

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

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

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

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

1890

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

¹ *AJHR*, 1890, C-3, p. 190.

² See paper on this company.

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

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

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

O wrong are you, O wrong am I

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

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

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

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

⁸ See paper on the Tui district.

⁹ See paper on Peter Ferguson and his New Era.

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

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

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

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

In December, residents 'anxiously' hoped that whoever bought the battery would not remove it.²⁰ The *Te Aroha News* was delighted when Henry Hopper Adams bought it,²¹ and 'confidently' expected 'to see operations resumed almost immediately. This will be good news, we feel

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

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

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

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

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

¹⁶ See paper on Peter Ferguson and his New Era.

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

¹⁸ *Thames Star*, 24 July 1890, p. 2.

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

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

²¹ See paper on his life.

sure, to all our readers'.²² It called for assistance for Adams' syndicate, 'for on their success depend the prosperity and progress of the district'. The 'new work' proposed and the letting of tributes would provide employment to 'many' unemployed miners, and could 'bring back some of our miners who have been driven away to seek work elsewhere'.²³

1891

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

²⁹ *AJHR*, 1891, C-4, p. 203.

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

³¹ *Thames Star*, 2 May 1891, p. 3.

³² See papers on these mines.

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

³⁴ See paper on Billy Nicholl.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

⁴⁰ See paper on his life.

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

⁴² See paper on his life.

past'.⁴³ Reviewing the year's mining, another newspaper noted that, although it had been 'very quiet' because most ground' was locked up in large areas', late in the year these were 'divided into smaller holdings, and consequently more work' was 'in progress'.⁴⁴

1892

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

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

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

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

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

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

⁴⁷ *AJHR*, 1892, C-3, p. 47.

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

⁴⁹ *AJHR*, 1892, C-3A, pp. 15, 65.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

In October, as three parties were sending down small quantities in that month, the tramway was being 'worked steadily', an average of 'about 10 trucks a day' being sent down.⁶¹ A party of miners from Ohinemuri,

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

1893

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

A preliminary meeting of the Waiorongomai Prospecting Association, convened by publican Martin Murphy,⁶⁹ was held in his Waiorongomai Hotel in January. Murphy was not a claim owner, but two years later would apply for two.⁷⁰ The attendance of only 12 men 'would have been much larger but for counter attractions in Te Aroha, coupled with its being pay night', which did not suggest great enthusiasm. Two subscriptions of £10 and one of £5 had been promised, and Murphy 'had received promises of

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

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

⁶⁴ See paper on the Battery Company.

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

⁶⁶ *AJHR*, 1893, C-3, p. 71.

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

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

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

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

assistance from various settlers in the district, and others when the matter was once put in train'. A committee comprising a butcher, a hotelkeeper, two miners, and a mine owner (Adams) was formed to organize work to start shortly on 'very promising' ground. It planned 'to employ two men for at least three months' of 'the best months of the year, at something like £2 per week, and a quarter share' in any claim taken up after a discovery.⁷¹ Nothing was found.

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

A rumour that a British syndicate had taken up some ground 'to thoroughly prospect'⁷⁶ was two years premature. Adams continued to mine, but by July the battery was working 'about half-time' and miners were being discharged because of difficulties with the battery process, which was being modified.⁷⁷ In October the tramway ceased operating because all mining had ended, although a small amount of prospecting continued.⁷⁸ By

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

THE LOYALTY-PALACE MINES

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

In the following February, a trial parcel of nine loads yielded 4oz 10dwt, valued at £3 1s 6d per ounce, which was ‘considered payable’.⁸⁴ Shortly afterwards, when 33oz 3dwt were obtained from 22 loads of unpicked stone, the prospects were described as ‘exceptionally good’ and were ‘restoring confidence’.⁸⁵ A week later, the prospecting association, under Gavin’s ‘able guidance’, was ‘turning out very successful’, and since Christmas shareholders have received ‘several good divs [dividends] which

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

⁸⁰ See paper on his life.

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

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

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

⁸⁴ *Te Aroha News*, n.d., reprinted in *Thames Star*, 8 February 1894, p. 3.

⁸⁵ *Te Aroha News*, n.d., reprinted in *Thames Advertiser*, 26 February 1894, p. 3.

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

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

all of which have been worked at various times with different success. The gold was originally found about 90ft above the Inverness working, and a prospecting drive of 30ft was put in to cut the reef; when the reef was reached they drove east and west on it for about 30ft, when it was found the richest quartz lay on the bottom of the drive. So a winze was sunk on the reef to a depth of 23ft, and it was out of this that most of the last crushing was obtained, but owing to the water they were unable to continue working at the top level. On Monday last they commenced a drive about 35ft lower down in order to cut the reef

⁸⁶ *Te Aroha News*, n.d., reprinted in *Thames Advertiser*, 5 March 1894, p. 2.

⁸⁷ George Wilson to Under-Secretary, Mines Department, 7 May 1894, *AJHR*, 1894, C-3A, p. 14.

⁸⁸ H.A.Gordon to Minister of Mines, 24 July 1894, *AJHR*, 1894, C-3, p. 48.

⁸⁹ *Te Aroha News*, n.d., reprinted in *Thames Star*, 26 April 1894, p. 2.

⁹⁰ Te Aroha Correspondent, *New Zealand Herald*, 11 May 1894, p. 6.

⁹¹ *Te Aroha News*, n.d. reprinted in *Thames Star*, 14 May 1894, p. 4; *New Zealand Herald*, 18 May 1894, Supplement, p. 2.

at a lower level and get the water off. They will have to drive about 90ft, and are already in about 30ft, and expect to cut the reef in about a fortnight. They will only have about 7ft to rise to connect with the winze from the upper level.

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

The developments of this important discovery will be closely watched, and the next crushing anxiously waited for.⁹²

Several prospecting parties were seeking 'the same reef higher up the hill'.⁹³ When the reef was struck in the intermediate level in early June it was two feet thick but 'not so good as it was higher up. The reef is full of mineral, but very little gold is seen'. Gavin believed they had 'to drive about 20ft on the line of the reef before the rich run of gold is again picked up. A large amount of work' had been done laying a tramway, 'erecting a shoot, and other necessary works' which would save labour and 'greatly facilitate work'.⁹⁴ In early September, the owners were 'most prosperous', having crushed 53 trucks 'a few days ago for the very profitable return of 138oz 9dwt of gold, valued at £3 4s 9d per ounce, and they have a good-sized block opened up on the reef, which they believe will turn out equally as well'.⁹⁵ In November they were 'constantly getting very good stone. On Saturday they had a big boulder showing gold at every stroke of the drill, but whether the average will pay much is a question'.⁹⁶

In February 1895, after 'some six months dead work' the Loyalty 'returned the shareholders over a hundred per cent in dividends'. Gavin had just discovered gold in the adjoining Palace, which promised 'twice as good returns'.⁹⁷ The Palace had two men working in it,⁹⁸ who by early February

⁹² *Te Aroha News*, n.d., reprinted in *Thames Star*, 14 May 1894, p. 4.

⁹³ *New Zealand Herald*, 18 May 1894, Supplement, p. 2.

⁹⁴ *Te Aroha News*, n.d., reprinted in *Thames Star*, 7 June 1894, p. 4.

⁹⁵ *New Zealand Herald*, 7 September 1894, p. 6.

⁹⁶ *Te Aroha News*, n.d., reprinted in *Thames Star*, 22 November 1894, p. 4.

⁹⁷ Editorial, *Te Aroha News*, 9 February 1895, p. 2.

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

The *Te Aroha News* rejoiced that the efforts of the 'few individuals' who started the prospecting syndicate produced the Loyalty's 'really brilliant success', which, with the recent discoveries in the Palace, was 'responsible for a new glimpse of sunshine'.¹⁰⁵ The mines continued working with good results,¹⁰⁶ and for the remainder of the year reports emphasized how well the claims were being developed, the high quality of the ore, and that

⁹⁸ *Te Aroha News*, 28 January 1895, p. 2.

⁹⁹ *Te Aroha News*, 6 February 1895, p. 2, reprinted in *Thames Star*, 11 February 1895, p. 2.

¹⁰⁰ *Te Aroha News*, 20 February 1895, p. 2; see also Te Aroha Correspondent, *New Zealand Herald*, 22 February 1895, p. 6.

¹⁰¹ Te Aroha Warden's Court, Mining Applications 1895, 3/1895, BBAV 11582/4a, ANZ-A.

¹⁰² *Te Aroha News*, 20 February 1895, p. 2.

¹⁰³ Te Aroha Correspondent, *New Zealand Herald*, 22 February 1895, p. 6.

¹⁰⁴ 'Te Aroha', *Observer*, 2 February 1895, p. 21.

¹⁰⁵ Editorial, *Te Aroha News*, 23 February 1895, p. 2.

¹⁰⁶ *Te Aroha News*, 2 March 1895, p. 2, 30 March 1895, p. 2, 3 April 1895, p. 2, 10 April 1895, p. 2, 8 June 1895, p. 2; H.A. Gordon to Minister of Mines, 24 July 1895, *AJHR*, 1895, C-3, p. 67; George Wilson to Under-Secretary, Mines Department, 21 May 1895, *AJHR*, 1895, C-3A, p. 14.

profitable crushings meant regular dividends.¹⁰⁷ In August driving and stoping continued in the Loyalty on a lode from three to seven feet wide, the drive being ‘carried along on the strike of the reef for a distance of about 100 feet, while a leading stope’ had ‘also been carried along a considerable distance’. The quartz was ‘of a most kindly description’, gold being ‘frequently seen distributed through the stone, so that the proprietors should be handsomely rewarded for their pluck and perseverance’.¹⁰⁸ Especially because, a Te Aroha correspondent wrote, they had all been ‘poor men’ before they developed the Loyalty.¹⁰⁹ Four men had been continuously employed since work started in November 1894, producing by October 1895 ‘something like 338 tons of ore for the payable yield of 551 ounces of gold, valued at £1800 10s 6d, so that each man has earned about £5 3s 6d per week for the time worked’. In addition, their ‘stack of tailings’ assayed at 30s per ton.¹¹⁰

As it was believed less than half the gold was being saved, the owners decided in September to cease crushing until a cyanide plant was available.¹¹¹ By then, the four men working the Loyalty continuously since November 1893 had produced 551 ounces of gold from 338 tons, a return of £1,800 10s 6d, and 300 tons of tailings with an assay value of £1 10s per ton remained to be treated, giving a combined total of £2,250. When the Palace had 14 tons crushed from its newly discovered reef 39 ounces were obtained, or 2oz 18dwt per ton; the value was £124 6s 3d. The local newspaper for once was not exaggerating when writing that ‘for a bulk test’ this result ‘would be difficult to beat in any part of this peninsula’.¹¹² In December Gavin had ‘a few men working on a lode’ producing ‘fairly good results’.¹¹³

In July, a *Te Aroha News* editorial responded to the Loyalty shareholders claiming that the New Zealand Exploration Company,¹¹⁴ which had taken over most of the main mines but had yet to start work, was

¹⁰⁷ *Te Aroha News*, 6 July 1895, p. 2, 4 September 1895, p. 2, 14 September 1895, p. 2, 25 September 1895, p. 2; *New Zealand Herald*, 29 October 1896, p. 6.

¹⁰⁸ Waiorongomai Correspondent, *New Zealand Herald*, 28 August 1895, p. 6.

¹⁰⁹ Te Aroha Correspondent, *New Zealand Herald*, 30 September 1895, p. 6.

¹¹⁰ Waiorongomai Correspondent, *New Zealand Herald*, 4 October 1895, Supplement, p. 1.

¹¹¹ *Waikato Times*, 14 September 1895, p. 6.

¹¹² *Te Aroha News*, 25 September 1895, p. 2.

¹¹³ Own Reporter, ‘The Upper Thames Gold Mines: A Tour of Inspection’, *New Zealand Herald*, 25 December 1895, p. 5.

¹¹⁴ See paper on this company.

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

Like the owners of promising (and unpromising) claims throughout Hauraki, in 1895 the owners wished to make a quick profit by selling to overseas capitalists, whose interest in New Zealand had been prompted by the profitable Waihi mine, and in June the ground was under offer to an English company.¹¹⁶ To make the property more attractive, in September it was combined with the Extended to create an area of 100 acres. The shareholders wanted any company formed to have a working capital of no less than £20,000; their own reward for selling the ground was to be £1,500 in cash plus one-sixth of the shares, fully paid up.¹¹⁷ After two mining experts made a thorough inspection in late September, floating an English company was expected within three months.¹¹⁸ Gavin informed the warden in November, when applying for the Extended Special Claim, that 'it was originally intended to float the Loyalty mine on the English market, but capitalists who had visited the ground were of the opinion that the area was too small'. Hence the larger claim, 'to be floated with the Loyalty ground. The area applied for was old abandoned ground, which was repeatedly tried, but it was found necessary that capital was required to carry on operations successfully'. With the working capital they insisted upon, they would 'erect more modern machinery, put in low level tunnels, and otherwise prove the value of the claim. Granted'.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁵ Editorial, *Te Aroha News*, 20 July 1895, p. 2.

¹¹⁶ *Te Aroha News*, 22 June 1895, p. 2.

¹¹⁷ *Te Aroha News*, 25 September 1895, p. 2.

¹¹⁸ Te Aroha Correspondent, *New Zealand Herald*, 30 September 1895, p. 6.

¹¹⁹ Warden's Court, *Te Aroha News*, 30 November 1895, p. 2.

