Battery, 1905, Eric Hill Collection.

Figure 6:

**‘The QUEST For GOLD.
WHERE GOLD IS WON FROM THE HILLS AT
WAIORONGOMAI.**

1 - The entrance to the Bendigo Mines, in the hills, at Waiorongomai. 2 - The entrance to the Hardy Mines [McLean’s Level]. The mine, situated at the back of the ridge shown in No. 3, is about 2 1/2 miles from Waiorongomai. The pipe shown on the left of the photo acts as a ventilator to the mine. The natural pressure of air at the mouth forces the air into the mine and out again through the pipe. The waste shown in the foreground is the rock that was removed before the reef was reached. The tunnel extends through over 1000ft of solid rock, and much of the quartz has shown a considerable amount of copper, besides gold and silver ore. 3 - The valley of a creek that runs into the Waihou River, by which the Hardy Mines are approached. A tramway and horse track run along the left face of the gorge, and give access to the mine, which is situated beyond the sloping hill on the left, at a height of over 2000ft above sea-level. 4 - The tip head of the Hardy Mine. 5 - A small waterfall on the way to the mine. The horse track is shown in the foreground. 6 - The Waiorongomai Battery, which fell into disuse some years ago, but has now been renovated and fitted up with appliances for a new process for treating the quartz. 7 – Washing-day at one of the workers’ huts. 8 - Another view of the Waiorongomai Battery’.

(*New Zealand Graphic*, 30 June 1909, pp. 24-25; Sir George Grey Special Collections, Auckland Libraries, NZG-19090630-25-1; used with permission.)

Figure 7: ‘Waiorongomai Battery, Now Renovated’, Weekly Graphic, 30 June 1909, p. 24; Negative No. A9139, Sir George Grey Special Collection, Auckland Libraries; used with permission.

Figure 8: G. Johnston, ‘The Mining Revival in the Auckland Province: The Waiorongomai Battery, some five miles distant from Te Aroha, Auckland’, Auckland Weekly News, 24 June 1909, Supplement, p. 2; C16,704, Auckland War Memorial Museum – Tamaki Paenga Hira; used with permission.

Figure 9: J.S. Hill, assay house and other buildings near Waiorongomai battery, c. 1912, Eric Hill Collection.

Figure 10: J.S. Hill, adding cyanide tanks to Waiorongomai battery, c. 1912, Eric Hill Collection.

Figure 11: J.S. Hill, Waiorongomai battery after the January 1913 fire, Eric Hill Collection.

Figure 12: E.F. Adams, 'Amended Plan of Special Site' for Waitawheta Gold Prospecting Company, 13 September 1913, Te Aroha and District Museum; used with permission.

Figure 13: Arthur Lush, Waiorongomai battery, n.d. [after 1913?]; C2364, Auckland War Memorial Museum – Tamaki Paenga Hira; used with permission.

