

ADAM PORTER: A MINER WHO BECAME A 'SELF-MADE MAN'

Philip Hart

Te Aroha Mining District Working Papers

No. 62

2016

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

ISSN: 2463-6266

© 2016 Philip Hart

Contact: prhart1940@gmail.com



THE UNIVERSITY OF
WAIKATO
Te Whare Wānanga o Waikato

ADAM PORTER: A MINER WHO BECAME A ‘SELF-MADE MAN’

Abstract: *Adam Porter won the accolade of being a ‘self-made man’ because of rising from humble beginnings in Scotland. After arriving in New Zealand, aged 12, and working hard for some years, he joined the South Island gold rushes from 1861 onwards, sometimes as a miner and sometimes as an investor, storekeeper and publican. Even as a young man he was involved in local politics. After settling at Thames after the goldfield opened there, he concentrated on prospecting in Ohinemuri and in promoting the interests of the mining industry generally. From 1875 onwards he would be a director of many mining companies, and would encourage the prospecting of new districts, especially in his capacity as an Ohinemuri representative on the county council. Amongst his many policies designed to benefit the community was the promotion of education, including secondary education. By the late 1870s he was based in Auckland.*

From 1878 onwards he claimed to know that gold was to be found at Te Aroha, and urged the government to acquire Maori land there for Pakeha farmers and prospectors. In mid-1880 he arranged for a government-subsidized prospecting party to examine the mountain under the leadership of Hone Werahiko, and liaised with both the warden and the government on the latter’s behalf, on occasions implying that he had shared in the discovery of gold. He may have tried to obtain control over the new find, but despite this he remained Werahiko’s agent and would be the executor of his estate. As well as investing in the Te Aroha and Waiorongomai fields, he was involved in the development of mines throughout Hauraki in the 1880s.

Over time he took an increasingly leading role in promoting the mining industry, as for example a member of the Thames Drainage Board and of the Auckland Chamber of Commerce. For many years he attempted to obtain government assistance for mining, and was also interested in new mining technology. In his last years he was a leading member of the Auckland business community, investing in non-mining ventures and being a good employer (though critics disagreed). He also became involved in local government issues and the temperance movement before speaking his mind on national issues, finally standing for parliament as an independent-minded supporter of his old friend from his West Coast days, Richard John Seddon.

Harsh working conditions on the West Coast led to poor health and an early death. He left his family a comfortably legacy, and was remembered as having a genial, kindly, and witty personality but also having a good sense of his own importance. He seized opportunities, sometimes in a manner that offended others, but tried to benefit not only himself but also the wider community.

HIS REPUTATION

A photograph of Adam Alexander Porter published in the diamond jubilee souvenir of the Thames goldfield was captioned ‘Mining Expert’.¹ When he died on 18 August 1894, his death certificate gave his occupation as ‘gentleman’.² The obituaries were kind, the *Observer* stating that his life ‘would work up into a good novel’.³ He had no enemies. In his life he ‘played many parts, and in the end he amassed a competence by the sweat of his brow and the weariness of his bones. He was essentially a “self-made” man, but ... assumed no “frills” on account thereof, and was not ashamed of his humble beginnings.’⁴ In 1881 it declared that his career revealed ‘what may be done in New Zealand by industry and perseverance, unaided either by talent, genius, or education’.⁵ The *Auckland Star* saw him as being ‘essentially a self-made man, who by using a natural ability with unusual perseverance, steadily climbed step by step up to a position of competence and influence’.⁶ The *New Zealand Herald* described his career as ‘a chequered and adventurous one, illustrating the vicissitudes of colonial life’, and agreed that he was ‘essentially a self-made man, and owed all he had to his determination, natural ability, and shrewdness’.⁷

EARLY LIFE

¹ Fred. W. Weston, *Diamond Jubilee Souvenir: Thames goldfields: A history from pre-proclamation times to 1927* (Thames, 1927), p. 181.

² Death Certificate of Adam Alexander Porter, 18 August 1894, 1894/540, BDM.

³ *Observer*, 25 August 1894, p. 6.

⁴ *Observer*, 25 August 1894, p. 10.

⁵ *Observer*, 12 February 1881, p. 217.

⁶ *Auckland Star*, 18 August 1894, p. 5.

⁷ *New Zealand Herald*, 20 August 1894, p. 5.

Porter was born in Glasgow to Robert Porter, a carpet weaver, and Ann Jane, née Geddes, in 1844.⁸ Being proud of his Scottish birth, a few years before his death he boasted ‘that he never was in England for more than five minutes’.⁹ After being orphaned ‘at an early age he was reared through childhood by an aunt’, and came to Auckland ‘to try and make a way for himself’.¹⁰ Neither the number of his siblings nor the date of his becoming an orphan is known, but in 1851, when aged seven, he and his brother Robert, aged 14, were living with a cousin, Ann Geddes.¹¹ Another brother, George, also left Scotland to seek his fortune; in 1880 he was a leader of the Republican Party in Indiana.¹²

At the time of his death, in 1894, Porter had lived for about 37 years in New Zealand,¹³ making the year of his arrival 1857, when aged 12, the age given in one obituary.¹⁴ In 1886, when he signed the address presented to Sir George Grey on his 74th birthday, he gave the year as 1855.¹⁵ The *Auckland Star* wrote that his ‘subsequent conduct’ proved him to be ‘the proper type of lad to make a good colonist’.¹⁶ In 1881 the *Observer* reported that ‘some twenty years ago’ Matthew Whytlaw¹⁷ brought out from Scotland a few lads - the waifs and strays of the streets - to work in a flax mill’.¹⁸ An obituary stated that Porter ‘first got employment at Mr Mellin’s farm, Matakana’,¹⁹ north of Auckland, probably cutting flax for Whytlaw.²⁰

⁸ Marriage Certificate of Adam Alexander Porter, 13 December 1881, 1881/2397, BDM; British Census of 1851, ancestry.co.uk.

⁹ *Observer*, 6 December 1890, p. 9.

¹⁰ *Auckland Star*, 18 August 1894, p. 5.

¹¹ British Census of 1851, ancestry.co.uk.

¹² *Thames Star*, 20 October 1880, p. 2.

¹³ Death Certificate of Adam Alexander Porter, 18 August 1894, 1894/540, BDM.

¹⁴ *New Zealand Herald*, 20 August 1894, p. 5.

¹⁵ ‘Addresses Presented to Sir George Grey on his 74th Birthday, 14 April 1886, by European and Maori Residents of Auckland Province’, p. 184, Grey New Zealand MS 275, Auckland Public Library.

¹⁶ *Auckland Star*, 18 August 1894, p. 5.

¹⁷ Printed as Whitelaw.

¹⁸ *Observer*, 12 February 1881, p. 217; reprinted in *Thames Advertiser*, 14 February 1881, p. 2.

¹⁹ *Auckland Star*, 18 August 1894, p. 5.

²⁰ *Tribune*, 6 December 1890, p. 1.