Edward Mann Corbett, an experienced Waitekauri mine manager,¹²⁰ who had had an interest in one Waiorongomai claim in 1881,¹²¹ in February 1896 inspected the Loyalty United on behalf of an English syndicate. Being ‘greatly impressed with what he saw, and the appearance of the country generally’, he verified Gavin’s report.¹²² ‘As the larger portion of the shares’ was held locally, the prospect of selling the Loyalty United was ‘viewed with lively satisfaction’ by local shareholders.¹²³ Although Corbett had verified the claims made about the quality of the ore,¹²⁴ Gordon noted that, although the assay value was one ounce per ton, the ore contained so much copper that little gold was saved; the cyanide process also gave a very poor result.¹²⁵ In May, it was ‘just about floated in London’,¹²⁶ but as it never got beyond this stage, by September prospecting had resumed, with mostly discouraging results: of the second batch of samples, nine of the 11 gave a nil result.¹²⁷ In October, two Paeroa mining engineers obtained a six-month option.¹²⁸ The property was ‘looked upon by many competent authorities as being one of, if not, the very choicest in the locality’, and the flotation was expected to succeed.¹²⁹ As it did not, by August 1897 work in the Loyalty had declined to mainly prospecting newly exposed reefs.¹³⁰ ‘First-class’ ore was reportedly uncovered, with an occasional ‘handsome yield’, but only trial crushings were made.¹³¹

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¹²⁰ See *Ohinemuri Gazette*, 22 January 1898, p. 3; *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 2, p. 501.

¹²¹ Te Aroha Warden’s Court, Register of Licensed Holdings 1881-1887, folio 30, BBAV 11500/9a, ANZ-A.

¹²² Te Aroha Correspondent, *New Zealand Herald*, 22 February 1896, p. 5.

¹²³ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 15 February 1896, p. 30.

¹²⁴ *Ohinemuri Gazette*, 20 February 1896, p. 7.

¹²⁵ H.A. Gordon to Minister of Mines, 17 June 1896, *AJHR*, 1896, C-3, p. 78.

¹²⁶ *Ohinemuri Gazette*, 16 May 1896, p.5, 30 May 1896, p. 5.

¹²⁷ Thames School of Mines, Assay Book 1895-1897, two batches of samples tested on 14 September 1896, School of Mines Archives, Thames.

¹²⁸ *New Zealand Herald*, 29 October 1896, p. 6.

¹²⁹ *Waikato Argus*, 22 October 1896, p. 2.

¹³⁰ *Ohinemuri Gazette*, 21 August 1897, p. 4; *Thames Advertiser*, 28 August 1897, p. 3.

¹³¹ *New Zealand Graphic*, 28 August 1897, p. 299.

In February, the battery was 'constantly employed in conveying quartz to the battery', which was working two shifts on ore provided by several parties.¹³² In assessing the 12 months to 31 March 1894, Gordon recorded 'still a few men working', with 'only partial success', the patches of good ore occasionally struck being exhausted after a few months. The field might 'linger on for years without anything great being discovered, especially when no prospecting work of any consequence' was going on. As an experiment, some ore was sent to Maryborough in Queensland for treatment, with good results, but deducting the cost of transport and smelting left insufficient to work the lodes profitably. There were 29 contractors, wages men, working owners, and tributers.¹³³ Six mining leases covered 114 acres, but little mining was being done apart from Adams' mine, Newsham's small claim, and the Loyalty.¹³⁴ 1,929 tons were crushed and 592 tons of tailings treated for a return of 2,515 ounces of gold.¹³⁵ Using somewhat different figures, the *Te Aroha News* analyzed the returns to show that the 'about twenty men' who had stuck to Waiorongomai miners were 'getting nearly nine times as much gold per man as miners working in the Ohinemuri Country'. In the latter 380 men had treated about 22,771 tons for a return of 1,722 ounces, whereas Waiorongomai's 23 men had crushed 1,519 tons for 880 ounces and 1,650 tons of tailings for 297 ounces. 'Or to put it in another way, Ohinemuri has crushed about 60 tons of quartz per man, for a return of 2dwt per ton or 4oz 18dwt per man for the year. Waiorongomai has treated about 65 tons per man, which has yielded 13 1/4dwt per ton or 37oz 12dwt per man'. It described the 'spurt just given' to local mining as 'a very important one, and not altogether unexpected by the men who know the ground'.¹³⁶

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

¹³² *Te Aroha News*, n.d., reprinted in *Thames Star*, 8 February 1894, p. 3.

¹³³ H.A. Gordon to Minister of Mines, 24 July 1894, *AJHR*, 1894, C-3, pp. 47-48; *AJHR*, 1895, C-3, p. 68.

¹³⁴ H.W. Northcroft to Under-Secretary, Mines Department, 4 April 1894, *AJHR*, 1894, C-3A, p. 3.

¹³⁵ *AJHR*, 1895, C-3, p. 67.

¹³⁶ *Te Aroha News*, n.d., reprinted in *Thames Star*, 14 May 1894, p. 4.

thought by those who are supposed to know that good returns could be obtained if the ground were systematically prospected and worked. At present very little work is being done on the hill, and only small quantities of gold are being got, but there seems no reason why larger quantities should not be obtained if a larger number of men were seeking for it. If one-third of the proposed capital could be raised here, and two-thirds in Auckland, a good local interest would be maintained, combined with outside help, to work the mine. It is highly probable that a good return for the outlay would result if the affair were properly managed.¹³⁷

These hopes were premature. In May, the same correspondent expected 'a few parties to take up small holdings' after Adams abandoned all his ground apart from the New Find and Colonist mines.¹³⁸ Small parties continued working in several parts of the field, with results considered promising or satisfactory.¹³⁹ In July several parties were doing 'a good deal of useful prospecting', and the following month 'a little gold' was being produced.¹⁴⁰ John Hawkins¹⁴¹ had 'just finished crushing a parcel of 11 trucks for 12dwt per truck', his party being 'able to make wages' from this small return. The battery was treating 'some forty trucks of ore from the Premier' anticipated to give 'a fair return'.¹⁴² Not very exciting news, but then mining in other parts of the peninsula was equally unproductive, with younger miners leaving for the new goldfield of Coolgardie in Western Australia.¹⁴³ In November, the Premier crushing was 'unfortunately too crushing, only 24oz 37dwt of melted gold from 88 trucks. After paying expenses this does not give the lucky owners – workers – one-third wages'.¹⁴⁴

IN 1895, UNTIL THE START OF THE BOOM

¹³⁷ Te Aroha Correspondent, *New Zealand Herald*, 7 March 1894, p. 6.

¹³⁸ Te Aroha Correspondent, *New Zealand Herald*, 16 May 1894, p. 6.

¹³⁹ *Te Aroha News*, n.d., reprinted in *Thames Star*, 7 June 1894, p. 4.

¹⁴⁰ *New Zealand Herald*, 16 June 1894, Supplement, p. 2; *Thames Advertiser*, 2 August 1894, p. 2.

¹⁴¹ See *Te Aroha News*, 26 March 1890, p. 2, Waiorongomai Correspondent, 16 February 1895, p. 2, 3 August 1895, p. 2; *Thames Advertiser*, 5 November 1894, p. 2.

¹⁴² *Thames Advertiser*, 2 August 1894, p. 2.

¹⁴³ For example, *Observer*, 21 April 1894, p. 5, 'Obadiah', 'Shares and Mining', 30 June 1894, p. 14, 'Paeroa', 3 November 1894, p. 21.

¹⁴⁴ *Te Aroha News*, n.d., reprinted in *Thames Star*, 22 November 1894, p. 4.

In his annual report, Gordon noted that by March the battery had only ten stamps, Adams having sold most of the machinery, and the mining population was 'very limited'. Mining was confined mainly to the New Find, Loyalty Palace, and New Premier, with altogether 16 wages men, owners, and tributers at work, 15 less than in the previous year. Only 840 tons were crushed for the wages men and owners, resulting in 552oz 11dwt of gold being produced, while tributers had 31 tons crushed for 19oz 15dwt.¹⁴⁵ Nevertheless, he argued that, despite the failure of many companies, in time 'the lodes will be opened out and rich returns obtained from them. The oftener one examines this country the more he becomes impressed with the certainty that rich auriferous lodes exist'. Returns lessened each year 'due to the want of capital' required 'to enable the lodes to be tested at a greater depth', where 'a better class of country' was expected. Until attention was 'especially directed' to the field it was 'likely to dwindle to a condition in which only a few men will be employed.'¹⁴⁶

The *Te Aroha News* continued to see signs justifying its optimism. Early in February, it believed prospects were improving,¹⁴⁷ and three days later its editorial, in noting new discoveries at Coromandel and Karangahake and 'remarkable' returns at Waihi, argued that Waiorongomai could be 'as good as any of them', using the Loyalty and Palace as an example of its 'long spell of ill luck' being broken. Finding good ore in them in just over 12 months 'would make the fortune of any place but Waiorongomai', which had 'so long been looked on as the Cinderella of goldfields. Perhaps like that despised little girl we shall yet see that as a gold-producing field she is second to none of her sisters'. And 'perhaps after all it might be best that local men should pick up the plums, if it were not that any thorough testing of the field would demand large capital'.¹⁴⁸ A local correspondent considered 'quite a revival in mining' was taking place, and 'hoped prospects will continue to be good, so that those who have stuck to the place for many years past' would be 'repaid for their patience'.¹⁴⁹ But later he noted that 'the great want' was a cyanide plant.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁵ H.A. Gordon to Minister of Mines, 24 July 1895, *AJHR*, 1895, C-3, pp. 66-67.

¹⁴⁶ H.A. Gordon to Minister of Mines, 24 July 1895, *AJHR*, 1895, C-3, pp. 65, 67.

¹⁴⁷ *Te Aroha News*, 6 February 1895, p. 2.

¹⁴⁸ Editorial, *Te Aroha News*, 9 February 1895, p. 2.

¹⁴⁹ Te Aroha Correspondent, *New Zealand Herald*, 22 February 1895, p. 6.

¹⁵⁰ Te Aroha Correspondent, *New Zealand Herald*, 30 September 1895, p. 6.

In most cases, prospectors working during the remainder of the year in the old Lucky Hit, Werahiko, Navy, Welcome, and Success and at Stoney Creek discovered some traces of gold, but nothing payable.¹⁵¹ Half a dozen 'little syndicates' were formed; their members usually paid five shillings weekly towards the prospectors' wages. The *Te Aroha News* argued, over-optimistically, that 'this self-reliant policy' would 'eventually be rewarded we feel sure'.¹⁵² As for self-reliance, the newspaper wrote that there was nothing 'to prevent people of all classes in the district forming prospecting associations, which will earn help from the government'.¹⁵³

STONEY CREEK

By the end of 1890, a syndicate of Te Aroha and Tauranga men had driven 60 feet towards a reef in the Stoney Creek district without hitting it. 'They have had to drive through some queer country' which was 'just a mass of huge boulders', but they expected 'to be in good solid country in a few days. Good stone was got from the reef they were driving for some time ago, but the driving falling in the reef was lost'.¹⁵⁴ Nothing further was heard from this syndicate, nor was any discovery made when the Te Aroha Prospecting Association employed two men for one month to prospect 100 acres near Stoney Creek in March 1893.¹⁵⁵ One year later, another prospecting party was formed at Waiorongomai to rework some ground; two men would be employed once the council cleared the track.¹⁵⁶

In early 1895, the 20-man Stoney Creek Prospecting Syndicate started testing 100 acres under Gavin's supervision. In April, the *Te Aroha News* noted that 'vigorous prospecting' had been going on for 'two or three months', with assays producing very variable results.¹⁵⁷ Two of its

¹⁵¹ Letters from prospectors to James Mills and Thomas Gavin, March 1895 to September 1895, Mines Department, MD 1, 97/1072, ANZ-W.

¹⁵² *Te Aroha News*, 23 March 1895, p. 2.

¹⁵³ Editorial, *Te Aroha News*, 9 February 1895, p. 2.

¹⁵⁴ Te Aroha Correspondent, *New Zealand Herald*, 23 December 1890, p. 6.

¹⁵⁵ *Thames Advertiser*, 23 March 1893, p. 2.

¹⁵⁶ *Te Aroha News*, n.d., reprinted in *Thames Star*, 8 February 1894, p. 3.

¹⁵⁷ *Te Aroha News*, 10 April 1895, p. 2; see also William Roycroft and Robert Michael to Thomas Gavin, 4 February 1895, 4 March 1895, Mines Department, MD 1, 97/1072, ANZ-W; *New Zealand Herald*, 9 August 1895, Supplement, p. 2.

members, Robert Michael, a miner and contractor,¹⁵⁸ who had been a member of the abortive Waiorongomai Prospecting Association,¹⁵⁹ and William Frederick Roycroft, carter, miner, and contractor,¹⁶⁰ drove on a leader reportedly carrying rich gold.¹⁶¹ Although the reef had not been cut and the men were driving through loose ground having ‘every appearance of having been a slip at some remote period’, requiring heavy timbering, Gavin told shareholders that indications were ‘very encouraging’.¹⁶² In late April his miners found another reef carrying ‘a little stone when broken down’, and extracted several tons to take to the battery once the track was cleared.¹⁶³ Having received a government subsidy, they let a contract for sledging the quartz down.¹⁶⁴ A month later, ‘good gold’ was struck.¹⁶⁵ The assay value was 1 1/2oz to the ton, but only 17dwt were obtained when treated. As the reef showed good gold, a meeting of shareholders appointed a committee to replace Gavin (who had resigned) and called tenders for a low level. To meet the demand for shares, the four held in reserve were to be sold for not less than £10 each, the money gained to be spent developing the mine. ‘The meeting was very sanguine of success, and decided to push on the work in hand with all possible speed’.¹⁶⁶ All shareholders had kept paying their subscriptions.¹⁶⁷ Late in July a new drive had been commenced, and ‘systematic work on a large scale’ would start when a battery was erected on the flat below the mine.¹⁶⁸ By the beginning of August, the prospectors reported that the ‘well-defined’ reef had been ‘opened out at a much lower level than where the last crushing was taken from’, looked ‘exceedingly well’ and increased in size as it went down.¹⁶⁹

An Auckland syndicate owning the All Nations employed two men to take assays giving from 1oz 4dwt to 6oz per ton, and in April their main

¹⁵⁸ See paper on his life.

¹⁵⁹ *Auckland Weekly News*, 5 November 1892, p. 23.