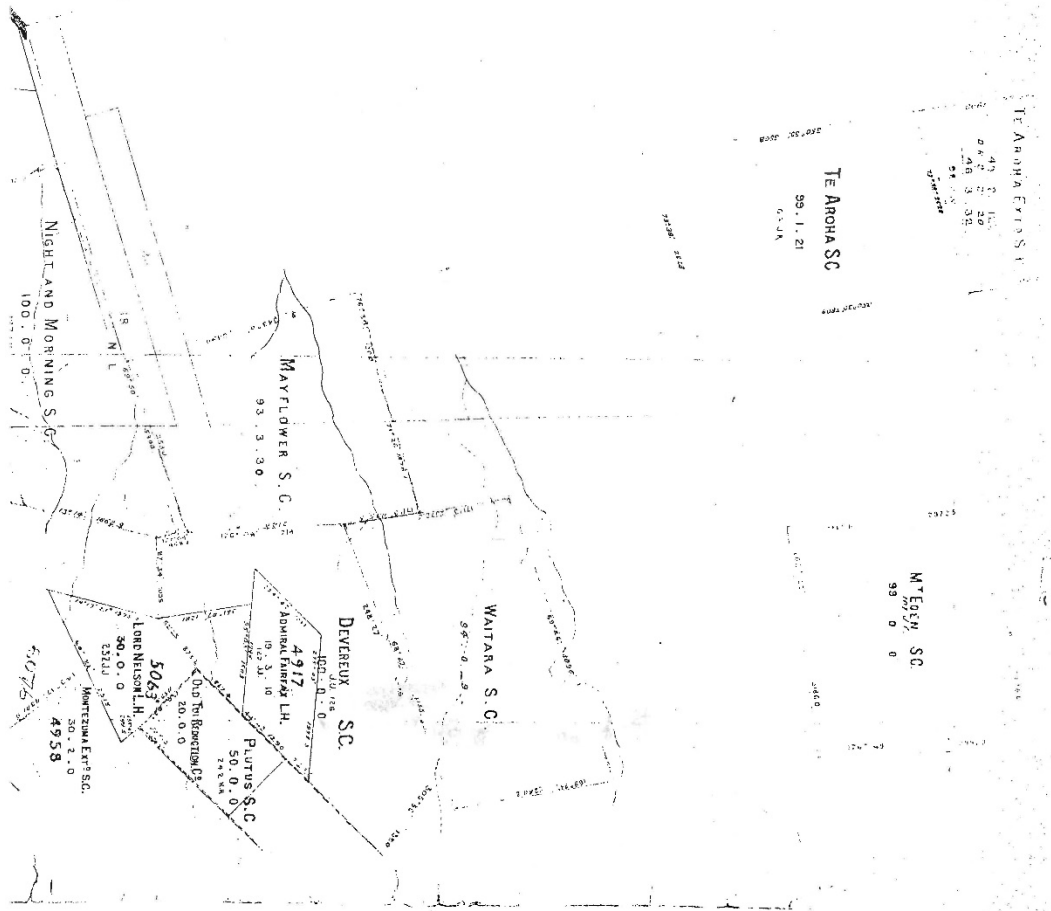
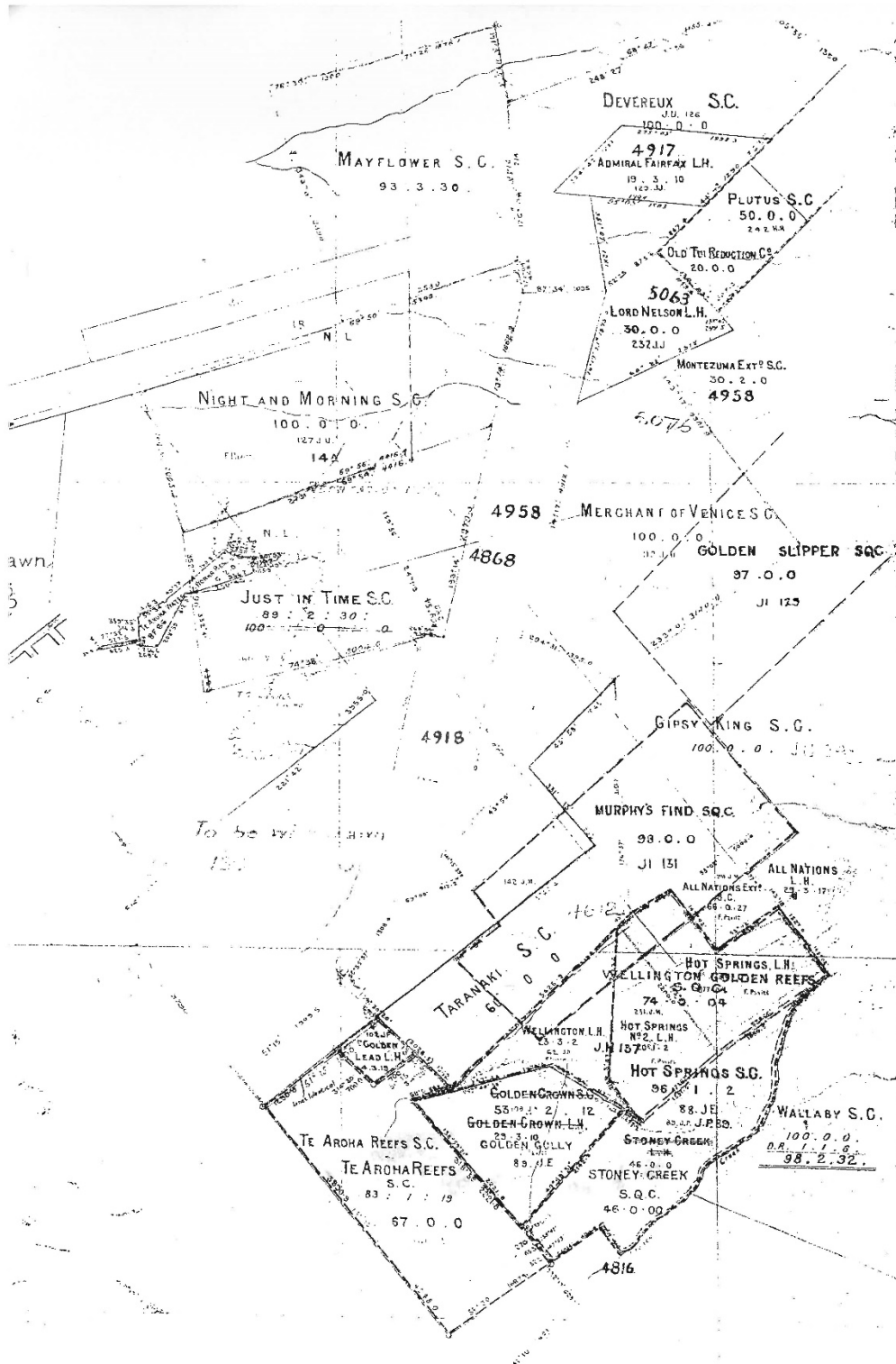