Another obituary stated that immediately upon arrival he worked at Whytlaw and Company's flaxmill.²¹

Whytlaw, who arrived in New Zealand in 1843 and at first had a manganese mine near Whangarei,²² became a pioneer of the flax industry and invented a flax-dressing machine.²³ His mill was erected at Matakana in 1854.²⁴ Whytlaw worked for nearly a decade in this industry, forming a company and bringing 'workers of all descriptions' from Britain, working 'like a slave' and spending 'about £20,000', unsuccessfully.²⁵ After his mill failed, Whytlaw attempted to be a partner in a sawmill at Wangaroa, without having any capital or knowledge of the timber industry.²⁶ In 1864, when he became bankrupt, his estate included 'the remains of a flax dressing machine, of no value'.²⁷ After working for about three years for Whytlaw, after the flaxmill failed Porter and other 'lads' employed in it

were cast adrift to do the best they could, and one of them applied for employment to a poor but very deserving woman, who then kept a shop in High-street, [Auckland]. He was a gaunt, raw-boned youth of about fifteen years, as rough and as dour as one of his native hills. She gave him a "shake-down" in the shop and a bite of food; to do more was beyond her power. But she soon procured him better aid. "Look here, now sir," she said, to a lawyer long since dead, and whose office was opposite her shop - a most kind-hearted, impressionable man - "Take this lad home with you and find him work; I know you can; he wants good food and more than I can give him." The gentleman took him home without any more words, and showed him first to his gardener, a splendid looking Irishman, who eyed him from top to toe with supercilious amazement. "And sure, sir, what would the likes of him be fit for?" "Put him to weed the strawberries," was the reply, which elicited a disdainful growl. He was then taken to the large and comfortable kitchen - which must have seemed to the boy's

²¹ *New Zealand Herald*, 20 August 1894, p. 5.

²² *Daily Southern Cross*, 3 February 1844, p. 3.

²³ *Daily Southern Cross*, 10 June 1851 p. 3, advertisement, 25 November 1858, p. 4, letter from 'Colonist', 19 July 1867, p. 4, 24 March 1870, p. 4.

²⁴ *Daily Southern Cross*, 24 March 1870, p. 4; *New Zealand Herald*, 15 November 1893, p. 6.

²⁵ Letter from James Robertson, *Daily Southern Cross*, 4 July 1867, p. 4.

²⁶ *Daily Southern Cross*, 22 July 1864, p. 5, letter from Matthew Whytlaw, 23 July 1864, p. 5, Supreme Court, 27 August 1864, p. 5.

²⁷ Supreme Court, *Daily Southern Cross*, 27 August 1864, p. 5.

eyes a haven of peace and plenty - where a “smart” servant (and smart servants knew their value in those days) went into fits of horror and indignation. At last she asked him his name. “Adam,” said the boy, and the young lady immediately went into shrieks of ringing laughter. “Adam! you might as well have said Methuselah; there, sit down.” The lad sat down, and soon made his mark in the establishment. He was honest, civil, and hard-working; he grew and got sleek on the good food; he became neat and clean, and brought out his copy-book and worked his sums of an evening in the kitchen. Like a canny Scotchman, he saved his wages, and at the end of two years he had a few pounds in the bank.²⁸

‘To the day of his death’ he ‘gave pecuniary assistance to two old ladies who had won his gratitude by helping him in the “hard-up” days of his youth’.²⁹ An obituary noted that he ‘never forgot those who befriended him in his early days of roughing it’. Later he was a gardener in Remuera, ‘never being idle and always putting his hand to whatever came first’.³⁰ Another obituary specified that he had gardened ‘for the late Mr George (Hughes and George)’ of Remuera.³¹ Hughes and George was a firm of solicitors.³²

His youthful gardening led to a life-long enthusiasm for horticulture. In 1873 he was elected to the committee of the newly formed Thames Horticultural Society and helped organize its first exhibition, judging fruit, flowers, and vegetables.³³ Later, when living at Owharoa, he grew vegetables.³⁴ He became ‘passionately fond of horticulture, and the public parks and the private gardens’ of Aucklanders were ‘enriched by rare bulbs, plants, and seeds, through his generosity’.³⁵ One obituary dated his ‘passion for horticulture’ to his ‘latter years’, when he ‘imported at considerable expense many rare bulbs and plants and seeds, which besides growing

²⁸ *Observer*, 12 February 1881, p. 217; reprinted in *Thames Advertiser*, 14 February 1881, p. 2.

²⁹ *Observer*, 25 August 1894, p. 10.

³⁰ *New Zealand Herald*, 20 August 1894, p. 5.

³¹ *Auckland Star*, 18 August 1894, p. 5.

³² See *New Zealand Herald*, 21 June 1876, p. 2, advertisement, 7 October 1876, p. 1.

³³ *Thames Advertiser*, 14 January 1873, p. 2, 21 November 1873, p. 2, 9 December 1873, p.

³⁴ *Thames Star*, 17 February 1880, p. 2; *Thames Advertiser*, 16 July 1881, p. 3.

³⁵ *New Zealand Herald*, 20 August 1894, p. 5.

himself he was ever ready to distribute round free of cost to his many friends'.³⁶

GOLD MINING IN THE SOUTH ISLAND

The *Observer's* 1881 account of his life only briefly mentioned his involvement with South Island mining. When the

goldfield fury broke out at Dunedin and the West Coast, Adam thought he would go "to better himself," he said; and the good master, in whose home he had grown and thriven did not oppose him. He went and did well. From one goldfield to another he departed, sometimes making money, sometimes losing it, but always on the whole thriving.³⁷

He arrived at Dunedin on his way to the rush at Gabriel's Gully in September 1861.³⁸ After working there 'for some time', he 'followed the fortunes of the various goldfields' throughout New Zealand. 'In 1865 he walked overland to the West Coast, and at one time was gold-buyer at Greymouth for the Bank of New Zealand. He had some narrow escapes in the course of his duty of falling a victim to the bushranging gang of Burgess, Kelly, Sullivan, and Levy'.³⁹ When this gang operated, in 1866,⁴⁰ 'a gold buyers life was not worth much if he came their way'. He carried the gold 'on a pack animal, and ride another animal himself. On one occasion, he did encounter the gang of murderers, but as they were in front, he, by dashing through at full gallop succeeded in escaping. Next day a surveyor named Dobson was found murdered'.⁴¹ At the end of August that year, his store at Westport was 'robbed of 33oz of gold'.⁴²

³⁶ *Auckland Star*, 18 August 1894, p. 5.

³⁷ *Observer*, 12 February 1881, p. 217; reprinted in *Thames Advertiser*, 14 February 1881, p. 2.

³⁸ See Porter's speeches in *Thames Advertiser*, 7 March 1877, p. 3, *New Zealand Herald*, 15 November 1893, p. 6.

³⁹ *New Zealand Herald*, 20 August 1894, p. 5.

⁴⁰ See Philip Ross May, *The West Coast Gold Rushes* (Christchurch, 1962), p. 298.

⁴¹ *Auckland Star*, 18 August 1894, p. 5.

⁴² *Grey River Argus*, 15 September 1866, p. 3.

At an untraced date he became a shopkeeper on the Grey River, until Fox's rush, 'when he sold out'.⁴³ He 'built and occupied the Empire Hotel' at Westport, which he 'conducted for some time';⁴⁴ this may have been the 'substantial two-storeyed building' he erected in late 1866.⁴⁵ He was living there in September 1867, when his ownership of a quarter and then a tenth of the interests in the Argyle Quartz Mining Company was recorded.⁴⁶ The Bank of New Zealand recorded him as being a publican there in that year, with a 'bad debt' to it of £135 1s 3d.⁴⁷ According to the *Observer*, as a farmer and storekeeper he 'worked hard at each calling, and didn't do so badly either. He made his money' during the 'lively times' there that 'made a man of Porter'.⁴⁸

There is no record in provincial and central government official publications of any shareholdings in Otago mining,⁴⁹ and after 1867 his only investment on the West Coast was in 1881, with 100 of the 30,000 shares in the Ross Company.⁵⁰

Porter later claimed to have carried 'into effect in Westland' in 1866 a land tax on the unimproved value.⁵¹ This statement cannot be confirmed, but seems unlikely, if for no other reason than his youth. In late April 1869, when Westport citizens campaigned for separation from the Nelson Provincial Government, Porter was asked to collect signatures in the Lyell and Inangahua districts.⁵² He 'obtained between 400 and 500 signatures in the Upper Buller and Lyell districts'.⁵³ At the Napoleon diggings, when 'asked if he was prepared to propose a resolution in support of the memorial

⁴³ *Auckland Star*, 18 August 1894, p. 5.