¹⁶⁰ See paper on the Roycroft brothers.

¹⁶¹ *Te Aroha News*, 3 April 1895, p. 2.

¹⁶² *Te Aroha News*, 10 April 1895, pp. 2, 7.

¹⁶³ *Te Aroha News*, 24 April 1895, p. 2; *Thames Advertiser*, 25 April 1895, p. 2.

¹⁶⁴ *Te Aroha News*, 8 May 1895, p. 2.

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

¹⁶⁶ *Te Aroha News*, 15 June 1895, p. 2.

¹⁶⁷ *Te Aroha News*, 6 July 1895, p. 2.

¹⁶⁸ *Te Aroha Correspondent*, *New Zealand Herald*, 1 August 1895, p. 6.

¹⁶⁹ *Te Aroha News*, 3 August 1895, p. 2.

drive was in 110 feet, with a small leader containing 'good gold' in the face. The main lode should be cut in another 40 feet; it was 'about' four feet thick 'at the outcrop, and looks fairly good'.¹⁷⁰ The owners expected the New Find lode to pass through their ground.¹⁷¹ Their claim was formed into the All Nations Company in July, which immediately tried to sell the ground to English or French investors for £2,000. A mining expert inspecting on behalf of a French syndicate sent it an ore sample;¹⁷² either the report or the test cannot have been favourable, for no sale resulted. In March 1896, the legal manager successfully requested six month's protection whilst seeking to sell the property, stating that 'the required number of men had been employed, and that a considerable amount of money had been spent in opening up the property'. Negotiations had 'every prospect of success, and it was believed that before the term of protection applied for had expired, everything would be completed, and the new machinery on the ground'.¹⁷³

Not till mid-1896 did an English company purchase the All Nations, the owners receiving £1,750 in cash as well as 35,000 paid up shares out of a total shareholding of £120,000.¹⁷⁴ This company, Ethel Reefs, owned mining property elsewhere in Hauraki.¹⁷⁵ The warden discovered that the 'parent Syndicate' was 'cut up into several small companies in which the same shareholders are more or less interested'; the properties were not worked from the one fund, 'each division' having its own finances.¹⁷⁶ In November nine men were working, some cutting roads to the ground, and it was expected 'a large number' would be employed.¹⁷⁷ Prospecting continued while experts considered the best ways of developing the ground, probably

¹⁷⁰ *Te Aroha News*, 10 April 1895, p. 2.

¹⁷¹ H.A. Gordon to Minister of Mines, 17 June 1896, *AJHR*, 1896, C-3, p. 78.

¹⁷² *Te Aroha News*, 3 July 1895, p. 2, 24 July 1895, p. 2, 3 August 1895, p. 2, 28 September 1895, p. 2.

¹⁷³ Te Aroha Correspondent, *New Zealand Herald*, 4 March 1896, p. 6.

¹⁷⁴ *Ohinemuri Gazette*, 3 June 1896, p. 2; Te Aroha Warden's Court, Mining Applications 1896, 4, 98, 142/1896, BBAV 11582/4a, ANZ-A; *Thames Advertiser*, 15 August 1896, p. 3; *Auckland Weekly News*, 12 September 1896, p. 20, 17 October 1896, p. 22.

¹⁷⁵ *Thames Advertiser*, 15 January 1898, p. 4; 'Obadiah', 'Shares and Mining', *Observer*, 22 January 1898, p. 9; *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 2, p. 474.

¹⁷⁶ Warden to Minister of Mines, 14 March 1899, Te Aroha Warden's Court, Letterbook 1883-1900, pp. 525-526, BBAV 11534/1a, ANZ-A.

¹⁷⁷ *Thames Advertiser*, 30 November 1896, p. 2; *New Zealand Herald*, 12 December 1896, p. 5.

by amalgamating with an adjacent claim.¹⁷⁸ Machinery valued at £4,000 was conveyed to the battery site near the mine, but 16 months later was removed to the company's Tapu mine.¹⁷⁹ As a 'considerable amount' of prospecting did not produce 'any encouraging results' and the ore, worth only 13s to the ton, could not be treated profitably, the company abandoned the property after spending only £2,000 or £3,000.¹⁸⁰

THE BOOM OF 1895

In February 1895, the *Te Aroha News* hoped Waiorongomai, 'the Cinderella of the goldfields', would no longer be ignored but instead become prosperous. 'Perhaps after all it might be best that local men should pick up the plums, if it were not that any thorough testing of the field would demand large capital which is not available locally'. It urged the formation of prospecting associations.¹⁸¹ Several prospecting parties were organized in April.¹⁸² Throughout the year, reports suggested much activity was taking place, but no important finds were made.¹⁸³ In April the *Te Aroha News* commented that the Thursday half-holiday was

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

¹⁷⁸ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Argus*, 6 May 1897, p. 2; *Thames Advertiser*, 20 May 1897, p. 3.

¹⁷⁹ *Ohinemuri Gazette*, 9 January 1897, p. 4; 'Obadiah', 'Shares and Mining', *Observer*, 2 April 1898, p. 9; R.S. Bush (Warden) to Minister of Mines, 20 December 1898, Mines Department, MD 1, 01/1180, ANZ-W.

¹⁸⁰ Edward Thornton, declarations of 18 August 1898, 13 March 1899, Mines Department, MD 1, 01/1180, ANZ-W; *Thames Advertiser*, 11 February 1899, p. 3; *New Zealand Mines Record*, 16 May 1899, p. 411.

¹⁸¹ Editorial, *Te Aroha News*, 9 February 1895, p. 2.

¹⁸² *Thames Advertiser*, 25 April 1895, p. 2.

¹⁸³ *Te Aroha News*, Waiorongomai Correspondent, 16 February 1895, p. 2, 20 March 1895, p. 2, 24 April 1895, p. 2, 22 May 1895, p. 2, 4 September 1895, p. 2, 21 September 1895, p. 2, 16 October 1895, p. 2, 16 November 1895, p. 2.

With what it described as ‘gold fever’ breaking out at Te Aroha, some prospectors arrived from elsewhere.¹⁸⁴ This fever led to extravagant boasts: a Waiorongomai correspondent considered a claim to have traced gold from Waihi to the Wairere Falls was ‘a tolerably large order on our credulity’.¹⁸⁵ In February, the *Te Aroha News* published the briefest of reports: ‘mining booming’.¹⁸⁶ Three days later, an editorial was pleased to note the ‘new life infused into’ Waiorongomai, for since the collapse of the Te Aroha Silver and Gold Mining Company mining had been ‘confined to intermittent spurts’ until the Loyalty was found. ‘That there is gold in the Hill has been proved, its extraction requires only systematic and thorough working’, but those who had ‘retained their faith’ had ‘been too poor to do work not presently remunerative, and unable, consequently, to deal with the large quantities necessary to make small returns payable’. It welcomed the syndicate which had taken over Adams’ mines and battery,¹⁸⁷ and would soon bring English capital in the form of the New Zealand Exploration Company.¹⁸⁸ It looked forward to new battery owners because existing arrangements were ‘by no means satisfactory’, with terms being ‘constantly altered from crushing to crushing, when in all business matters one of the main essentials to success’ was ‘a reasonable prospect of calculating expenses on a steady basis’.¹⁸⁹ A Te Aroha correspondent believed there was ‘a likelihood’ of mining ‘looking up’ again, for several companies had started sending out prospectors.¹⁹⁰ A month later, typically mistaking rumours for substance, he reported mining ‘going ahead by leaps and bounds, with ‘marvellous returns’ obtained.¹⁹¹ A week later, he wrote that mining was ‘booming along splendidly, grand stone ... still being got out. One share changed hands for £40’. Pegging out was ‘going on rapidly, and outside speculators’ were ‘commencing to drop in. Several meetings have been held and a few prospectors have been sent out’.¹⁹²

¹⁸⁴ *Te Aroha News*, 3 April 1895, p. 2.

¹⁸⁵ Waiorongomai Correspondent, *Te Aroha News*, 23 January 1895, p. 2.

¹⁸⁶ *Te Aroha News*, 20 February 1895, p. 2.

¹⁸⁷ Editorial, *Te Aroha News*, 23 February 1895, p. 2.

¹⁸⁸ See paper on this company and its offshoot, Aroha Gold Mines.

¹⁸⁹ Editorial, *Te Aroha News*, 23 February 1895, p.2.

¹⁹⁰ ‘Te Aroha’, *Observer*, 2 February 1895, p. 21.

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

¹⁹² ‘Te Aroha’, *Observer*, 9 March 1895, p. 21.

By early April, 250 acres were pegged out.¹⁹³ One correspondent, reporting a long list of mining cases being heard at the warden's court on 5 April, noted that 'quite a mania for pegging out special claims' had developed. Although 'exceedingly' pleased with a revival, he noted that it 'consisted mainly in the "pegging out" of land'. There would be 'no real revival' until 'a large amount of dead work' was done, and at present 'very little work' was being done. He wanted 'some company with plenty of capital to undertake to thoroughly prospect the hill by putting in a drive of a thousand feet'. He was 'quite certain' that Waiorongomai had 'never yet been properly prospected, and the mere scratching of the ground going on now will never bring permanent prosperity'.¹⁹⁴

Pegging out continued,¹⁹⁵ prompting Gavin to complain in June that Waiorongomai was 'now pegged out down to the river, and as a consequence miners were being driven from the place' because ground applied for as special claims was closed to prospectors.¹⁹⁶ As always, exaggerated claims were made for the value of the ore found.¹⁹⁷ Although in July a correspondent wrote that people were 'waiting on the mining boom',¹⁹⁸ by the end of August all the ground from Karangahake to the Te Aroha trig had been pegged out.¹⁹⁹ A syndicate of '25 of Te Aroha's principal businessmen' took over the Golden Crown claim near Te Aroha,²⁰⁰ but one local correspondent mocked their enthusiasm:

The ball having been set rolling, numerous small fry are banding together to collar the ground in hopes that there will be no end of English speculators who will swallow every 12-foot reef yarn presented to them. The latest I hear of is the old Morning Star ground, which is reputed to be worth an ounce to the ton, in fact, old Gall ['impudence, effrontery']²⁰¹ says the gold can be found on

¹⁹³ *Te Aroha News*, 30 March 1895, p. 2, 13 April 1895, p. 2.

¹⁹⁴ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 13 April 1895, p. 23.

¹⁹⁵ *Te Aroha News*, 22 May 1895, p. 2, 8 June 1895, p. 2, 31 July 1895, p. 2, 3 August 1895, p. 2, 24 August 1895, p. 2, 11 September 1895, p. 2.

¹⁹⁶ Warden's Court, *Auckland Weekly News*, 8 June 1895, p. 29.

¹⁹⁷ For example, *Te Aroha News*, 31 July 1895, p. 2.

¹⁹⁸ 'Te Aroha', *Observer*, 27 July 1895, p. 21.

¹⁹⁹ *Te Aroha News*, 31 August 1895, p. 2.

²⁰⁰ *Te Aroha News*, 3 August 1895, p. 2.

²⁰¹ Dictionary.com: Google.

the trees up that way, so it will pay them to burn off the bush and sluice the ashes.²⁰²

Late in August the newly revived local sharemarket did ‘a considerable amount of business’. After several Cadman shares changed hands at £40, interest switched to Stoney Creek where ‘a small syndicate of Auckland and local gentlemen’ was ‘determined to secure as much ground as possible on the line of reef’. The list of shareholders was full and ‘a great many applicants’ had been refused.²⁰³ The local stock exchange met a ‘long felt want’, and at least one mining agent set up in business because of the apparent boom.²⁰⁴ At the beginning of September, the *Thames Star*, under the heading ‘The Boom at Te Aroha’, reported ‘a considerable amount of business’ on the Te Aroha sharemarket, with a notice board giving the latest quotations being ‘eagerly watched by speculators and others’. In one mine, several shares ‘changed hands at £40 each’. A large number of new claims had been pegged out between Karangahake and Te Aroha.²⁰⁵ The *Te Aroha News* noted all the talk ‘about a boom which is a-coming which is going to work miracles, and make us all rich. Not confined to grey-heads and leading citizens alone, but the boys are ever speculating like their fathers’.²⁰⁶ Two months later it commented that ‘two out of every men we meet are holders of shares’.²⁰⁷

Late in August, the *Te Aroha News* wrote that it had ‘for a long time past been anxiously looking forward to a mining boom in this district’, which had now commenced, and ‘before long we will be in the midst of a vigorous mining population’.²⁰⁸ A ‘large’ but unspecified number of miners were employed.²⁰⁹ In September, it referred to an ‘unusual amount of activity’, with more pegging out and many claims ‘preparing to commence operations in real earnest’.²¹⁰ However, later that month, it took a harder look at all the excitement:

²⁰² ‘Te Aroha’, *Observer*, 3 August 1895, p. 21.

²⁰³ *Te Aroha News*, 31 August 1895, p. 2.

²⁰⁴ *Te Aroha News*, 31 August 1895, p. 2, 25 September 1895, p. 2.

²⁰⁵ *Thames Star*, 2 September 1895, p. 2.

²⁰⁶ Editorial, *Te Aroha News*, 28 September 1895, p. 2.

²⁰⁷ *Te Aroha News*, 23 November 1895, p. 2.

²⁰⁸ *Te Aroha News*, 24 August 1895, p. 2.

²⁰⁹ *Te Aroha News*, 31 August 1895, p. 2.

²¹⁰ *Te Aroha News*, 7 September 1895, p. 2.

Our Mines

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

No More Delay.

The time is now right for some action on the part of local syndicates. Action immediate and decisive. For many months now our citizens have been doling out monthly calls to keep the mine in trim and the interest of shareholders from flagging. All this goes merrily on while claims by the gross are floated by our neighbours 'tother side of the hill. While they in many instances float on the four pegs, or float in anticipation of getting a reef somewhere beneath the surface, here we are with magnificent reefs, working like Trojans to open up the mine. We have done the prospecting, the discovery has been made, tunnelling has been undertaken at large expense, the ground secured, the survey and all the et cetera completed, and yet we are pegging away getting all the dirty work finished for the capitalist to pay us a visit. This is not the usual procedure of up-to-date mining, and we reiterate now that we have bona fide mines and the time for "floating" has arrived.