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45829

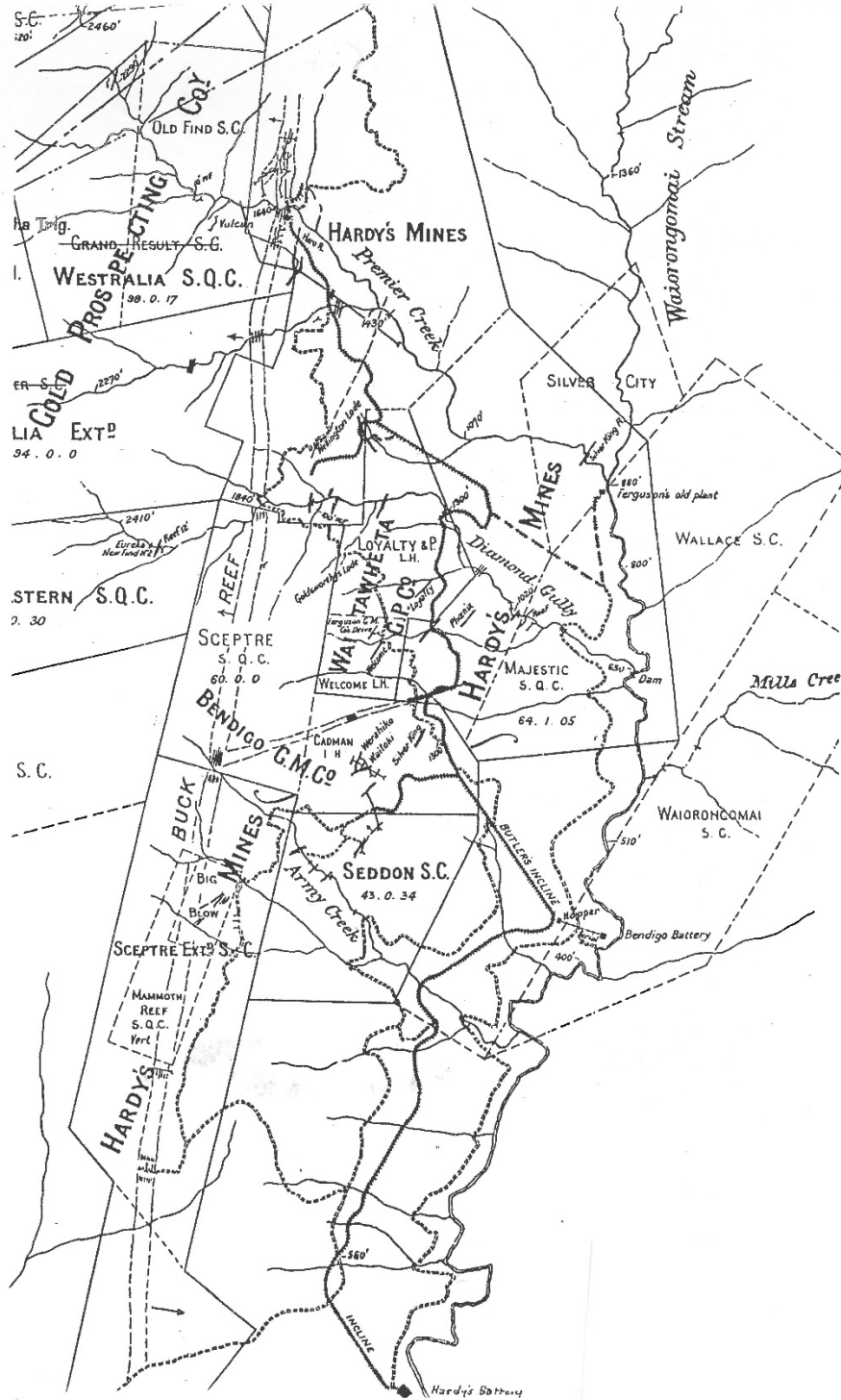