⁴⁴ *New Zealand Herald*, 20 August 1894, p. 5; *Auckland Star*, 18 August 1894, p. 5.

⁴⁵ *Grey River Argus*, 15 September 1866, p. 3.

⁴⁶ *Nelson Provincial Government Gazette*, 18 September 1867, p. 169; *New Zealand Gazette*, 27 September 1867, p. 357.

⁴⁷ Bank of New Zealand, Inspector's Office, Bad Debt Ledger 1865-1879, folio 218, Bank of New Zealand Archives, Wellington.

⁴⁸ *Observer*, 25 August 1894, p. 10.

⁴⁹ *New Zealand Government Gazette, Province of Canterbury*, 1862-1869; *Otago Provincial Government Gazette*, 1862-1866; *New Zealand Gazette*, 1862-1869.

⁵⁰ *New Zealand Gazette*, 17 February 1881, p. 240.

⁵¹ *New Zealand Herald*, 2 December 1890, p. 6.

⁵² *Grey River Argus*, 4 May 1869, p. 2.

⁵³ *Grey River Argus*, 27 April 1869, p. 2.

with which he was entrusted', he declined.⁵⁴ A correspondent reported that the rumour 'that the Buller people' were endeavouring to create a new county was at first disbelieved, 'but to the astonishment of the Napoleon people a man named Adam Porter, *alias* "The Maori," actually appeared with a petition requesting signatures', an act of 'audacious coolness' that failed.

Suffice at present to say that we are perfectly satisfied with our present rulers, and are determined not to be humbugged into a forced partnership with the Buller, where the profit would be all on one side. I heard that Porter asserted that he had obtained many hundred signatures from the miners in their tents. Of course a few ignorant individuals there always will be, who, not knowing right from wrong, would sign almost anything, but if he possesses any number from the Grey River, I openly assert that the names could only be obtained by inserting fictitious ones. As a proof of how he was received he did not dare to open the petition at the two chief business centres up the river, the old and new Ahaura, and entirely shirked the question when mooted at the latter place, to which I was an eyewitness myself.⁵⁵

It is not known when or why Porter acquired the nickname 'The Maori'.

During his West Coast years he became friendly with Richard John Seddon, in 1891 being described as 'one of the closest friends of the Hon "Dick" Seddon during a long term of years. They were mining "chums" on the West Coast in the good old days'.⁵⁶ When recommending changes to the Mining Bill in that year, he addressed a letter to 'Dear Seddon'.⁵⁷ Upon hearing of what was to be his final illness, Seddon 'sent up a kindly telegram, expressing regret at hearing of the illness of his old friend, trusting that it would not be serious, and desiring to be informed how Mr Porter progressed'. After his death, Seddon telegraphed to Porter's widow that he was 'sorry indeed to hear of your very sad bereavement, and

⁵⁴ *Grey River Argus*, 4 May 1869, p. 2.

⁵⁵ Ahaura Correspondent, *Grey River Argus*, 11 May 1869, p. 3.

⁵⁶ *Observer*, 16 May 1891, p. 7.

⁵⁷ Adam Porter to 'Dear Seddon' [Richard John Seddon], 24 July 1891, Mines Department, MD 1, 91/773, ANZ-W.

personally am deeply grieved at losing a kind and good friend'. To Porter's brother-in-law, he telegraphed: 'I have lost a valued and kind friend'.⁵⁸

Porter 'bought his gold dearly', for 'his hardships at the West Coast' caused health problems that would kill him at the age of 49.⁵⁹ He had contracted bronchial asthma 'while working on the Hokitika gold diggings, in the construction of a water flume to a gold mine'.⁶⁰ 'He and some others were sometimes up to their necks in water' when constructing it, which 'probably laid the seeds of the complaint which eventually carried him off'.⁶¹

MINING IN HAURAKI BEFORE 1875

Having sold his hotel, he arrived at Thames in 'about 1868'.⁶² He moved to Thames permanently two years later, after returning to the West Coast for a time in 1869.⁶³ According to his 1875 statement, he 'arrived in Ohinemuri in 1868'.⁶⁴ He was first recorded as being in Thames in July 1869, when he chaired the meeting of shareholders in the Pride of Karaka that resolved to form a company.⁶⁵ His first miner's right was dated 21 September that year.⁶⁶ In 1875 he gave his occupation as miner,⁶⁷ and two years later stated that of his 16 years experience of mining, 'none' had been at Thames, but he had mined in Ohinemuri.⁶⁸ In 1869, when shown samples of gold taken from Karangahake, he 'did not know where Karangahake was, but a few months after, when I returned, I found a place surveyed'. Another prospector 'told me where the place was, and where I was to peg out. I tried to act up to his instructions'.⁶⁹ As Ohinemuri was

⁵⁸ *New Zealand Herald*, 20 August 1894, p. 5.

⁵⁹ *Observer*, 25 August 1894, p. 10.

⁶⁰ *New Zealand Herald*, 20 August 1894, p. 5.

⁶¹ *Auckland Star*, 18 August 1894, p. 5.

⁶² *Auckland Star*, 18 August 1894, p. 5.

⁶³ *Thames Advertiser*, 15 March 1875, p. 3; Thames Warden's Court, Register of Miners' Rights 1868-1869, no. 7260, issued 21 September 1869, BACL 14358/3a, ANZ-A.

⁶⁴ *Thames Advertiser*, 15 March 1875, p. 3.

⁶⁵ *Auckland Weekly News*, 31 July 1869, p. 10.

⁶⁶ Thames Warden's Court, Register of Miners' Rights 1868-1869, no. 7260, BACL 14358/3a, ANZ-A.

⁶⁷ *AJHR*, 1875, I-3, p. 14.

⁶⁸ *Thames Advertiser*, 7 March 1877, p. 3.

⁶⁹ *Thames Advertiser*, 15 March 1875, p. 3.

closed until 1875, any prospecting was illegal, and he could neither register a claim nor commence mining.

In August 1870, he seconded the nomination of a candidate for the Auckland Provincial Council who had obtained a reduction in gold duty and, Porter hoped, would be able to reduce the cost of miners' rights.⁷⁰ In 1873 and 1874 he lived at Puriri,⁷¹ to the south of Thames, and may have resided there earlier, using it as a base for prospecting Ohinemuri. In April 1873, in seconding a motion at a miners' meeting that Ohinemuri be opened, he stated that he had been prospecting there 'and had seen several reefs, but whether they were payable remained to be proved'. After outlining the inter-tribal rivalries there, he claimed the district could have been opened more easily four years previously.⁷² In 1874, he was one of those who visited Paeroa hoping the district would soon be opened.⁷³ According to one obituary, 'along with the late Hone Werahiko⁷⁴ he prospected Ohinemuri and Te Aroha in advance of these fields being officially opened'.⁷⁵ Amongst the five Maori who were partners with Porter and three other Pakeha in the No. 1 South claim at Karangahake in early 1875 was one named Hone or Hona,⁷⁶ who may have been Hone Werahiko.

THE OHINEMURI RUSH

At a miners' meeting in mid-February 1875 about the impending opening of Ohinemuri, Porter raised the issue of prospecting claims earlier applied for because he knew several men seeking the same ground.⁷⁷ Appointed to a delegation of three miners to discuss the opening with Donald McLean, the Native Minister, they came to what he considered to be satisfactory arrangements.⁷⁸ On opening day, 3 March, he was one of the

⁷⁰ *Thames Advertiser*, 24 August 1870, p. 3.