What Mines to Float.

Perhaps we are not too late to float our local mines. There are some which would go off with a hum if in expert hands, and we are sanguine that mines like the Loyalty, Cadman, Golden Crown, Hot Springs, and Starlit Dell are well worth the consideration of investors. These mines have been well opened up, contain good gold-bearing reefs, and are second to none of the dozens of others floated in Auckland recently. The immediate flotation of two of these mines has been decided upon, and we are glad a start is made, but it must be followed up to the end. Given the successful floating of local mines, then they will be worked, and our prosperity so anxiously looked for will be assured.²¹¹

²¹¹ Editorial, *Te Aroha News*, 18 September 1895, p. 2.

Ten days later, in commenting on the boom which was ‘going to work miracles, and make us all rich’, it argued that ‘the boom as they call it’ was ‘a misnomer. If you put money into the mountain range you get it back again with a thousand per cent’ once the miners got ‘old king cyanide on the job’. Capital would in a ‘short time’ produce both gold and dividends.²¹² In mid-September, it reported that Loyalty, Palace, and Cadman shares were popular and that the Golden Crown and Starlit Dell claims, near the Te Aroha township, would be floated after doing some preliminary work. The public was ‘not very anxious at present to buy up promoters’ shares. Mining generally will settle down to a firm, steady, but not sensational condition’, it expected and hoped, for it regretted the ‘sensational features’ only ‘too prominent recently’.²¹³ Four days later, it noted ‘considerable interest’, with experts inspecting some of the best mines and, in particular, investigating whether the Loyalty reef continued into other claims.²¹⁴ It reported more encouraging mining,²¹⁵ which was confirmed by other correspondents,²¹⁶ but admitted that the boom appeared to be only brief. In September it ‘slackened off somewhat’ and then was ‘easing off’,²¹⁷ and by December was ‘on the wane’.²¹⁸

Much of the pegging out was done in the expectation of selling ground to overseas investors. For example, the Cadman Prospecting Association was formed ‘with the object of thoroughly trying the ground lying between the Loyalty and Palace claims’. This 25-member syndicate employed two prospectors.²¹⁹ By July, they had pegged out 30 acres comprising the former Werahiko, Silver King, Success, Waitoki, and part of the Success Extended. Two men would be employed to take ten trucks from a 20-foot wide reef in the Werahiko; the stone already got out should, to all appearance, be good payable ore’.²²⁰ When its works committee visited in early July, they ‘were

²¹² Editorial, *Te Aroha News*, 28 September 1895, p. 2.

²¹³ *Te Aroha News*, 21 September 1895, p. 2.

²¹⁴ *Te Aroha News*, 25 September 1895, p. 2.

²¹⁵ For example, *Te Aroha News*, 23 November 1895, p. 2, 5 December 1895, p. 2.

²¹⁶ For example, Te Aroha Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 14 December 1894, p. 45.

²¹⁷ *Te Aroha News*, 4 September 1895, p. 2, 18 September 1895, p. 2.

²¹⁸ *Te Aroha News*, 4 December 1895, p. 2.

²¹⁹ Te Aroha Correspondent, *New Zealand Herald*, 22 February 1895, p. 6.

²²⁰ Te Aroha Correspondent, *New Zealand Herald*, 3 July 1895, p. 6.

greatly pleased with the prospects'. The account of the work done illustrates of how old workings were reused:

On the lower level, which is some 300 feet long, and enters through the old Waitoki ground, everything was found intact and ready for the tram rails to be laid down by which it is proposed to bring the stone to the hopper, and thence to the trucks. The tramway goes right on to the property. In the intermediate level (230 feet in) everything was found ready for breaking out the first crushing, which will be taken from the main reef, and should prove the value of the mine. Good dish prospects were got from every portion of the outcrop, which had been stripped, and disclosed a fine body of quartz about 18 feet in width. Very little outlay will be required to put the mine in first-class working order. The upper level (200 feet in) was visited, and contains three reefs ranging from four to six feet in width, each giving indications of gold. This level will evidently pay well for working, but it is only intended to work the intermediate level at present, as there is such a quantity of quartz ready to be broken out.²²¹

At the end of the month, a 'largely-attended' meeting of the association was told that 'a splendid reef two feet thick, showing gold', had been 'opened out'. Members were 'naturally in good spirits, and very anxious to thoroughly prospect their property'. It was rumoured an offer for it had been received.²²² In mid-August, when 'some splendid stone' was obtained from a recently discovered reef, shares went up to £10, and the property was 'under offer to an English syndicate for a large amount'.²²³ When the Cadman and Seddon were amalgamated later that month so that they could be offered to an English syndicate, shares were sold at £40 each.²²⁴ A mine manager inspected the property on behalf of the potential purchasers, samples from the four principal reefs were tested, and it was expected the ground would be floated before November.²²⁵ Work was suspended in this and other mines 'pending negotiations for floating the properties in England'.²²⁶

²²¹ Te Aroha Correspondent, *New Zealand Herald*, 11 July 1895, p. 6.

²²² Te Aroha Correspondent, *New Zealand Herald*, 1 August 1895, p. 6.

²²³ Waiorongomai Correspondent, *New Zealand Herald*, 19 August 1895, p. 6.

²²⁴ *New Zealand Herald*, 27 August 1895, p. 6.

²²⁵ Te Aroha Correspondent, *New Zealand Herald*, 30 September 1895, p. 5.

²²⁶ Own Reporter, 'The Upper Thames Gold Mines: A Tour of Inspection', *New Zealand Herald*, 25 December 1895, p. 5.

One cynical observer wrote that, ‘the ball having been set rolling, numerous small fry are banding together to collar the ground in the hopes that there will be no end of English speculators who will swallow every 12 foot reef presented to them’. The latest example was the old Morning Star ground near Te Aroha, ‘reported to be worth an ounce to the ton, in fact, old Gall’ [not a person but ‘impudence’] claimed ‘gold can be found on the trees up that way, so it will pay to burn off the bush and sluice the ashes’.²²⁷

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

The English speculator is the kind of visitor who turns up occasionally and meditatively walks our streets. He generally hears much and says little. We are always happy in receiving visitors of all sorts and conditions, but in case of a “foreign capitalist,” we simply indulge in more frantic speculations as to his intentions and so forth, than we do in promoters’ shares. The latter article is getting rather numerous at present, and the former - the gentleman with the £1 a day for looking around - well, we imagine any new visitor with a high hat and stick to be another capitalist gent, and still the genuine ones come! In the case of treating with the touring foreign capitalist the Te Aroha syndicates are not eager to deal. Nor are Te Aroha goldmine owners at all anxious to pop off their claims in the proverbial “quarter of an hour.” We believe in doing legitimate business - even goldmine business - in a steady happy-go-lucky *sang-froid* kind of way and we are going to come out trumps in the case of all our mine flotations while the English capitalist is looking on.... This field and this mountain of ours must be looked after, and our syndicates are doing the thing properly.²²⁸

This unwillingness or inability to exploit the boom flourishing elsewhere meant that in mid-October, when the bubble was about to burst, a correspondent could only report that the boom was ‘gradually working its way in this direction’ and shares were ‘rising in consequence’.²²⁹ Te Aroha

²²⁷ ‘Te Aroha’, *Observer*, 3 August 1895, p. 21.

²²⁸ *Te Aroha News*, 4 September 1895, p. 2.

²²⁹ ‘Te Aroha’, *Observer*, 19 October 1895, p. 21.

only really benefited from one major injection of overseas capital provided by the New Zealand Exploration Company, and throughout 1895 it was generally agreed the boom was based largely on fraud and gambling, with worthless or at best unproven claims being sold to English speculators who in turn often intended to make money by selling shares rather than working them.²³⁰

1896

1896 started with mining being 'rather quiet', although there was 'some talk' of employing 40 men 'after the holidays'.²³¹ Apart from some prospecting on the ground owned by the Te Aroha Syndicate, forerunner of the New Zealand Exploration Company, and a few men mining in the Loyalty, there was 'very little doing', for claims on offer in England were granted protection.²³² In February, 'most people' thought mining was 'still quiet'.²³³ So did Gordon, who, when he visited at the end of January, found mining was restricted to the Loyalty and Palace and Newsham's tribute in the Premier. The Cadman was protected, being under offer to an English syndicate, as was the All Nations at the head of Stoney Creek. Indeed, 'all ground' was taken up where there was 'the slightest prospect of a lode going through it', and 'large sums' were asked from syndicates or companies.²³⁴

The water race was repaired in readiness for testing 'several small crushings' which had been 'delayed for some time'.²³⁵ Some miners working on their own believed they had good mines. Richard Burke, for instance, owner since the previous October of the Welcome, in February was 'working on a nice looking lead' giving 'every promise of opening out something good'.²³⁶ His claim adjoined the Loyalty, in which he had worked for wages;

²³⁰ For example, *Observer*, 30 March 1895, p. 2, 11 May 1895, pp. 3, 9, 24 August 1895, p. 16; editorial, *Thames Advertiser*, 19 June 1895, p. 2; editorial, *Thames Star*, 21 October 1895, p. 2; editorials, *Te Aroha News*, 22 June 1895, p. 2, 20 July 1895, p. 2; *Mining Standard*, 29 November 1895, p. 3.

²³¹ 'Te Aroha', *Observer*, 4 January 1896, p. 21.

²³² Waiorongomai Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 4 January 1896, p. 35; Te Aroha Correspondent, *New Zealand Herald*, 4 March 1896, p. 6.

²³³ 'Te Aroha', *Observer*, 8 February 1896, p. 21.

²³⁴ H.A. Gordon to Minister of Mines, 17 June 1896, *AJHR*, 1896, C-3, p. 78.

²³⁵ Te Aroha Correspondent, *New Zealand Herald*, 27 February 1896, p. 6.

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

it never produced much ore, and was abandoned in 1898.²³⁷ Newsham was also hard at work, with encouraging prospects.²³⁸

When shown the Silver King reef in the Cadman, a visiting mine manager ‘expressed astonishment at the magnitude and quality of the lode’. His visit had ‘led to his forming a high opinion of its capabilities as a gold-producing field’, and predicted ‘a prosperous future for it with the introduction of English capital’.²³⁹ When asked to protect properties potentially under offer in England, the warden, Henry Eyre Kenny, warned speculators:

He was strongly opposed to giving protection in cases where people who owned a property simply got protection and waited for “something to turn up.” If they were not prepared to do something then they must make way for those who would. In all cases applicants must show that certain work had been done, or that genuine efforts were being made to procure additional capital for the better development of the property. He fully recognised the fact that these low grade ores required a large amount of capital to work them, and he was willing to give every concession as regards time, but applicants must satisfy him as to their bona fides in this respect.²⁴⁰

Reflecting popular attitudes to the boom, a local poet, wisely hiding under the pseudonym of ‘Toop’, mocked the ambitions of local prospectors-cum-speculators:

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

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

²³⁷ Te Aroha Warden’s Court, Applications 1895, 1, 2, 9, 80/1895; Applications 1896, 21/1896; Applications 1897, 26, 123/1897; Applications 1898, 30/1898, BBAV 11582/4a; Register of Licensed Holdings and Special Holdings 1887-1909, folio 64, BBAV 11500/8b, ANZ-A.

²³⁸ See paper on his life.

²³⁹ Te Aroha Correspondent, *New Zealand Herald*, 27 February 1896, p. 6.

²⁴⁰ Te Aroha Correspondent, *New Zealand Herald*, 4 March 1896, p. 6.

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

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

We risked our lives upon the hills
 When pegging out our claim;
 Noo, we but want our well-earned rest,
 With wife and weans at hame.

Yes, hame, sweet hame; send on your cash,
 Land of the brave and free;
 We'll prove there's siller in the hills,
 If nae for baith – for me.²⁴¹

Only 36 owners and wages men had been working during the 12 months to 31 March, and only 120 tons were crushed, for 153oz 3dwt; with the additional treatment of 54 tons of tailings, the value of bullion for the year was £470 10s 7d.²⁴² The 1,526 acres occupied produced this miniscule result.²⁴³ Claimholders still aimed to sell their ground to foreign investors. For instance, a correspondent informed that a good find in the Premier was 'equal to the Martha reef at Waihi' hoped that this would attract capitalists. 'In many cases the rich leads' had been developed by tributers who were 'forced to abandon them, owing to an inflow of water and a lack of sufficient capital to enable them to put in low levels'. It was 'satisfactory to know that these rich spots are mostly included' claims 'seeking capital in the English market'.²⁴⁴

The formation of the New Zealand Exploration Company was greeted with 'general satisfaction' in Te Aroha. 'As other properties in close proximity' were 'likely to be taken upon the London market at an early date, a permanent revival in mining' seemed assured.²⁴⁵ Its introduction of

²⁴¹ 'Toop', 'Te Aroha', *Observer*, 29 February 1896, p. 21.

²⁴² *AJHR*, 1896, C-3, p. 79.

²⁴³ *AJHR*, 1896, C-3, p. 90.

²⁴⁴ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 22 February 1896, p. 19.

²⁴⁵ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 4 April 1896, p. 20.

capital created confidence, and 'several claims that would have been abandoned' had been occupied again, especially because of an expectation that the Anglo-Continental Company would take up its option over the Cadman.²⁴⁶ 'Numerous inquiries' had been made 'for suitable properties', and it was expected that the sales of the main mines would 'give quite an impetus to other holdings' under offer.²⁴⁷ The new company employed more miners and created 'an air of busyness about the place' that was 'in pleasing contrast to the dead and alive state of affairs' which had existed 'for the past few years'.²⁴⁸ Miners who had previously had 'to go miles away from home to obtain employment' were now able to find work where they lived.²⁴⁹ In May, Waiorongomai was full of enthusiasm:

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

This enthusiastic correspondent, who 'always had confidence in the Buck Reef', traced it to Waitekauri. He praised the plans of the Exploration Company, having 'not the slightest doubt that they will be well rewarded for their investment in this much neglected district'. He expected the Loyalty and Cadman to be floated, and when that happened they could 'safely say that the boom has reached us, and I have not the slightest doubt that before many months pass we will give the sceptic and knowing ones proof that it has come to stay'.²⁵⁰

²⁴⁶ 'Obadiah', 'Shares and Mining', *Observer*, 23 May 1896, p. 6; Te Aroha Correspondent, *New Zealand Herald*, 28 May 1896, p. 6.