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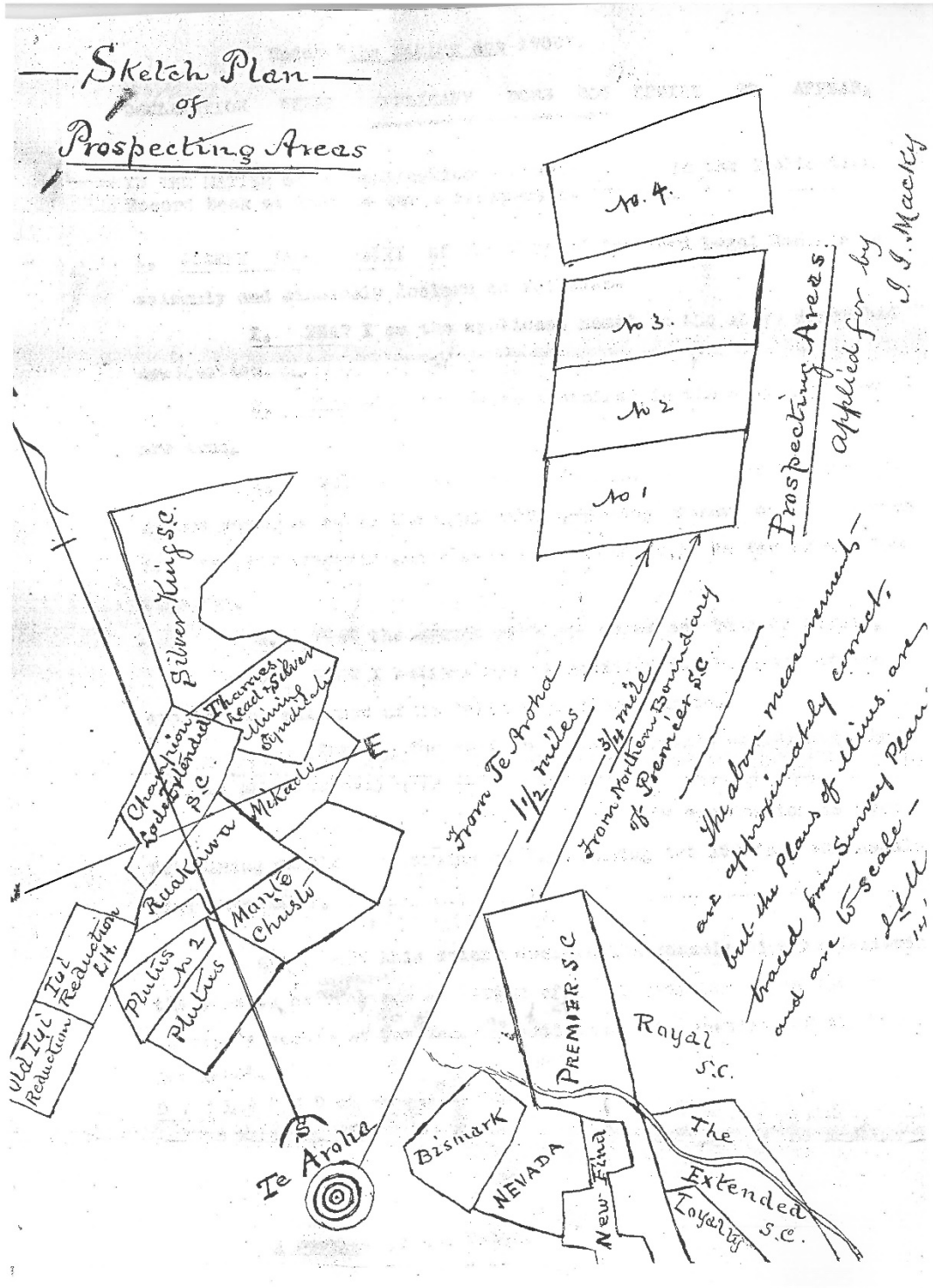