⁷¹ Thames Electoral Roll, August 1873-September 1874, Auckland Provincial Government Papers, ACFL 8170, 3015/73, ANZ-A.

⁷² *Thames Advertiser*, 2 April 1873, p. 3.

⁷³ *Thames Advertiser*, 15 September 1874, p. 2.

⁷⁴ See paper on his life.

⁷⁵ *New Zealand Herald*, 20 August 1894, p. 5.

⁷⁶ Thames Warden's Court, Notes, Ohinemuri 1875-1877, hearing of 7 April 1875, BACL 14566/1a, ANZ-A.

⁷⁷ *Thames Advertiser*, 20 February 1875, p. 3.

⁷⁸ *Auckland Weekly News*, 27 February 1875, p. 9; *AJHR*, 1875, I-3, p. 14.

first to obtain a miner's right and was the first horseman to reach Karangahake carrying rights for himself and his mates.⁷⁹

After the rush he became prominent in a controversy over the illegal issue of miners' rights. In July, he signed a petition to parliament,⁸⁰ and three months later two petitions from him were presented to the select committee considering the allegations.⁸¹ Giving evidence on behalf of his party, he summarized the meeting with McLean and officials in February, which had agreed that, because of the possibility of two or three thousand applications, money for miners' rights would be received the day before the opening and names recorded on them in readiness for issuing when the field was proclaimed:

When on board the steamer, I myself, in conjunction with others, put a question to Sir Donald McLean, if, after paying the money for our rights, we could go on the ground, peg out, and get our rights afterwards. Sir Donald McLean said that, in his opinion, we could not do that, as we had no business there until in actual possession of our rights.... We went away with that impression, and the question then was, who could get first on the ground. On the evening previous to the opening, I was the first that paid money into the Warden's office for rights. Myself and C[harles] F[eatherstone] Mitchell⁸² went in together. I paid for sixteen or eighteen rights, and Mr Mitchell paid for thirty. We got tickets representing the money we paid in. On the Wednesday morning, the 3rd of March, I got a horse - everybody seemed to be getting horses. I got a horse belonging to Te Kepa [Raharuhi], of the Ngatikoe,⁸³ which was supposed to be as good as any. When we got the rights, some ten or twelve started at once for Karangahake. I managed to get there first, but when I got there the very first words told me were that I was too late. Some said, "We have had our rights here this hour." The ground that I intended to peg off had been pegged off; I found there were four other parties who claimed possession. Three of those parties claimed possession by having prior rights on the ground. These parties afterwards registered one as "The Golden Hill." I myself registered as "No. 1 South."

⁷⁹ *Thames Advertiser*, 4 March 1875, p. 3, 9 April 1875, p. 3.

⁸⁰ *Thames Advertiser*, 29 July 1875, p. 2.

⁸¹ *Thames Advertiser*, 6 October 1875, p. 3, 13 October 1875, p. 3; 'Ohinemuri Miners' Rights Inquiries Committee (Report of, Together with Evidence and Appendix)', *AJHR*, 1875, I-3, p. 2.

⁸² See paper on the Thames Miners' Union.

⁸³ See *Ohinemuri Gazette*, 13 July 1903, p. 2.

After he obtained advice in Auckland, legal action led to an amalgamation of interests and the formation of the Mazeppa Company, in which Porter and his party received half the interest because they provided half of its ground.⁸⁴ When it was registered, he had 750 of the 10,000 scrip shares and was a director,⁸⁵ the first time he became one.

I may say that it is my own opinion that if these rights had not been issued we should have had no lawsuit regarding the ground, because no one, I think, disputes that I was the first that arrived on the ground. From the place where the rights were issued to the Karangahake Spur is a distance of a mile and a half or two miles, and on the whole length of the road there were miners, two or three hundred probably, and I could not be lost sight of until I got to the Karangahake Hill, and when I arrived at the foot of the hill, that I was the first that had arrived. It was impossible for any person to pass me, as there was only one road, and that a very narrow one.

Asked whether there was a short cut, he replied that there was not:

The only short cut was one I made myself. I have known Ohinemuri for some years, and the reason I made such a rush was that Thorp⁸⁶ and party had put in an application for a prospecting claim some years previous. They told me where the ground was, and I arranged not to interfere with their application for a prospecting claim, but agreed to peg out alongside of them. Three days previous I went over the ground with one of the Natives, who showed me where they intended to claim as a prospecting claim. I then took my mates on the ground and showed them where, in my opinion, they ought to peg out. On the Tuesday previous to the opening, a surveyor went up and surveyed what was to be the Prospector's Claim, and I believe were stopped by some of the parties claiming the ground. The decision was not then given who was to have the prospecting

⁸⁴ *AJHR*, 1875, I-3, p. 14.

⁸⁵ *New Zealand Gazette*, 13 May 1875, p. 329, 19 August 1875, p. 571.

⁸⁶ Alfred Joshua Thorp, a surveyor and farmer in Ohinemuri, and his elder brother John Wullanora Thorp: *Thames Advertiser*, 10 March 1875, p. 3, 15 March 1875, p. 3, 7 April 1875, p. 3; for the Thorp family and the district, see *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 2, pp. 855-856; *AJHR*, 1910, C-14, pp. 15, 23. A.J. Thorp was very briefly involved in the Waiorongomai rush: see Te Aroha Warden's Court, *Thames Advertiser*, 8 December 1881, p. 3.

claim. Then the ground became as well known to hundreds as it did to me. The surveyors went up to survey the ground, and Mr [James] Mackay went up himself and pointed out the supposed course of the reef, and where the pegs of the prospecting claim were to be put in. So far as the miners were led to understand, the men who were there first with rights were to be the owners of the ground. That was the reason why the race out took place.⁸⁷

Porter explained that he 'had agreed with my mates that they were to peg out as soon as I came to the foot of the hill, where they could tell me from another. A Maori rode with me in case I should break down. They did peg according to my instructions'. When he arrived on the ground he found two other parties, 'who told me I might have saved myself the trouble, for that they had had their rights before I left the camp'. He 'immediately went round the ground to see what pegs were in. Our party had two men at each peg, and as soon as they saw me, as a matter of course they put the pegs in'. As well, 'as soon as I got on the ground I knocked in a peg'. He later found 'thirteen pegs in one place and nine at another'. These pegs had been driven in at 10 o'clock, the time the goldfield was opened.⁸⁸

His party's claim for \$400 in compensation was based on having spent £150 in legal action and on being deprived of ground of 'great value', their application being for the lowest value. Porter had checked the register and identified those who received rights illegally.⁸⁹ Under questioning, he explained that he had organized the petition and obtained the signatures of all those of his party who were in the district at the time. The government was responsible if they suffered 'loss or damage' through 'the carelessness or negligence' of its officials because it was responsible 'to a certain extent' for their fraudulent or criminal acts. 'If it were proved who did this, I would take criminal proceedings against him'.⁹⁰ Although the select committee determined that James Mackay's clerk had 'improperly and fraudulently' issued a parcel of 53 miners' rights early on the morning of opening day, even issuing some to himself,⁹¹ Porter did not take legal action. The committee also found that 'some, if not all', of these rights 'were exercised' at Karangahake 'before the miners who were receiving their rights in a

⁸⁷ *AJHR*, 1875, I-3, p. 14.

⁸⁸ *AJHR*, 1875, I-3, p. 15.

⁸⁹ *AJHR*, 1875, I-3, p. 15.

⁹⁰ *AJHR*, 1875, I-3, p. 16.