²⁴⁷ *New Zealand Herald*, 20 May 1896, p. 6.

²⁴⁸ Te Aroha Correspondent, *New Zealand Herald*, 28 May 1896, p. 6.

²⁴⁹ Captain J.A. Cochrane to Colonel Goring, 26 May 1896, Te Aroha Rifles, Nominal Roll, Army Department, ARM 41, 1911/66v, ANZ-W.

²⁵⁰ A Correspondent, 'Waiorongomai Notes', *Ohinemuri Gazette*, 30 May 1896, p. 5.

In late May, a Paeroa newspaper referred to ‘the coming revival in mining at Waiorongomai, and the wholesale pegging out that took place only last week’.²⁵¹ Pegging out continued into June, a state of affairs ‘strongly reminiscent of the old days’, with the warden’s court having difficulty coping with the applications because a clerk was no longer stationed permanently at Te Aroha. As before, ground was taken up for sale, not mining; half the eight mining applications heard in that month involved actual or potential sales to local or English interests.²⁵² Mining experts from New Zealand and abroad occasionally visited, and were reportedly impressed with the quality of the main lodes.²⁵³ The governors of the Thames High School were informed that the ‘great revival in mining’ was likely to increase their revenue greatly.

If the results prove as favourable as is generally expected, the goldfields revenue should each year show a decided improvement. Works are being vigorously prosecuted in some of the mining properties upon a large scale, and with so far the most satisfactory results, everything pointing to the conclusion that an era of permanent prosperity has commenced.²⁵⁴

Both the All Nations and the Tui were floated in London, and in July ‘the quest for vacant pieces of likely ground’ continued ‘as brisk as ever, and the supply of mining agents and experts’ showed ‘no sign of diminution’.²⁵⁵ Between Tui and Waiorongomai there was ‘hardly a patch of ground available’ for marking out by August.²⁵⁶ With the Exploration Company keeping the battery working full time, mining was ‘considerably improving, and ere long we will certainly have a boom of our own’.²⁵⁷ There was conflict over promising areas: for instance, two parties competed for ground containing the continuation of the Vulcan lode adjacent to the Exploration

²⁵¹ *Ohinemuri Gazette*, 27 May 1896, p. 2.

²⁵² Te Aroha Correspondent, *New Zealand Herald*, 13 June 1896, p. 6.

²⁵³ *Ohinemuri Gazette*, 20 June 1896, p. 4; *Te Aroha Times and Waiorongomai Advocate*, 4 July 1896, p. 4; *Auckland Star*, 10 July 1896, p. 3; *Thames Advertiser*, 17 September 1896, p. 2.

²⁵⁴ Thames High School, *Thames Advertiser*, 2 June 1896, p. 2.

²⁵⁵ Te Aroha Correspondent, *New Zealand Herald*, 4 July 1896, p. 5.

²⁵⁶ *Mining Standard and Financial News*, 7 August 1896, p. 7.

²⁵⁷ *Thames Advertiser*, 10 August 1896, p. 2; *Waikato Argus*, 29 August 1896, p. 3.

Company's ground near where it had obtained 'splendid prospects'.²⁵⁸ Owners of unworked claims were sued for their forfeiture.²⁵⁹

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

signs of the times show distinctly that the days of depression have gone by, consequently, the feeling of distrust so long held by the capitalist is passing away. Without a doubt, Te Aroha will shortly become the main centre of a very extensive mining population, as several large mines will, at an early date, with the help of English capital, be in full swing. The town must extend, and will probably embrace Waiorongomai, the main street extending from one to the other.²⁶⁰

It seemed that the potential boom was not dependent solely on the Exploration Company. A plant to use Joseph Campbell's method of treating refractory ore was proposed,²⁶¹ which was expected to be 'the means of developing, with profit to the respective shareholders, many good properties' then 'lying idle under the shield of protection and awaiting the aid of English capitalists'.²⁶² In September, a Waitekauri syndicate employed two men to prospect east of Waiorongomai,²⁶³ and another prospecting party had 21 samples tested in Thames, mostly for unpayable results.²⁶⁴ 'Every day' brought 'something fresh, and numbers of applications' were 'regularly' received by the warden's court.²⁶⁵ By November, 90 claims were registered (compared with 140 at Waihi, 283 at Waitekauri and Owharoa, and 136 at Karangahake).²⁶⁶

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

²⁵⁸ Te Aroha Correspondent, *New Zealand Herald*, 4 July 1896, p. 5, 8 August 1896, p. 5, 3 October 1896, p. 5.

²⁵⁹ For example, Te Aroha Correspondent, *New Zealand Herald*, 16 November 1896, p. 5.

²⁶⁰ *Te Aroha Times and Waiorongomai Advocate*, 4 July 1896, p. 4.

²⁶¹ See paper on Joseph Campbell.

²⁶² *Thames Advertiser*, 15 September 1896, p. 3.

²⁶³ *Thames Advertiser*, 7 September 1896, p. 2.

²⁶⁴ Thames School of Mines, Assay Book 1895-1897, entry for 9 September 1896, School of Mines Archives, Thames.

²⁶⁵ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Argus*, 8 September 1896, p. 2.

²⁶⁶ *Observer*, 28 November 1896, p. 3.

Many of the old inhabitants have been waiting so long for “something to turn up,” and have had so many hopes raised, only to see them shattered, that they seem to have lost heart, to a great extent, and are very apt to deprecate the value of their own locality.... Certain influences have been brought to bear to retard progress here for the present. If a stranger comes in and pegs out ground he is treated with scant courtesy, and impediments of various kinds are thrown in his way. It appears to me that certain residents think they have a pre-emptive right to all the good things round about.... Only the other day I heard a man, a mine manager of some repute too, running down mining matters in a very wholesale manner. And yet I found on searching records that the gentleman himself has claims of his own pegged out and is doing prospecting work on one of them at least. Evidently he does not want any neighbours just yet. Then again another, who never saw a mine at Te Aroha, went to Auckland and did his best to duffer the place.²⁶⁷

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

Local jealousy carried to such extremes that A, B, and C, having interests in different goldmining properties, in their individual greediness to obtain the first haul of English capital will each run down their neighbour’s claim to likely purchasers, and at the same time, of course, laud up their own little Eldorados to the sky. This policy might answer say if B and C kept mum while A had his innings; but when they substantially go “on their own” in the heated race for “British gold,” then the “fat gets in the fire with a vengeance.” John Bull’s purse-strings are tightly drawn, to the consternation of Messrs A, B, and C, who, with well-affected surprise, exclaimed, “who would have thought it!”²⁶⁸

This desire to sell mines for a quick profit required more prospecting, and the development plans of the Exploration Company gave ‘owners of the other mines a little heart to push ahead’ and float their properties. Three or four prospecting parties were exploring ‘ground hitherto almost untouched, and some good shows have been obtained’.²⁶⁹ The capital required for

²⁶⁷ ‘Te Aroha: A Correspondent’, *New Zealand Herald*, 4 September 1896, p. 6.

²⁶⁸ ‘Trilby, Jr’, ‘Te Aroha Titbits’, *Thames Advertiser*, 15 September 1896, p. 3.

²⁶⁹ *Auckland Weekly News*, 12 September 1896, p. 36; see also *Ohinemuri Gazette*, 16 September 1896, p. 4.

prospecting and undertaking the initial development had to be provided by the local community, but, as the manager of the Ohinemuri Branch of the Bank of New Zealand noted, at Te Aroha the businessmen were ‘all small traders, of limited capital’, having ‘no security to offer beyond goldfield properties’ with ‘uncertain values’.²⁷⁰

AFTER THE BOOM

Newspaper reports continued to be relentlessly optimistic. A Paeroa newspaper decided in September that Te Aroha and Waiorongomai were ‘the coming fields’,²⁷¹ and in October announced that the boom had ‘at last’ reached this ‘long-neglected’ district. Mining was to be ‘vigorously commenced’ at Tui, and the All Nations would soon be at work ‘with an ample working capital’ (neither of these statements would be borne out). ‘Altogether, Te Aroha seems to be the coming place’.²⁷² The *Te Aroha News*, inevitably, could not but agree, writing that the number of applications for claims pending at the warden’s court was ‘the first step of the “boom” that will shortly burst over our devoted heads. We are in possession of some important information on the subject which, however, we are not yet at liberty to divulge’.²⁷³ This mysterious information, if ever released in a now-lost edition, was not reprinted in another newspaper. It also reported that

keen-eyed speculators haunt the precincts of the Palace and Hot Springs hotels and a spirit of restlessness and impending change is visible everywhere. Vague rumours of new finds and negotiations for flotation successfully carried out, fills the air and it really looks as if the steadily expanding boom has reached our district at last.²⁷⁴

In fact, the boom was contracting,²⁷⁵ and only its ripples had reached the district. At the time it seemed so near. Not only did Auckland investors

²⁷⁰ Bank of New Zealand, G.A. Burgess’ Report, in Balance Book of the Ohinemuri Branch for the half-Year to 30 September 1896, Bank of New Zealand Archives, Wellington.

²⁷¹ *Ohinemuri Gazette*, 5 September 1896, p. 4.

²⁷² *Ohinemuri Gazette*, 14 October 1896, p. 2.

²⁷³ *Te Aroha News*, n.d., reprinted in *Thames Advertiser*, 14 October 1896, p. 2.

²⁷⁴ *Te Aroha News*, n.d., reprinted in *Thames Advertiser*, 12 October 1896, p. 2.

²⁷⁵ For example, ‘Obadiah’, ‘Shares and Mining’, *Observer*, 18 January 1896, p. 9, ‘Our English Letter’, 18 January 1896, p. 10; *New Zealand Mining Standard*, 27 February

seem interested, but overseas investment in the shape of the Exploration Company did come, Joseph Campbell arrived, the Tui Company took over the mines in that district, and other claims seemed likely to be floated. In February, the Cadman was still under offer on terms reportedly 'extremely favourable to the vendors'; as most shares were held locally, its flotation would bring 'a large amount of money' into the district.²⁷⁶ In May, the Anglo-Continental Company took it on five months' trial, with two further months allowed to float it: failure to do so would mean the loss of the £1,000 deposit. Purchase would mean the vendors receiving £10,000 cash and £2,000 in paid-up shares in a company of 150,000 shares.²⁷⁷ It was not floated.²⁷⁸ Yet as late as August 1897 an overseas expert claimed the 'most promising localities' in the North Island were 'Karangahake, Te Aroha, and, of course, Waihi'.²⁷⁹

1897

A find of specimen stone in February 1897 created expectations that the Cadman would be 'a dividend payer in the immediate future'.²⁸⁰ Although the Anglo-Continental Company had decided not to float it, another English company, the London and New Zealand Finance Corporation, took up a six-month option that was later extended until the end of the year.²⁸¹ Intending to spend from £3,000 to £4,000 developing and testing the mine, it employed three shifts in this and took up additional ground.²⁸² After discovering that the gold earlier extracted had come from

1897, p. 10; *Auckland Weekly News*, 6 June 1896, p. 20, 20 June 1896, p. 21, 'A Tramp, Esq', 'Casual Ramblings', 26 September 1896, p. 38; *Auckland Star*, 1 July 1896, p. 2, 31 August 1896, p. 2; *New Zealand Herald*, 27 October 1896, p. 5.

²⁷⁶ *New Zealand Herald*, 12 February 1896, p. 6.

²⁷⁷ *New Zealand Herald*, 20 May 1896, p. 6; *Auckland Weekly News*, 30 May 1896, p. 9.

²⁷⁸ See paper on companies and company financing in general and at Te Aroha in particular.

²⁷⁹ 'Mining in Western Australia and New Zealand: A chat with Mr A. Spencer-Ellam, MIMM', *British Australasian*, 26 August 1897, p. 1433.

²⁸⁰ *Auckland Star*, 9 February 1897, p. 2; *New Zealand Mining Standard*, 27 February 1897, p. 5.

²⁸¹ *Ohinemuri Gazette*, 10 March 1897, p. 3, 31 July 1897, p. 5.

²⁸² *Thames Advertiser*, 11 March 1897, p. 3, 14 July 1897, p. 3, 18 July 1895, p. 3; 'Werahiko', 'Our Te Aroha Letter', *New Zealand Mining Standard*, 6 May 1897, p. 3.

‘chutes and pockets’ from which miners had ‘picked the eyes’, in October the option-holders shut down the mine, throwing ‘a considerable number of men out of work’.²⁸³ Although no future work, apart from prospecting, was to take place in it, the mine had been of some value to the vendors, who in March had met at a hotel to divide the £300 deposit paid for the option amongst themselves, ‘after which a convivial evening was spent, which terminated satisfactorily to everyone concerned’.²⁸⁴

On the evening of 14 September, ‘the eleven lucky shareholders in the Trident’ went to a hotel ‘to square up accounts and divide the purchase money’, unspecified, received from the Exploration Company for their mine. After concluding this business, ‘the joint healths of the assembly were drunk in bumpers of (fourteen year old) champagne, which mine host solemnly declared had been kept for the occasion. Songs, Toasts, and speeches were given with great gusto, and it is hardly necessary to add that a convivial evening was spent’.²⁸⁵

To assist prospecting, in December the council was asked to construct a track into the Mangakino Valley, where there were 13 special claims. One prospector told it that ‘miners experienced great difficulty in obtaining provisions which had to be carried on the back for about three miles’. With government assistance, this track was made.²⁸⁶ One exception to the general encouragement of prospecting was the decision to protect the hot springs and the bush-clad hillsides close to Te Aroha from mining because of the tourist trade. Gavin, as chairman of the domain board, was ‘sure that if Deep Mining is Carried on it will prove Disastrous to our baths and this would be a great loss to the Colony’.²⁸⁷ The warden agreed, and the area was excluded from the goldfield: he would have liked a larger area excluded, but some claims had been granted already.²⁸⁸ Fortunately for lovers of scenery, prospecting did not find anything payable.