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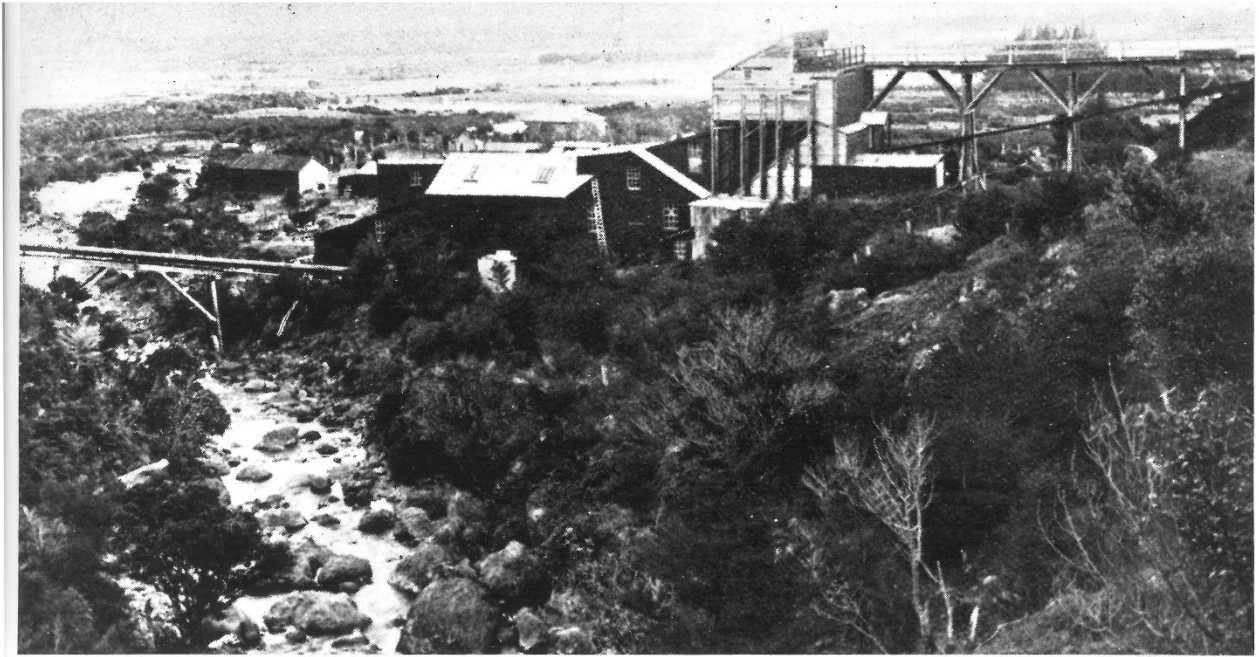


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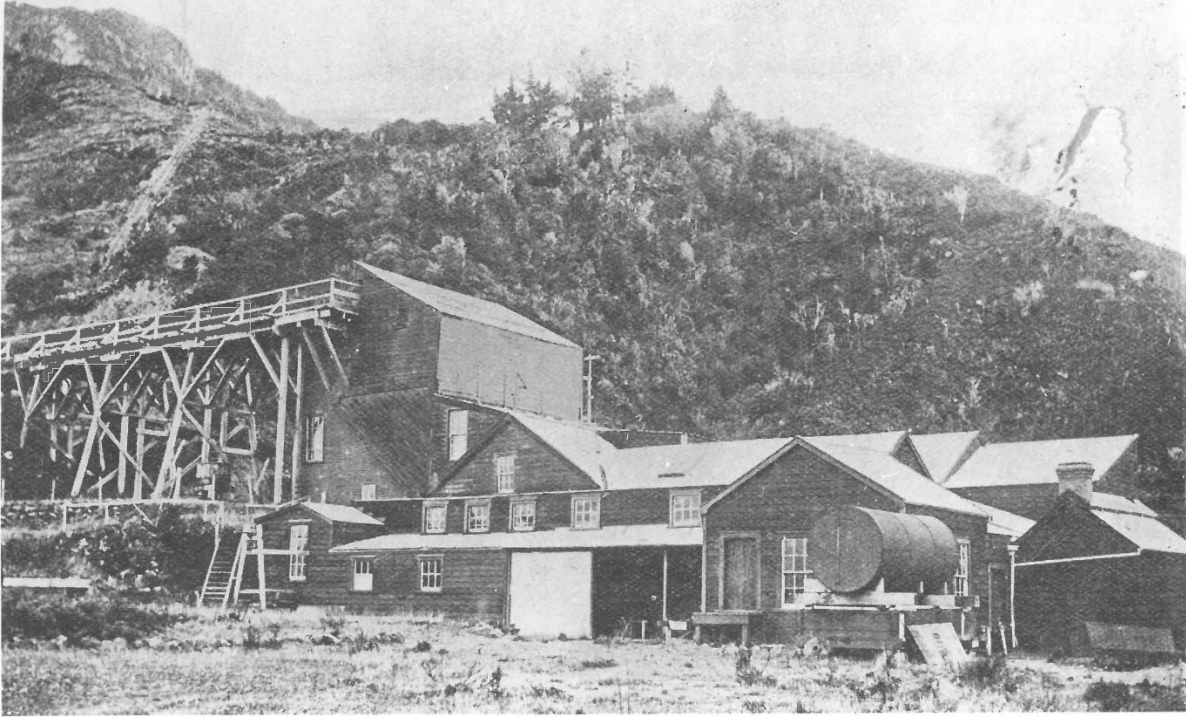