⁹¹ *AJHR*, 1875, I-3, p. 2.

legitimate manner, at the Warden's tent, Mackaytown', could reach there, thereby preventing Porter and others 'from acquiring ground which they were desirous of taking up'. Although Porter and his fellow petitioners had 'no legal claim against the colony for compensation for losses which they may have suffered by reason of the improper issue of miners' rights', as 'a matter of equity' they should receive £150 to reimburse their legal expenses.⁹²

Immediately after giving evidence, Porter claimed that Charles Featherstone Mitchell, who held Miner's Right no. 1, had not really obtained the first right, for Porter had been the first to pay for both it and other rights. As Porter had not provided his list of names until the following day, Mitchell obtained no. 1. Porter also stated that he had been threatened with 'lambing down' because of his agitation over the scandal,⁹³ implying a threat of violence, a curious use of this expression, which normally referred to the defrauding of 'a "chequed-up" bushman by keeping him drunk until his funds are supposedly exhausted'.⁹⁴

MINING, 1875-1880

Between April 1875 and April 1876, Porter challenged others for ownership of or interests in six Karangahake claims.⁹⁵ As a spokesman for Ohinemuri miners, in June 1875 he and others asked Sir George Grey to establish an enquiry into mismanagement of the goldfields during the past four to five years.⁹⁶ In November, he visited Kawau Island on their behalf to ask Grey to bring new regulations into force at Ohinemuri.⁹⁷ Some miners wanted to acquire agricultural leases there, and Porter asked that these be larger than the 50 acres permitted.⁹⁸ In the following year, he was a member of a delegation to the Attorney General, Frederick Whitaker, on the

⁹² *AJHR*, 1875, I-3, p. 2.

⁹³ *Thames Advertiser*, 21 October 1875, p. 3.

⁹⁴ Eric Partridge, *A Dictionary of Slang and Unconventional English*, 8 ed., ed. Paul Beale (London, 1984), p. 663.

⁹⁵ Thames Warden's Court, Record of Warden's Decisions re Ohinemuri 1873-1876, 13, 73, 108, 110, 129, 169, 177, 179/1875; 1/1876, BACL 14565/1a, ANZ-A.

⁹⁶ *Thames Advertiser*, 25 June 1875, p. 3.

⁹⁷ *Thames Advertiser*, 23 November 1875, p. 3.

⁹⁸ *Thames Advertiser*, 27 July 1875, p. 3.

same issue.⁹⁹ He applied for a lease himself in May 1876, but as the survey was unfinished,¹⁰⁰ it could not be granted at that time. He did obtain land, in February 1880 growing a 'splendid' crop of potatoes at Owharoa.¹⁰¹

In April 1875, he inspected the new find at Tairua.¹⁰² Because of the number of unworked claims at Karangahake, in the following month he called a meeting at Mackaytown, which he chaired; his motion that all the ground be worked was defeated.¹⁰³ He was a director of the Karangahake Welcome Company.¹⁰⁴ In June, he informed Grey that he was spending £60 a week on Ohinemuri leases.¹⁰⁵ In December, he was one of the first to peg out at the new find at Owharoa, having abandoned his interest in the No. 1 South at Karangahake, and became a shareholder in the Radical.¹⁰⁶ From then onwards he lived at Owharoa in a 'slab chateau'.¹⁰⁷ He had not lost all interest in Karangahake, in February 1876 applying for the Democrat.¹⁰⁸ Although in 1880 his residence was recorded as Karangahake, in the following year he was granted a residence site at Owharoa.¹⁰⁹

Porter became chairman of directors of the Smile of Fortune Company, the first company formed at Owharoa, in February 1876.¹¹⁰ The following month, he was a shareholder in the Star of Ohinemuri at Karangahake, and

⁹⁹ *Thames Advertiser*, 1 December 1876, p. 3.

¹⁰⁰ Thames Warden's Court, Mackaytown and Thames Letterbook 1876-1896, p. 16, BACL 14458/1b, ANZ-A.

¹⁰¹ *Thames Star*, 17 February 1880, p. 2.

¹⁰² *Thames Advertiser*, 10 April 1875, p. 3.

¹⁰³ *Thames Advertiser*, 10 May 1875, p. 3.

¹⁰⁴ Company Files, BBAE 10286/15f, ANZ-A.

¹⁰⁵ *Thames Advertiser*, 23 June 1875, p. 3.

¹⁰⁶ Te Aroha Warden's Court, Register of Ohinemuri Claims 1875, Claim 114, folio 13, BBAV 11568/1a, ANZ-A; *Thames Advertiser*, 21 December 1875, p. 3.

¹⁰⁷ *Ohinemuri Gazette*, n.d., cited in *Observer*, 8 September 1894, p. 3; *Thames Advertiser*, 22 September 1881, p. 3.

¹⁰⁸ *Thames Advertiser*, 14 February 1876, p. 2.

¹⁰⁹ *Thames Electoral Roll, 1880*, p. 35; Thames Warden's Court, Register of Applications for Residence Sites 1875-1885, folio 41, BACL 14431/1a, ANZ-A.

¹¹⁰ Company Files, BBAE 10286/4j, ANZ-A; *New Zealand Gazette*, 24 February 1876, p. 152, 30 March 1876, p. 227; *Thames Advertiser*, 20 February 1877, p. 3.

later became a director of the company of the same name.¹¹¹ His next investment at Owharua was in the Morning Light Company, of which he was chairman of directors.¹¹²

Porter also invested in Waitekauri. In September 1876, with a partner, he applied for his first claim there, the Sultan,¹¹³ and was a shareholder and director of the Bank of Ireland Company.¹¹⁴ He also became a director of the Perseverance Company.¹¹⁵ In the following September, when the Sultan was registered as a company, he had 800 of its 20,000 shares, and was a director.¹¹⁶ Also in 1877, he was elected a director of the Energetic Company.¹¹⁷

Porter managed mines both at Owharua and at Karangahake until at least 1881.¹¹⁸ In this role he sometimes took bullion to the bank, and once, in December 1879, when carrying gold from Owharua to Thames he 'experienced a narrow escape from drowning'. An 'immense landslip, which had occurred through the heavy rains, caused horse and rider to be precipitated' into the Ohinemuri River. He 'escaped almost unhurt, and was equally successful in retaining his hold of the precious parcel he was conveying'.¹¹⁹

Porter continued to advocate for the interests of his fellow miners. In February 1876, he was one of a three-man committee elected at Mackaytown to obtain money for unemployed miners to make a road to Waitekauri.¹²⁰ As a member of a five-man deputation to Daniel Pollen, the Colonial Secretary, Porter reminded him that, when they had earlier

¹¹¹ Te Aroha Warden's Court, Register of Ohinemuri Claims 1875, folio 123, BBAV 11568/1a; Company Files, BBAE 10286/4q, ANZ-A; *Thames Advertiser*, 29 August 1876, p. 3; *New Zealand Gazette*, 28 September 1876, p. 674, 2 November 1876, p. 753.

¹¹² *New Zealand Gazette*, 13 July 1876, p. 495; *Thames Advertiser*, 31 August 1876, p. 3.

¹¹³ Thames Warden's Court, Mackaytown and Thames Letterbook 1876-1896, p. 98, BACL 14458/1b, ANZ-A.

¹¹⁴ *Thames Advertiser*, 29 August 1876, p. 3; *New Zealand Gazette*, 7 September 1876, p. 634.

¹¹⁵ *Thames Advertiser*, 9 September 1876, p. 3.

¹¹⁶ *Thames Advertiser*, 7 August 1877, p. 3; *New Zealand Gazette*, 6 September 1877, p. 926.

¹¹⁷ *Thames Advertiser*, 26 May 1877, p. 2.