²⁸³ *New Zealand Herald*, 19 July 1897, p. 6; *Thames Advertiser*, 9 October 1897, p. 2.

²⁸⁴ *Waikato Argus*, 11 March 1897, p. 2.

²⁸⁵ *Te Aroha Times*, n.d., reprinted in *Thames Advertiser*, 21 September 1896, p. 1.

²⁸⁶ Piako County Council, *Waikato Argus*, 19 December 1896, p. 2, 16 January 1897, p. 2.

²⁸⁷ Thomas Gavin to Minister of Mines, 12 October 1896, Mines Department, MD 1, 97/520, ANZ-W.

²⁸⁸ Warden to Minister of Mines, 3 November 1896; Warden to Under-Secretary, Mines Department, 22 February 1897, and map of area excluded, Mines Department, MD 1, 97/520, ANZ-W.

Wilson's first annual report in his new role of inspecting engineer for the Mines Department revealed that, despite all the talk of a boom in the latter part of 1896, in the 12 months to 31 March 1897 only 60 men had been employed and only 934 tons extracted. These had produced the discouraging result of 376 ounces of gold, worth £986 10s.²⁸⁹ Although 52 claims were registered, 13 between 13 January and 29 March 1897, on most only prospecting was done. The most extensive work was in the Aroha Gold Mines' low level tunnel.²⁹⁰ The warden reported 'very little definite work' done, although recently there was 'much promise of great things. All available land' had been taken up, but 'the highly refractory nature of the ore' hindered progress. The only hopeful developments were Joseph Campbell's process and the Aroha Company's low level.²⁹¹ In March representatives of English capital were still investigating, sending over-optimistic reports to their employers, and promising work would start shortly.²⁹² These promises were to be unfulfilled, and in most claims very few miners were being worked because protection had been granted while capital was sought.²⁹³

As was to be expected, the *Te Aroha News* in March 1897 predicted that 'the brave little community of Waiorongomai' was 'on the eve of experiencing a change from the monotony of undeserved neglect', pinning its hopes this time on the Cadman.²⁹⁴ In contrast, the manager of the local branch of the Bank of New Zealand, who had no vested interest in keeping morale high, in the same month assessed some of the problems facing local and Ohinemuri mining because the market had collapsed. Local capital was becoming exhausted, and calls were unlikely to be paid. The Aroha Company had suspended all work apart from its big tunnel, and although Campbell was said to have floated a couple of companies the manager did not think he had 'prospects of doing any good with them'. Storekeepers who had supported prospectors and syndicates had given 'reckless credit' during the boom and were now 'beginning to feel the pinch and the want of more

²⁸⁹ *AJHR*, 1897, C-3, p. 99.

²⁹⁰ George Wilson to Minister of Mines, 29 June 1897, *AJHR*, 1897, C-3, pp. 98-99.

²⁹¹ R.S. Bush to Under-Secretary, Mines Department, 7 July 1897, *AJHR*, 1897, C-3A, p. 6.

²⁹² See *New Zealand Herald*, 19 March 1897, Supplement, p. 1.

²⁹³ For example, *New Zealand Herald*, 25 January 1897, p. 6, 13 April 1897, p. 5, 14 July 1897, p. 6, 15 September 1897, p. 6.

²⁹⁴ *Te Aroha News*, n.d., reprinted in *Thames Advertiser*, 17 March 1897, p. 1.

capital'.²⁹⁵ In September, he wrote that few mines were at work, and the companies still mining were 'working out the remainder of their small Capital, more to the benefit of the managers than the shareholders'.²⁹⁶ That his assessment was correct was revealed during this year.

In February, 'a large number of miners' were discharged.²⁹⁷ Thomas Radford, a prominent Thames mine manager,²⁹⁸ commented in early March that there was 'not the same briskness' seen 'a month or two earlier'.²⁹⁹ Several areas at Waiorongomai, Tui, and the Mangakino Valley were prospected, with high hopes and a claim that prospects were 'certainly brighter' than at the start of the year.³⁰⁰ Straws were eagerly grasped: when two claims were taken up at Tui, hope was 'reviving in mining circles'.³⁰¹ Visits in the first half of the year by mining experts with links to English capitalists were eagerly noted,³⁰² but nothing came of them. When Campbell announced that he would erect a plant, investors were reported to be, 'figuratively speaking, on the tip toe of hopeful expectation'.³⁰³ A local mining correspondent hoped that 'another opportunity will be given by the English capitalist to thoroughly develop our mines', but he recognised the difficulties:

The careful examination the hill at Waiorongomai is at present undergoing will furnish one more proof of the fact that assays, in ascertaining the value of local properties, are misleading, beyond satisfactorily determining the question of the existence or absence of gold in the class of stone submitted to chemical analysis. Fresh facts brought to light from day to day more and more persuade

²⁹⁵ Bank of New Zealand, Ohinemuri Branch, General Remarks by Manager, Half-Yearly Balance Book to 31 March 1897, Bank of New Zealand Archives, Wellington.

²⁹⁶ Bank of New Zealand, Ohinemuri Branch, General Remarks by Manager, Half-Yearly Balance Book to 30 September 1897, Bank of New Zealand Archives, Wellington.

²⁹⁷ *Thames Advertiser*, 25 February 1897, p. 2.

²⁹⁸ See *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 2, p. 861; *Thames Star*, 15 August 1907, p. 2.

²⁹⁹ *Thames Advertiser*, 10 March 1897, p. 1.

³⁰⁰ Special Reporter, *Thames Star*, 1 May 1897, p. 4.

³⁰¹ *Thames Advertiser*, 17 May 1897, p. 2.

³⁰² *Ohinemuri Gazette*, 27 January 1897, p. 3, 30 January 1897, p. 4, 15 May 1897, p. 4, 22 May 1897, p. 4, 9 June 1897, p. 3; *Thames Advertiser*, 1 March 1897, p. 2, 9 March 1897, p. 3, 1 May 1897, p. 3.

³⁰³ *Thames Advertiser*, 3 June 1897, p. 2.

one to the belief that what is required is a process by which the ore may be chemically treated in bulk.

When that was provided, ore could be treated successfully.³⁰⁴ ‘The enormous variety and complexity’ of the ore was ‘a strong argument’ for ‘the establishment of a school of mines in every mining district in the peninsula’.³⁰⁵

A Thames newspaper wrote in July that mining was ‘very healthy’, with tunnels being driven in the Cadman and the Aroha Company’s ground and steady but small-scale mining continuing in other claims.³⁰⁶ Development in the Cadman was being ‘pushed rapidly ahead’, the option-holders driving to crosscut ‘several of the famous lodes traversing this claim’, and the *Te Aroha News* had ‘not the slightest doubt that the ultimate results of the investigations’ would be ‘of a favorable character’.³⁰⁷ A journalist who visited at the beginning of August detected ‘indications of a revival in mining, caused principally by the confidence which many had that the quartz from the numerous lodes ... would eventually prove payable’. But he noted that the cost of extracting the gold from the refractory ore was too high for mining to be payable, and estimated that only 40 per cent was being saved. He could point to only two mines being developed significantly, the Aroha Company with its low level drive and the Great Western Company, about which there were all the usual assurances (unfulfilled) of promising prospects.³⁰⁸ A mining columnist claimed, later that month, that ‘even dull, prosy old Te Aroha’ was ‘kicking up its heels and importing champagne in preparation for the good time to come’, which, with the champagne as a gloss, was meant seriously, for he claimed that there was ‘confidence and activity throughout’ the Upper Thames.³⁰⁹ The reality was reflected in the absence of any reference to the Te Aroha district in the *Auckland Weekly News*’s review of mining during 1897.³¹⁰

³⁰⁴ ‘Werahiko’, ‘Our Te Aroha Letter’, *New Zealand Mining Standard*, 24 June 1897, p. 4.

³⁰⁵ ‘Werahiko’, ‘Our Te Aroha Letter’, *New Zealand Mining Standard*, 13 May 1897, p. 4.

³⁰⁶ *Thames Advertiser*, 24 July 1897, p. 3.

³⁰⁷ *Te Aroha News*, n.d., reprinted in *Thames Advertiser*, 14 July 1897, p. 3.

³⁰⁸ *New Zealand Herald*, 3 August 1897, p. 6; see also *New Zealand Graphic*, 28 August 1897, p. 299.

³⁰⁹ ‘Obadiah’, ‘Shares and Mining’, *Observer*, 21 August 1897, p. 9.

³¹⁰ *Auckland Weekly News*, 1 January 1898, pp. 26-27.

In January 1898, the *Te Aroha News* reported that several prospectors 'scouring the country at the back of Te Aroha' had found a few good 'dish prospects' but nothing substantial. One abandoned drive was being reworked, and 'some excellent colours were met with' after a few days.³¹¹ Nothing further was heard of these explorations. In February interest switched to claims pegged out 'at the confluence of the Waitawheta and Mangakino Creeks', which were 'the centre of so much attention in the local mining world'. There were the usual 'great hopes' that a reef recently cut would be part of the lode that this party had sought 'so long'.³¹² This was yet another area that never produced anything remotely payable. Late in March the newspaper admitted that mining was 'still in a somewhat dormant state just now', but it expected a revival 'in the near future' because the Aroha Company's big tunnel was still underway, Campbell was soon to treat Tui ore, and 'a few prospectors' were at work.³¹³

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

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

Some people still considered the quartz was payable, the only problem being to find 'a process simple and effective' and profitable. At the moment, only three mines were at work.³¹⁴ In his annual report, the warden noted

³¹¹ *Te Aroha News*, 27 January 1898, p. 2.

³¹² *Te Aroha News*, 12 February 1898, p. 2.

³¹³ *Te Aroha News*, 22 March 1898, p. 2.

³¹⁴ Editorial, *Thames Advertiser*, 2 March 1898, p. 2; *Thames Star*, 2 March 1898, p. 4.

that by 31 March mining was ‘pretty well at a standstill’.³¹⁵ Of 41 leases, covering 2,773 acres,³¹⁶ the only ones at work were the Aroha Gold Mines, Great Western, Loyalty, Grand Result, and Montezuma, the last-named being near Te Aroha.³¹⁷ As a Waiorongomai correspondent wrote in early April, ‘mining here as in many other gold-mining districts’ was ‘very dull’.³¹⁸ This reference to other districts was apposite; miners were leaving the peninsula for mines in the South Island or Australia,³¹⁹ for only Waihi had a boom, and that only in some mines. The Loyalty, previously so well thought of, was now being worked with only two men, in between periods of protection, and though some ore was extracted there was no suitable plant to treat it.³²⁰ Ignoring such realities, the *Te Aroha News*, still hoping that every mine would be successful, insisted that the outlook was ‘distinctly favourable’.³²¹ Two months later, when the Aroha Company ceased work in its low level tunnel and its miners were dismissed, ‘quite a damper’ was placed on Waiorongomai.³²² By November, Newsham was ‘Waiorongomai’s sole prospector’.³²³

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

When Campbell was comin
 Te-a-ro-ha
 The miners were hummin
 Te-a-ro-ha
 Protection was wanted
 Te-a-ro-ha

³¹⁵ R.S. Bush to Under-Secretary, Mines Department, 1 June 1898, *AJHR*, 1898, C-3A, p. 9.

³¹⁶ *AJHR*, 1898, C-3A, p. 85.

³¹⁷ James Coutts (Inspector of Mines) to Under-Secretary, Mines Department, 18 April 1898, *AJHR*, 1898, C-3A, pp. 52-53.

³¹⁸ Waiorongomai Correspondent, *Te Aroha News*, 7 April 1898, p. 2.

³¹⁹ For example, *Observer*, 23 July 1898, p. 4; *Coromandel County News*, 28 January 1899, p. 3.

³²⁰ James Coutts to Under-Secretary, Mines Department, 18 April 1898, *AJHR*, 1898, C-3A, p. 53; *Te Aroha News*, 7 April 1898, p. 2, Warden’s Court, 14 May 1898, p. 2.

³²¹ Editorial, *Te Aroha News*, 28 April 1898, p. 2.

³²² *Thames Advertiser*, 25 June 1898, p. 4.

³²³ *Auckland Weekly News*, 11 November 1898, p. 22.

And sometimes was granted
Te-a-ro-ha.

The Warden is getting
Almighty fly
His knife he is whetting
So mind your eye
The rent must be paid
And the mines fully manned
Or else he will see you
Teetotally Damned
ho-ho-ho.³²⁴

1899

1899 started with news of the discovery of good gold behind the domain,³²⁵ and with a visit from representatives of an English syndicate that revived hopes of new capital.³²⁶ Newsham, naturally, when applying for a subsidy was hopeful of good results.³²⁷ In mid-March, a correspondent noted ‘very little work being done on any of the mines’. He ‘anticipated that should satisfactory arrangements be made by the proprietors of some of the largest and most promising properties operations on a fairly large scale will probably be conducted’.³²⁸ There were sufficient qualifications in that sentence to indicate, correctly, that this was not going to happen. The mining inspector’s report on mining to 31 March stated that it was ‘very quiet’ at Tui and that little work had been done at Waiorongomai before Edwin Henry Hardy³²⁹ took up some of the ground.³³⁰ The warden had ‘little progress’ to report. ‘Several claims have been given up, while some have again been acquired by those who have studied the district for many years past’ and were ‘confident in its ultimate prosperity’. He concluded that, ‘from the present indications on the field, I have little doubt but that the

³²⁴ Anonymous poem, undated, Te Aroha Warden’s Court, General Correspondence, undated, BBAV 11584/7f, ANZ-A.