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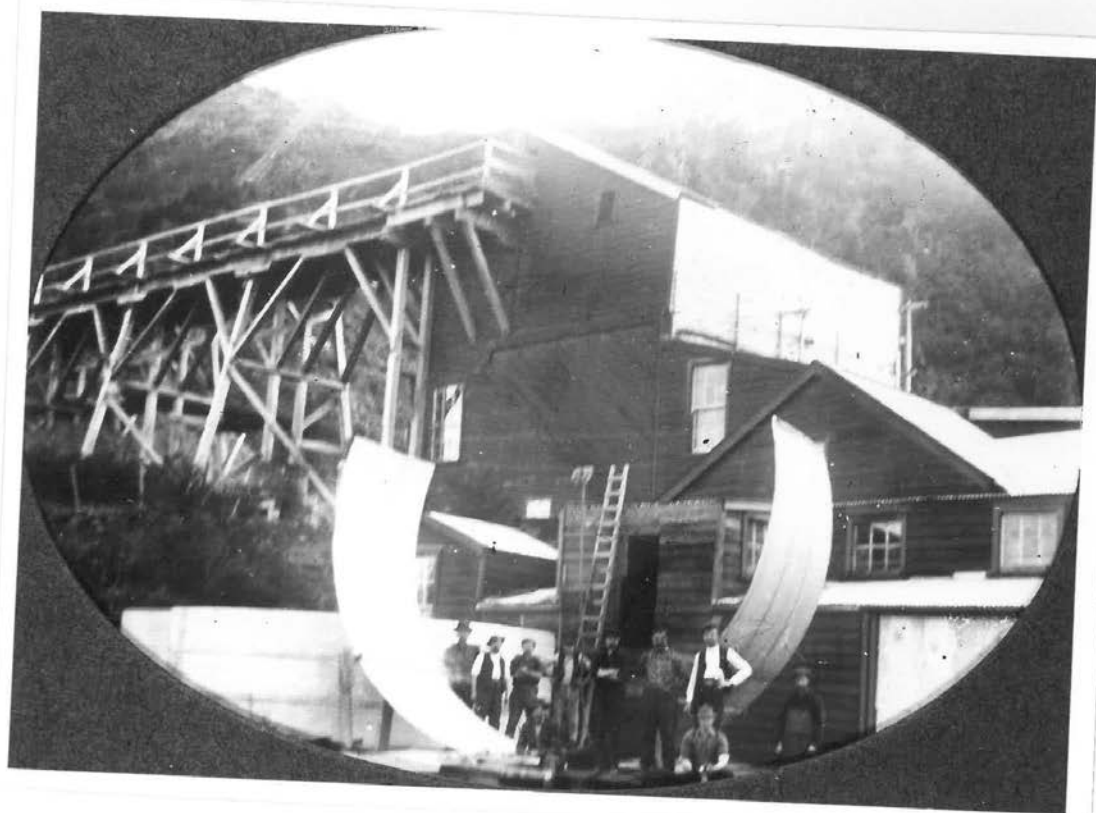


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