¹¹⁸ *Thames Advertiser*, 27 August 1881, p. 3, 22 September 1881, p. 3.

¹¹⁹ *Thames Advertiser*, 22 December 1879, p. 3.

¹²⁰ *Auckland Provincial Government Gazette*, 15 March 1876, p. 99.

spoken in Ohinemuri, Pollen had agreed that it was the government's responsibility to make the road to Katikati and Tauranga via Waitekauri. 'Since that there has been another discovery on that road, three miles from Mackaytown. At the present time, if roads were made available so that machinery could be taken up, a great deal of surplus labour would be employed'. The road would be constructed 'in a country where a great population will settle, and is settling, and 4,000 acres of land has been taken up for agricultural settlement. If a road were made it would lead to the settlement of a large population'. When recently in Tauranga, he had discovered the government was making a main road to Thames: it seemed 'strange they should begin there, and not begin at the other end', where it was 'far more urgently needed'.¹²¹

Five months later, he sought permission to construct a tramway from the junction of the Ohinemuri and Waihou rivers to Mackaytown, a distance of five-and-a-half miles, at a cost of £6,000.¹²² This proposal came to nothing. In September, he convened a meeting at Mackaytown to request a telegraph service.¹²³ He was also prominent at a mid-year meeting at Paeroa called to protest over confusion created by ill-defined Maori reserves in Ohinemuri, demanding an end to the delay in determining their location. He opposed Maori obtaining any reserves that were larger than those they had originally agreed to, and was elected to the committee to draw up a petition to parliament.¹²⁴ In January 1878, another Paeroa meeting elected him to a committee charged with urging the government to purchase the goldfield from its Maori owners.¹²⁵

When an Ohinemuri Mining Association was formed in April 1878, Porter was on its management committee.¹²⁶ This was contrary to his doubts, expressed to the prospecting committee of the county council in the previous year, of the value of such associations. He told it he had 'contributed much money' to prospecting parties and 'been on many prospecting committees, which have paid prospecting parties, but as a rule the prospecting had been unsuccessful, the reason being that the men have

¹²¹ *Auckland Weekly News*, 26 February 1876, p. 5.

¹²² Adam Porter to Superintendent, Auckland Province, 6 July 1876, Auckland Provincial Government Papers, ACFL 8170, 1703/76, ANZ-A.

¹²³ *Thames Advertiser*, 16 September 1876, p. 3.

¹²⁴ *Thames Advertiser*, 13 June 1876, p. 3, 17 June 1876, p. 2.

¹²⁵ *Thames Advertiser*, 30 January 1878, p. 3.

¹²⁶ *Thames Advertiser*, 24 April 1878, p. 3.

been paid not for work done, but for time spent'.¹²⁷ Despite these views, in May 1878 he asked the Native Minister to give some of the £5,000 allocated for prospecting to this association, and, after negotiations, was granted £200.¹²⁸ By September, he was its chairman, and, according to a battery owner, Henry Christian Wick,¹²⁹ had been the chief mover in obtaining assistance. Wick recommended that he be in charge of any prospecting parties.¹³⁰ A week later, he was replaced as chairman.¹³¹

Porter attempted to convince the county council to allocate a sum equal to 30 per cent of all the gold duty received from its Ohinemuri Riding to assisting prospecting there.¹³² In 1879, £45 5s was paid by the Mines Department for prospecting,¹³³ but in May the following year the committee's treasurer announced that he had not seen any of it. He said that Porter, once again chairman, had received £2,000 and 'no doubt' would 'publish a balance-sheet, as several persons in this district would like to know how the money has been expended'.¹³⁴ No balance sheet was published, but Porter must have made a satisfactory explanation, as the matter was not referred to again.

In May 1879 he informed the council that he was familiar with John McCombie and Robert Lee's prospecting at Waihi and supported their application for assistance in getting ore to Owcharoa for testing.¹³⁵ The Ohinemuri Prospecting Association provided some financial assistance, and Porter informed the government about their work.¹³⁶

Porter had not ceased his association with Thames mining. In early 1876, he was a leading spokesman in seeking government assistance for unemployed miners there.¹³⁷ As a member of the delegation to Daniel Pollen, already referred to, he stated that it had

¹²⁷ *Thames Advertiser*, 7 March 1877, p. 3.

¹²⁸ *Thames Advertiser*, 1 May 1878, p. 2, 12 June 1878, p. 3.

¹²⁹ See paper on Henry Hopper Adams.

¹³⁰ *Thames Advertiser*, 3 September 1878, p. 3.

¹³¹ *Thames Advertiser*, 11 September 1878, p. 3.

¹³² Thames County Council, *Thames Advertiser*, 27 November 1879, p. 3.

¹³³ Mines Department, MD 3/1, 79/1000, ANZ-W.

¹³⁴ *Thames Advertiser*, 28 May 1880, p. 3.

¹³⁵ Thames County Council, *Thames Advertiser*, 2 May 1879, p. 3.

¹³⁶ *Thames Star*, 22 January 1881, p. 2.

¹³⁷ *Thames Advertiser*, 24 January 1876, p. 3, 22 February 1876, p. 3, 23 February 1876, p. 3.

been estimated that at the Thames there are some 400 or 500 men who want employment, but they do not like to break up their homes, because their wives and families will be left behind destitute. So long as the men remain at the Thames the families are able to get enough to eat, but if the husbands leave the storekeepers will shut up their books. I think, if you will read my telegram, you will find that what I advocate will not only be for the benefit of the Thames, but of the whole colony.... The Thames men do not wish to be starved out of the country. The first difficulty was the stoppage of the pumps,

thereby flooding the lower levels, the 'falling off of the gold', and land not being opened up by the government.¹³⁸ To remove one impost upon mining, the following year he called for the abolition of the gold duty.¹³⁹ In 1879 he denounced the management of the Big Pump as 'a disgrace', and the following year was a member of a sub-committee that studied how to use it to drain the mines.¹⁴⁰ In July 1880, he read its report to a 'meeting of gentlemen interested in' its working.¹⁴¹

His investments in Thames mining were modest. He was a director of two companies.¹⁴² In the late 1870s he owned one claim at Collarbone Spur and acquired 100 shares in the Victoria Company, but failed to pay calls in 1880.¹⁴³ In May 1880 he held 50 of the 8,000 shares in the New Golden Crown Company.¹⁴⁴

Porter was also interested in finding gold in entirely new areas. In February 1876 he applied for a prospecting license for the Tuhua District of the King Country. 'I have not received a permit from the native owners as required by law, but I beg to remind you that you promised to use your influence to obtain for me the necessary permit from Tawhiao - (the so called King), to whose immediate locality I wish to go'. Two men who had previously found traces of gold there would accompany him; 'all are well

¹³⁸ *Auckland Weekly News*, 26 February 1876, p. 5.

¹³⁹ *Thames Advertiser*, 18 July 1877, p. 3.

¹⁴⁰ *Thames Advertiser*, 23 January 1879, p. 3, 29 July 1880, p. 2.

¹⁴¹ *Thames Advertiser*, 29 July 1880, p. 3.

¹⁴² Company Files, BBAE 10286/4d, 10286/4g, ANZ-A.

¹⁴³ *Thames Advertiser*, 1 June 1878, p. 3, 14 September 1880, p. 3.