³²⁵ *Thames Advertiser*, 9 January 1899, p. 4.

³²⁶ *Auckland Weekly News*, 27 January 1899, p. 34.

³²⁷ *New Zealand Mines Record*, 16 February 1899, p. 285.

³²⁸ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Thames Advertiser*, 15 March 1899, p. 2.

³²⁹ See paper on his life.

³³⁰ James Coutts to Under-Secretary, Mines Department, 29 April 1899, *AJHR*, 1899, C-3A, p. 53.

current year will be more prosperous than the last one was'.³³¹ It would certainly reverse a clear trend if this prophecy proved to be correct, for in the year to 31 March, only 15 men had been employed, compared with 184 in the previous 12 months.³³²

Hopes were revived for the prospects of the Loyalty United when Gavin, tributing in it, discovered a good reef in a new intermediate drive.³³³ This find prompted a decision to form a 'small syndicate' to work it, the option from the Paeroa syndicate having lapsed; but news that the ore was refractory would not encourage investors.³³⁴ After two tributes were let in May, the tributers met 'with very fair prospects'.³³⁵ Then silence fell.

Occasional reports were printed of 'exceptionally rich stone' or 'encouraging prospects' being discovered,³³⁶ but in general mining had another quiet year. In August, 'a few hands' were employed in the battery and the principal mines. 'As long as the noise of the stamps is heard, the residents in the neighbourhood appear quite satisfied, as they are confident of something rich being struck ere long'.³³⁷ Rumours continued to circulate that some abandoned claims would be worked once more, although it was admitted that a suitable treatment process had not been discovered.³³⁸ Typical of the hopes was a highly qualified report of possibilities published in late September:

It is stated that an Auckland syndicate propose taking up some properties at Te Aroha for development. The syndicate will probably spend a substantial sum in developing what are believed to be rich, though refractory lodes, that have been found on the properties, and may approach the Rev. J[oseph] Campbell with the object of ascertaining whether the thermo-hyperphoric

³³¹ R.S. Bush to Under-Secretary, Mines Department, 3 July 1899, *AJHR*, 1899, C-3A, pp. 8-9.

³³² *New Zealand Mines Record*, 16 August 1899, p. 9.

³³³ *AJHR*, 1899, C-3A, p. 8; *Thames Star*, 6 February 1899, p. 1; *Thames Advertiser*, 25 March 1899, p. 3; *Ohinemuri Gazette*, 29 March 1899, p. 2; *New Zealand Herald*, 14 April 1899, Supplement, p. 1.

³³⁴ *Auckland Weekly News*, 31 March 1899, p. 35.

³³⁵ *Thames Advertiser*, 22 May 1899, p. 3.

³³⁶ *Ohinemuri Gazette*, 22 April 1899, p. 3; *Thames Advertiser*, 4 September 1899, p. 3, 13 September 1899, p. 2.

³³⁷ *Thames Advertiser*, 16 August 1899, p. 3.

³³⁸ *Auckland Weekly News*, 11 August 1899, p. 10.

process will successfully deal with the refractory quartz. There is also a probability that Southern capital will be introduced into the district, if satisfactory reports are received.³³⁹

All hopes really depended on Hardy's success in developing his ground, with people still dreaming that Waiorongomai would 'eventually prove one of the richest mining districts in New Zealand'.³⁴⁰ As always, capital was required. Wilson wanted the deep levels 'further explored' and new treatment methods, but admitted that 'only by the introduction of capital on a large scale' could the reefs be profitably worked.³⁴¹

SEEKING LOCAL AND CENTRAL GOVERNMENT ASSISTANCE

Yet again, in 1892, when mining was at a particularly low ebb, a government subsidy was seen as a way of reviving the industry. In June, a Te Aroha meeting asked for assistance to drive a low level tunnel.³⁴² When this was declined there was an attempt to form a prospecting association to prospect between Te Aroha and the New Find. Asked what assistance he might give, the Minister of Mines explained that aid would be given for an association formed under the auspices of the town board. The *Te Aroha News* considered the subsidy was

small, but perhaps the Government might be induced to grant more liberal assistance. A prospecting association, however, to be favourably received must be constituted on a thorough business basis, so as to gain the confidence of those whose experience in the past of such associations has been anything but pleasant or profitable. We hope the matter will not be allowed to drop, for unless prospecting is carried on, there can be little hope of new discoveries being made, or of the mining industry in the district progressing.³⁴³

It was not dropped, and at the end of October a meeting, 'convened by the chairman of the Town Board at the request of miners and others',

³³⁹ *New Zealand Herald*, 29 September 1899, Supplement, p. 1.

³⁴⁰ *Auckland Weekly News*, 27 October 1899, p. 20.

³⁴¹ George Wilson to Under-Secretary, Mines Department, 19 October 1899, Mines Department, MD 1, 99/1750, ANZ-W.

³⁴² *Thames Advertiser*, 14 June 1892, p. 2.

³⁴³ *Te Aroha News*, n.d., reprinted in *Thames Advertiser*, 19 September 1892, p. 2.

decided to form such an association, which failed either to obtain a subsidy or to find any gold.³⁴⁴

When visiting Te Aroha in January 1895, the Minister of Mines, Alfred Jerome Cadman, promised to grant the board £50 to enable it to assist prospecting.³⁴⁵ Gavin, its chairman, later informed Cadman that he had organized small syndicates that sent out four prospecting parties, two of which found payable gold; without subsidies, there could be no prospecting.³⁴⁶ Wilson was less enthusiastic about these parties, for several had made no new discoveries.³⁴⁷ Despite this, Cadman continued to support subsidizing prospectors. When in Te Aroha in April 1896, he wanted 'to see more applications for assistance to prospectors' because 'foreign capitalists seemed to want large reefs of low grade ore rather than rich specimens. They wanted quantities so as to warrant them in erecting a large plant and extensive machinery'.³⁴⁸

The boom meant that the main goldfield tracks needed repairing,³⁴⁹ and prompted calls to construct prospecting ones. In June 1895, Gavin told Cadman that one should be formed from the end of the tramway to Waihi to enable prospectors to explore the ranges.³⁵⁰ This was not agreed to, but tenders were called to extend the track partly cut between Tui and Karangahake earlier. There were hopes that the government could be convinced to assist making a prospecting track from the eastern side of the

³⁴⁴ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 5 November 1892, p. 23; H.A. Northcroft to Under-Secretary, Mines Department, 19 May 1893, *AJHR*, 1893, C-3, Appendix 1, p. v.

³⁴⁵ *Te Aroha News*, 23 January 1895, p. 2.

³⁴⁶ Thomas Gavin to A.J. Cadman, 4 March 1895, Mines Department, MD 1, 97/1072, ANZ-W.

³⁴⁷ George Wilson to Under-Secretary, Mines Department, 21 May 1895, *AJHR*, 1895, C-3A, p. 14.

³⁴⁸ *New Zealand Herald*, 8 April 1896, p. 5.

³⁴⁹ For repairs to the main tracks at Waiorongomai, see Piako County Council, Minutes of Meetings of 14 February 1895, 8 August 1895, 12 September 1895, Matamata-Piako District Council Archives, Te Aroha; *Te Aroha News*, 23 January 1895, p. 2, 16 March 1895, p. 2, Piako County Council, 10 August 1895, p. 2, 16 November 1895, p. 2; Piako County Council, *Waikato Times*, 13 August 1895, p. 2.

³⁵⁰ Thomas Gavin to Minister of Mines, 10 June 1895, Mines Department, MD 1, 95/950, ANZ-W.

ranges and through the Waitawheta district to open up the country between Katikati, Waiorongomai, Tui, and Karangahake;³⁵¹ it was not made.

Immediately the Aroha Company ceased work, it was suggested that the government should acquire its tunnel 'for future speculators to finish when capital' was 'more plentiful'.³⁵² Local residents also urged the government to buy the battery to prevent its being sold and removed. One man argued that, if it crushed for the public, 'numbers of men would avail themselves of it and go in for tributing'. At present nobody was mining and assistance was 'badly needed'.³⁵³ James Mills, the first mayor of Te Aroha,³⁵⁴ wanted the government, after purchasing the battery, to appoint a manager who would experiment with methods of treatment, for 'we' knew there were 'many other payable reefs on the Waiorongomai side of the Hill if only the stuff could be treated'.³⁵⁵ The government immediately rejected these suggestions,³⁵⁶ as it continued to ignore prompts to complete the abandoned low level tunnel.³⁵⁷

A LARGE-SCALE SOLUTION PROPOSED

John Watson Walker, earlier a leading Thames mine manager and now a mining agent,³⁵⁸ produced his own solution to the decline of the field. According to the *Observer*, he had

always been one of the optimists whose buoyant spirits have kept hope alive through the dull times on our gold fields. He generally

³⁵¹ Thomas Gavin to Minister of Mines, 10 June 1895; Minister of Mines to Under-Secretary, Mines Department, 22 June 1895, Mines Department, MD 1, 95/950; Town Clerk to Minister of Mines, 15 July 1895; Under-Secretary, Mines Department, to Town Clerk, 23 July 1895, Mines Department, MD 1, 95/1159, ANZ-W; *New Zealand Herald*, 6 June 1895, p. 3; *Te Aroha News*, 4 September 1895, p. 2.

³⁵² *New Zealand Herald*, n.d., reprinted in *Thames Advertiser*, 25 June 1898, p. 4.

³⁵³ J.W. Rennick to A.J. Cadman, 27 July 1898, Mines Department, MD 1A, 8/50, No. 1, ANZ-W.

³⁵⁴ See paper on his life.

³⁵⁵ James Mills to A.J. Cadman, 25 July 1898, Mines Department, MD 1A, 9/50, No. 1, ANZ-W.

³⁵⁶ *New Zealand Mines Record*, 16 September 1898, p. 73.

³⁵⁷ *Te Aroha News*, n.d., reprinted in *Thames Advertiser*, 31 January 1899, p. 2.

³⁵⁸ See paper on his life.

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.³⁵⁹

At a Te Aroha meeting in May 1898, Walker took the opportunity provided by Cadman's presence to urge special legislation for the district because of the difficulties treating the ore. 'A uniform system of mining laws would not suit all districts', and 'the restrictions needful for other parts of the field, such as Thames, were simply oppressive when applied to Te Aroha'.³⁶⁰ By early 1897 he had become the owner of four special claims at Tui and close to Te Aroha with a total area of almost 400 acres.³⁶¹ When applying for these he informed the warden that, as the ore was complex and low grade, large capital would be needed, and he planned to go to England to raise at least £25,000.³⁶² However, his failure to pay rent on time meant that he forfeited all his land in May 1897.³⁶³ In October 1899 he told Cadman that the only way to mine in this district was with 'very large Capital, applied in scientific and practical principles', which could make it 'as prolific, and as promising', as Waihi. He proposed raising 'sufficient capital for its proper development, say from £150,000 to £250,000'. Miners, their union, the local bodies, and residents all supported his application for from 400 to 500 acres of unoccupied ground. Using electric power and the latest rock-drills, he would drive at least three large tunnels, 'entering towards the several ore bodies from different starting points'.³⁶⁴ He had George Wilson's support, but regulations forbade such a large grant.³⁶⁵

³⁵⁹ *Observer*, 26 December 1903, p. 5.

³⁶⁰ *Te Aroha News*, 26 May 1898, p. 2; *Auckland Weekly News*, 28 May 1898, p. 10.

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

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

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

³⁶⁴ J.W. Walker to A.J. Cadman, 6 October 1899, Mines Department, MD 1, 99/1750, ANZ-W.

³⁶⁵ Under-Secretary, Mines Department, to J.W. Walker, 16 October 1899; George Wilson to Under-Secretary, Mines Department, 19 October 1899, Mines Department, MD 1, 99/1750, ANZ-W.

Walker then sought an interview with Cadman, explaining that he wanted the ground held in his name for one year while he tried to float it in London. They did meet in Te Aroha;³⁶⁶ their discussions were not reported, but the outcome was that he did not gain approval, despite his attempts to gain support by getting the endorsement of the council and publicizing his plans.³⁶⁷ He made one last attempt, in December 1900, to obtain Walker's First, Second, and Third Special Quartz Claims, totalling 300 acres between the Tui and Waitawheta Streams, but withdrew his application for unspecified reasons.³⁶⁸ After this failure, Walker tried to obtain several hundred acres, first at Thames and then at Waihi, but in both cases failed to interest English investors.³⁶⁹ In 1903 he obtained almost 700 acres at Waihi.³⁷⁰ His last involvement with Waiorongomai was in 1910, when he made an unsuccessful attempt to float a company to work a large area at the northern end of the field.³⁷¹

CONCLUSION

In 1899 an Auckland newspaper complained that British ones were unfairly critical of Hauraki mines. 'Te Aroha has been described as a worthless district, containing only properties containing quartz so refractory as to defy all attempts at successful treatment'.³⁷² In the previous year, the *Te Aroha News*, in assessing the collapse of so many Hauraki mines, stressed that, 'as Te Aroha and Waiorongomai learnt to their bitter

³⁶⁶ J.W. Walker to A.J. Cadman, 30 October 1899; Under-Secretary, Mines Department, to J.W. Walker, 6 November 1899, Mines Department, MD 1, 99/1750, ANZ-W.

³⁶⁷ See *Thames Advertiser*, 24 October 1899, p. 2; Piako County Council, *Waikato Argus*, 24 October 1899, p. 4; *New Zealand Mines Record*, 16 October 1899, p. 119, 16 November 1899, p. 161.

³⁶⁸ Te Aroha Warden's Court, Mining Applications 1901, 10-12/1901, BBAV 11582/4b, ANZ-A.