¹⁴⁴ *New Zealand Gazette*, 20 May 1880, p. 789.

acquainted with Maori habits and customs'.¹⁴⁵ As he did not have permission from the landowners, this exploration was not possible.¹⁴⁶ Twenty years later he was interested in the prospects of finding gold in the Kaimanawa ranges near Lake Taupo.¹⁴⁷

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Porter had been involved with local government issues from the early 1870s. For example, in 1873 he was appointed by a public meeting to a six-man committee to ask for a better domestic water supply at Waiotahi.¹⁴⁸ He was first elected to the Waiotahi Roads Board in 1874.¹⁴⁹ In the following year he was a member of a delegation to the Native Minister seeking a road from Thames to Kopu, to the south.¹⁵⁰ A year after Ohinemuri was opened to mining, he chaired a Mackaytown meeting seeking independence from the Thames County Council.¹⁵¹ The *Thames Advertiser* responded savagely by reporting 'a most amusing incident' when Porter 'attempted to enlighten his fellow men upon the question of local government, and to show that there was a very grave "hinsinuation" ' against Ohinemuri residents in its report. Somebody had been 'hoaxing' him, and by reading part of the report without giving the context 'he contrived to get himself into a hopeless fog, and to mislead some of those who had not read the article. Adam Porter is never happy without a grievance, but this time he has been gaping with open mouth over a mare's nest'. The newspaper wanted to avoid Ohinemuri becoming part of Waikato, and denounced Porter's 'very stupid interpretation' of the local government changes resulting from the abolition of the provinces. He 'may have misled others through his own stupidity in not being able to grasp the subject about which he was talking' and

¹⁴⁵ Adam Porter to Superintendent, Auckland Province, 14 February 1876, Auckland Provincial Government Papers, ACFL 8170, 335/76, ANZ-A.

¹⁴⁶ Note Reader Wood to Adam Porter, 9 March 1876, Auckland Provincial Government Papers, ACFL 8170, 335/76, ANZ-A.

¹⁴⁷ *Ohinemuri Gazette*, 28 October 1896, p. 2.

¹⁴⁸ Adam Porter and five others to Superintendent, Auckland Province, 12 December 1873, Auckland Provincial Government Papers, ACFL 8170, 4019/73, ANZ-A.

¹⁴⁹ *Auckland Provincial Government Gazette*, 13 August 1874, p. 132.

¹⁵⁰ *Thames Advertiser*, 13 February 1875, p. 3.

¹⁵¹ *Thames Advertiser*, 18 May 1876, p. 3.

accusing the newspaper of opposing what it was advocating.¹⁵² In the same issue, 'Nemo' considered that Porter was 'again making himself ridiculous, talking about matters he knows nothing about, and that he has not sufficient capacity to understand. Since this worthy returned from Wellington', where he had lobbied the government, he had 'arrogated to himself the position of dictator in the Ohinemuri district'.¹⁵³ 'Pakeha', of Ohinemuri, considered that the newspaper was 'very hard' on him. 'I was sorry to see it, because I know that Adam means well; but you should take no notice of him, as we all know his weakness and his aspirations, poor fellow!'¹⁵⁴

In October, Porter was elected chairman of another meeting seeking an independent Ohinemuri council, and, before reading correspondence on the issue, explained that the two Members of Parliament for the Thames electorate had been told of the wishes of the district,

both by petition and frequent correspondence, and they were requested to make every effort in erecting Ohinemuri into a separate county. They had not done so - why, he did not know, but thought that as they had no available excuse for their apathy to our interests, they might now reasonably account for their manifest neglect. However, as the Counties Bill had passed all its stages in the House, it was as well to submit, at all events for the first twelve months, and see whether any or no benefit will be derived from our connection with the Thames. If they desired, they could, by petition to the Governor of one-half of the inhabitants, get a separate county erected at next meeting of Parliament. Why most of them objected was that they were under the impression that the borough would form part of the county, and from their large voting power would be in a position to do what they liked with outlying districts. He was happy to inform them that such was not the case, for, according to clause 6 of the Counties Bill, boroughs were excluded. The only remedy at the present is for Ohinemuri to be divided into two ridings, and to be awarded a fair share of representation in the council.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵² *Thames Advertiser*, 19 May 1876, p. 2.

¹⁵³ Letter from 'Nemo', *Thames Advertiser*, 19 May 1876, p. 3.

¹⁵⁴ Letter from 'Pakeha', *Thames Advertiser*, 1 June 1876, p. 3.

¹⁵⁵ *Auckland Weekly News*, 21 October 1876, Supplement, p. 4.

Only one riding was formed, and when Porter stood as a candidate in December he was expected to be the second of the two elected.¹⁵⁶ Instead, his 33 votes put him in third place, those elected receiving 57 and 41.¹⁵⁷ Two years later, when he stood again, his platform included constructing a railway line from Waikato to Thames, spending £10,000 on making roads, deep sinking in the Thames mines, requiring tendering for all county contracts, ending Maori title over lands suitable for agriculture, giving farmers freehold title, and establishing secondary education. He wanted the Waihou River snagged above its junction with the Ohinemuri, and the settling of the dispute with the Maori owners of the Komata Block to permit making the main road through it.¹⁵⁸ This time he topped the poll, winning 99 votes.¹⁵⁹ As he told a meeting at Paeroa in 1879, 'he was now and always had been in favour of this being an independent County. He went into figures, and showed clearly that instead of having received anything from the Thames we had not got the money returned to us that we had paid in'.¹⁶⁰

Within two months of his election, 'Mariner' complained about Porter's expensive public works schemes and claimed he had charged his personal travel to the council, a charge he denied.¹⁶¹ He continued to have critics, 'Red Cap's Thames Letter' referring in August 1879 to 'a trio of such self-conceited cads as Porter, [James] Kilgour,¹⁶² and [William] Carpenter',¹⁶³ all members of Thames local bodies.¹⁶⁴ 'Tobias Rex' later that year stated that Porter was 'firmly established as Brodie's permanent bone sucker' and was 'paid accordingly'.¹⁶⁵ (Alexander Brodie was the first chairman of the council, and continued in that post for several years and being mayor from

¹⁵⁶ *Thames Advertiser*, 9 December 1876, p. 3, 18 December 1876, p. 2, 21 December 1876, p. 3.

¹⁵⁷ *Thames Advertiser*, 25 December 1876, p. 2.

¹⁵⁸ *Thames Advertiser*, 1 November 1878, p. 2.

¹⁵⁹ *Thames Advertiser*, 15 November 1878, p. 2.

¹⁶⁰ *Thames Advertiser*, 30 April 1879, p. 3.

¹⁶¹ *Thames Advertiser*, letter from 'Mariner', 22 January 1879, p. 3, 23 January 1879, p. 3.

¹⁶² Mayor of Thames from 1877 to 1878, and an investor in mining in the Thames and Te Aroha districts: see *New Zealand Herald*, 21 September 1897, p. 5.

¹⁶³ Mayor of Thames from 1888-1889: see *Thames Borough Centenary Souvenir, November 5th, 1973*, ed. L.P. O'Neill (Thames, 1973), p. 81.

¹⁶⁴ 'Red Cap's Thames Letter', *Auckland Free Lance*, 16 August 1879, p. 2.

¹⁶⁵ Letter from 'Tobias Rex', *Auckland Free Lance*, 1 November 1879, p. 3.