³⁶⁹ For Thames, see *Thames Star*, 23 May 1901, p. 4, 22 June 1901, p. 4, 26 May 1901, p. 3, 25 July 1901, p. 2, 9 August 1901, p. 2, 30 October 1901, p. 3, 17 June 1902, p. 2; for Waihi, see *Observer*, 8 August 1903, p. 20, 26 December 1903, p. 5, 12 November 1904, p. 4, 27 May 1905, p. 5, 13 October 1906, p. 20.

³⁷⁰ 'Obadiah', 'Shares and Mining', *Observer*, 8 August 1903, p. 20; *Thames Star*, 22 October 1903, p. 4; *New Zealand Mines Record*, 16 October 1903, p. 115.

³⁷¹ Warden's Court, *Te Aroha News*, 24 March 1910, p. 2.

³⁷² *Auckland Weekly News*, 6 October 1899, p. 19.

cost, when they woke up after their delirium', mining collapsed because cyanide failed as a 'universal application in the recovery of gold', and new processes were needed for the 'ultra-refractory' ore not amenable to existing treatments.³⁷³ Joseph Campbell had made his appearance by the end of the decade, and Edwin Henry Hardy and John Watson Walker were producing their large-scale plans. But the quality of the ore was mostly to blame for the failures, and after a decade of hopes being dashed the field would continue to decline in the following century, when it would be almost entirely abandoned.

Appendix

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

Figure 2:

C.P. Winklemann, 'The Waiorongomai Mine.

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

'WAIORONGOMAI MINES.

This week we give an admirable series of views of the works proceeding at the Waiorongomai mines, which have recently been acquired by an English Company. No. 1 is a general view of the Waiorongomai battery, which is a very complete plant, while No. 2 shows the stampers used for crushing the ore as it arrives by the various tramways from the mines. The Waiorongomai tramway is one of the features of the district, having been constructed at a great expense some years ago. In No. 3 view a good idea may be got of the natural difficulties that have been overcome by good engineering. The incline is so steep that at first sight it appears almost perpendicular. Down this the truck loaded with ore runs down to the battery, and in doing so pulls up the returning empty one, a loop line being, of course, provided where

³⁷³ Editorial, *Te Aroha News*, 10 May 1898, p. 2.

the cars meet. No. 4 is another view looking upwards at No. 2 incline. Here are seen the trucks passing each other. In No. 5 view is shown the level on the top of the range above No. 2 incline. From this level still a third incline rises still higher up the ranges. Of course for a large crushing plant like that at Waiorongomai a copious water supply is a necessity. That at Waiorongomai has been brought a considerable distance. In No. 6 view is shown the terminus of the water race from which a 20-inch pipe conveys the water to the battery, where it is used to drive a large Pelton wheel which supplies the power to keep the stampers going’.

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

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

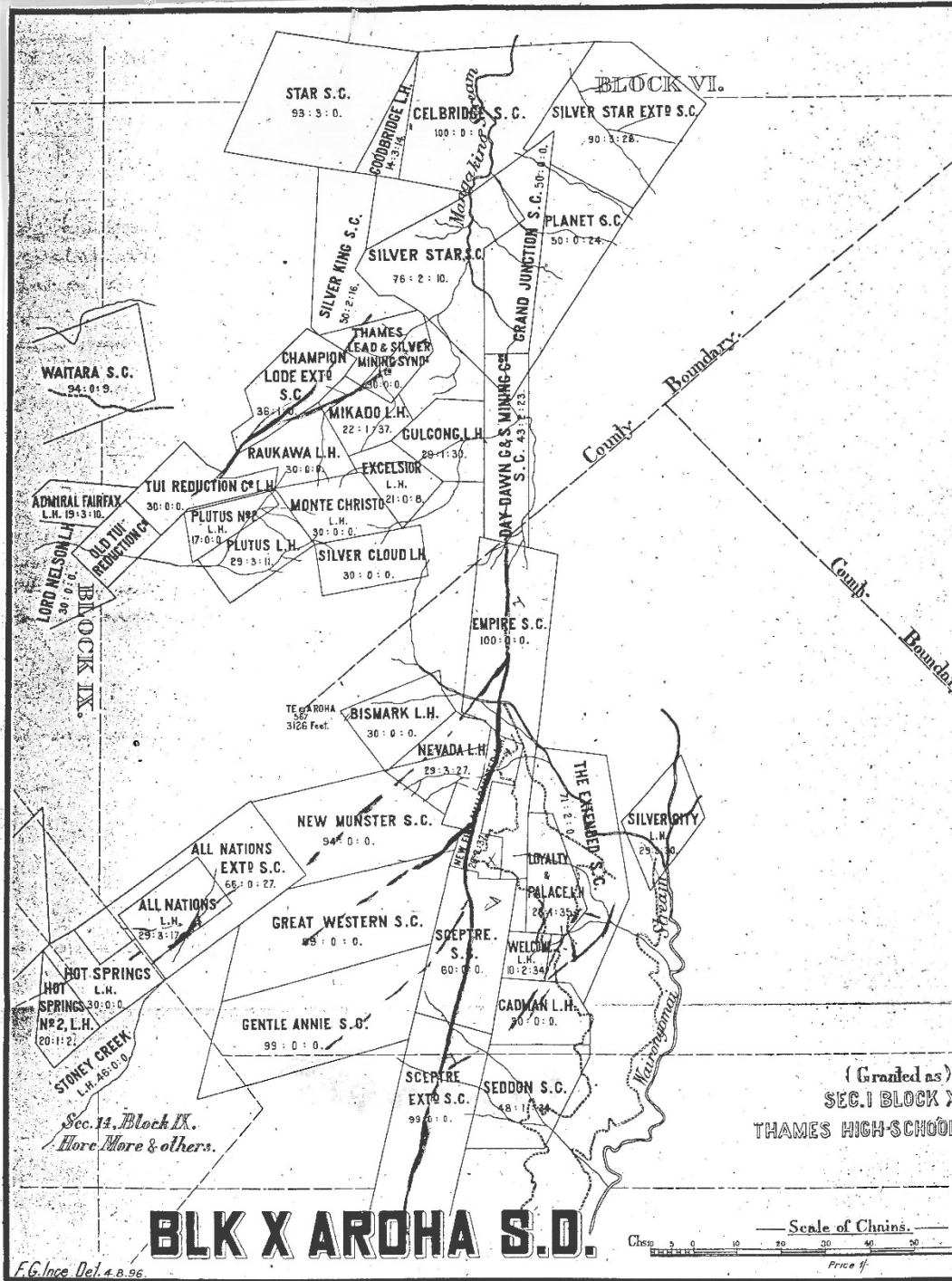


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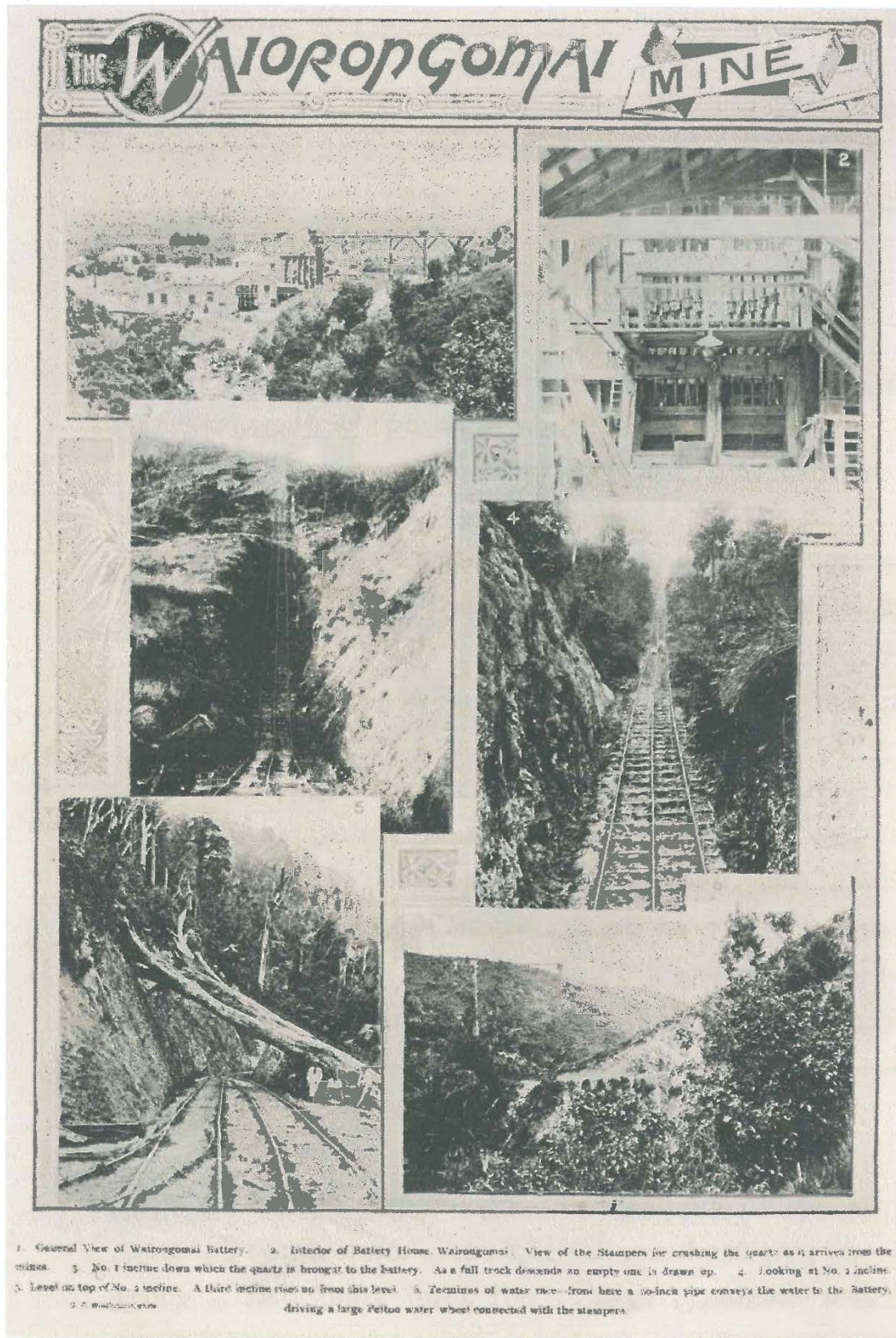


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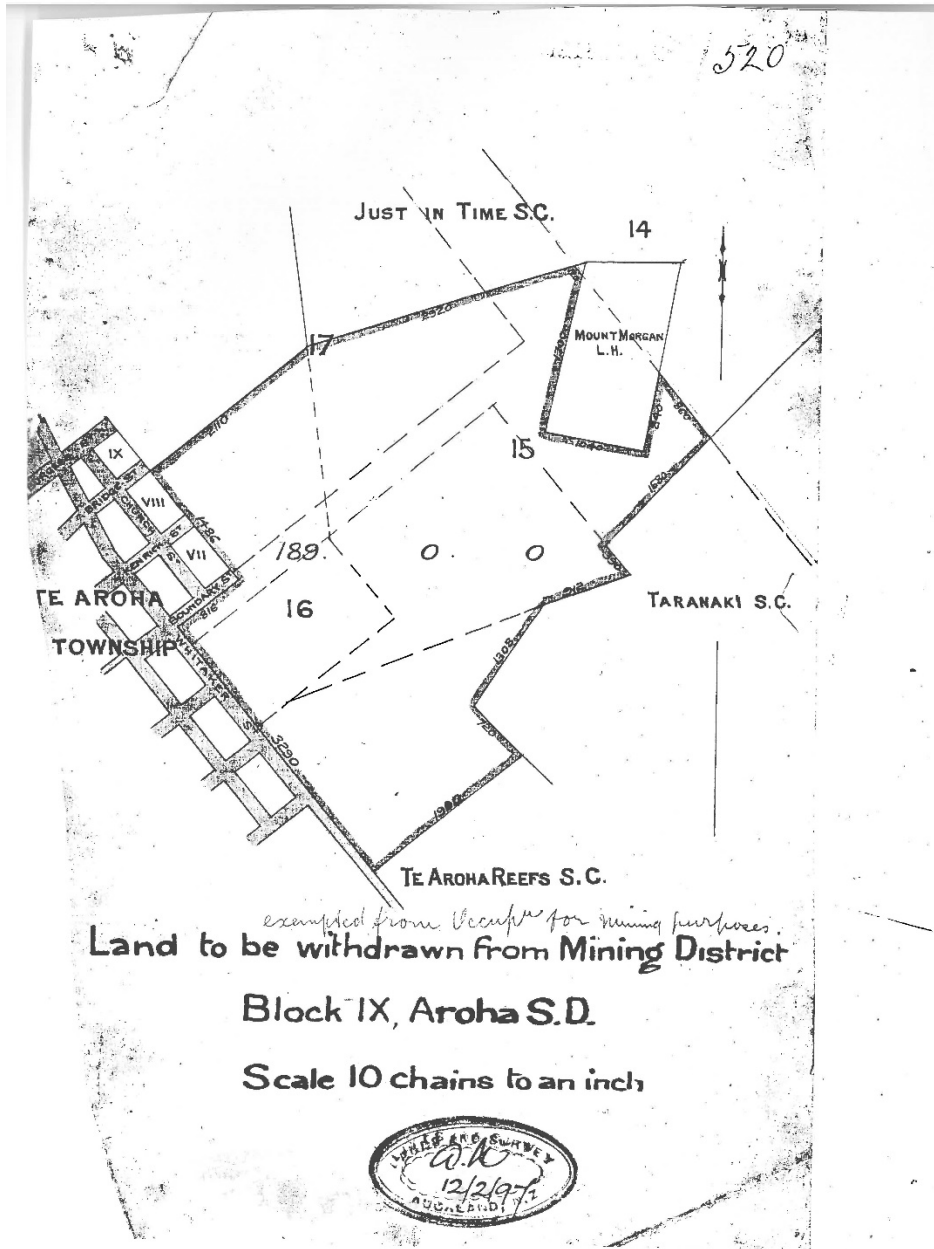


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