1887 to 1888.¹⁶⁶ ‘Bone sucker’ has not been traced in any dictionary of slang, but suggests that he was Brodie’s sycophantic partner in controlling the council for his own financial benefit.) That Porter provoked strong feelings was reflected by the fact that, two months after he was elected to the committee of the Liberal Association, the Ohinemuri Liberal Association started a petition that he resign his seat on the council while a counter-petition asked him to stay on.¹⁶⁷ The number of signatures for each petition was not reported, but Porter did not resign. He used his position on the council to promote the interests of the mining industry.¹⁶⁸ When he had a contractor barred from receiving future contracts because he did not pay his workers, another contractor criticized ‘the triumvirate at present ruling in County matters’.¹⁶⁹ By 1881, when described as being a ‘much abused’ councillor,¹⁷⁰ he was receiving more praise than criticism. The Ohinemuri correspondent of the *Thames Advertiser*, probably Charles Featherstone Mitchell,¹⁷¹ in January that year referred to ‘our energetic member’ who always made it ‘his business to know the wants of his constituents’.¹⁷² (Mitchell topped the poll in the first election for the Ohinemuri Riding, and won praise for his efforts for his constituents.¹⁷³ He shared Porter’s view on having a separate county.)¹⁷⁴ The following month, a Waitekauri correspondent wrote that repairs were made to a mining tramway ‘thanks to our energetic member ... who seems to get nothing but abuse and no credit for what he does for his constituents’.¹⁷⁵ An example of the latter was an effusion by ‘Heathen’:

¹⁶⁶ Weston, *Diamond Jubilee Souvenir: Thames Goldfields*, pp. 14, 79; *Thames Borough Centenary Souvenir*, p. 81.

¹⁶⁷ *Thames Advertiser*, 23 September 1879, p. 3, 10 November 1879, p. 3.

¹⁶⁸ For example, Thames County Council, *Thames Advertiser*, 2 May 1879, p. 3, 27 November 1879, p. 3.

¹⁶⁹ Thames County Council, *Thames Advertiser*, 8 September 1881, p. 3; letter from W.S. McCormick, *Thames Advertiser*, 20 September 1881, p. 3.

¹⁷⁰ ‘Paul Pry’, ‘At the Corner’, *Thames Advertiser*, 28 February 1881, p. 3.

¹⁷¹ See letter from Adam Porter, *Thames Advertiser*, 28 October 1880, p. 3.

¹⁷² Ohinemuri Correspondent, *Thames Advertiser*, 7 January 1881, p. 3.

¹⁷³ *Thames Advertiser*, 9 December 1876, p. 3, 11 December 1876, p. 3, 18 December 1876, p. 2, 21 December 1876, p. 2, 25 December 1876, p. 2, 30 October 1878, p. 3, 14 November 1878, p. 3.

¹⁷⁴ *Thames Advertiser*, 29 May 1878, p. 2.

¹⁷⁵ Waitekauri Correspondent, *Thames Advertiser*, 26 February 1881, p. 3.

On reading the report of the meeting of the Thames County Council, I was very much amused at the councillor with the antediluvian name; who, now that his term of office is nearly up, is going in to reform abuses, of which he never took the slightest notice, unless to take advantage of them for himself or friends. But now, he expects to gain a lot of credit, and a few votes at the coming election. But it won't do, Adam; we know you, and the men we will return must have something to recommend them besides "cheek," and more of this world's goods than a "slab chateau" at Owharoa, and the management (?) of a mine.... As an example of how Adam takes advantage of things to make the Ohinemuri ratepayers love him, Mr A[lbert] Butler [a publican and contractor]¹⁷⁶ has a contract here for filling the Rotokohu Swamp [near Paeroa], and in consequence of the bad weather he got leave from the Council to let it stand till the weather improved, and as Adam got to know that Butler was about to resume work, he thought to score a point by proposing that the Engineer give him notice to resume work - "Oh! Adam." The majestic councillor then moved that no men be employed by the Foreman of Works without the authority of the Engineer. Now, Sir, in no portion of this County has the authority of the Engineer been so totally ignored as in this riding of Ohinemuri, and that by Mr Porter himself, through the Foreman of Works, his very obedient servant; so much so that no one but "Porter's particular pets" could get a job unless there was a rush of work. If councillors know how things have been carried on here for some time back, I think they would be inclined to put the brake on. If Councillor Porter is short for propositions at next meeting here is one that he might make, "That the travelling expenses of councillors up to date be published;" and, also, how much a certain councillor received to get votes for draining the Waitoki estate under the pretence of making a road?¹⁷⁷

Porter and his supporters ignored these libellous statements, whose validity cannot now be checked. What his electors thought of his performance was revealed in November that year, when he topped the poll with 77 votes. Mitchell, who stood for the first time since 1878, was defeated.¹⁷⁸ When Brodie was in Melbourne in the following year, Porter

¹⁷⁶ See *Thames Advertiser*, 23 June 1874, p. 3, 7 June 1876, p. 3, 13 June 1877, p. 3, 5 June 1878, p. 3, 21 March 1879, p. 3, 20 October 1880, p. 2, advertisement, 16 October 1882, p. 3, 25 November 1887, p. 2.

¹⁷⁷ Letter from 'Heathen', *Thames Advertiser*, 22 September 1881, p. 3.

¹⁷⁸ *Thames Advertiser*, 17 November 1881, p. 3.

was acting chairman.¹⁷⁹ In July 1883, a gossip writer claimed one of his reasons for going to Wellington was ‘to urge on the claims of Ohinemuri, in order that he may earn the future reward of his constituents’.¹⁸⁰ When he failed to obtain the £5,000 sought, this writer considered that the chairman ‘must have known it was a hard case, or he would have sent a bigger gun to fire off at Ministers’.¹⁸¹ A more kindly view was that no other Thames man ‘could make a better or more special pleader’.¹⁸² Once his term expired Porter did not seek re-election, having moved to Auckland.

EDUCATION

Porter always took an active interest in education.¹⁸³ In 1874, he became a member of two Thames school committees,¹⁸⁴ and spoke in favour of establishing a high school.¹⁸⁵ Although not actively involved in this school once it started in 1880, he continued to assist primary education. An 1876 newspaper report announcing that Ohinemuri would become a separate school district commented that its residents were ‘largely indebted’ to him in this matter.¹⁸⁶ He was elected to the first Ohinemuri school committee, and provided the building used by the first Mackaytown school.¹⁸⁷ The following year, he was re-elected to school committees at both Thames and Ohinemuri,¹⁸⁸ the last year that he stood in Thames; in 1878 he was chairman of the Ohinemuri one.¹⁸⁹ In 1879, he topped the latter poll by one vote, was re-appointed chairman, and was its treasurer.¹⁹⁰ His re-election in 1880 at the top of the poll with 136 votes (as against the next highest vote

¹⁷⁹ Adam Porter, Evidence given on 13 September 1889, Supreme Court, Conolly J., Judge’s Notebook 1880-1890, Civil, p. 84, BBAE A304/134, ANZ-A.

¹⁸⁰ ‘Thames Tittle Tattle’, *Observer*, 28 July 1883, p. 6.

¹⁸¹ ‘Thames Tittle Tattle’, *Observer*, 8 September 1883, p. 6.

¹⁸² *Poverty Bay Herald*, 13 August 1883, p. 2.

¹⁸³ For instance, *Thames Advertiser*, 18 December 1874, p. 3.

¹⁸⁴ *Thames Advertiser*, 31 January 1874, p. 2, 18 February 1874, p. 3.

¹⁸⁵ Thames High School Board of Governors, Minutes of Meeting of 23 October 1874, High School Archives, Thames; *Thames Advertiser*, 24 October 1874, p. 3.

¹⁸⁶ *Thames Advertiser*, 20 April 1876, p. 2.

¹⁸⁷ *Thames Advertiser*, 9 May 1876, p. 3, 15 August 1876, p. 2.

¹⁸⁸ *Thames Advertiser*, 18 January 1877, p. 3, 27 January 1877, p. 3, 4 March 1878, p. 2.

¹⁸⁹ *Thames Advertiser*, 7 March 1878, p. 3.

¹⁹⁰ *Thames Advertiser*, 29 January 1879, p. 3, 28 January 1880, p. 3.

of 63 for Mitchell)¹⁹¹ provoked an outburst of spleen from the latter, who had been elected to the first committee and was re-elected subsequently.¹⁹² Mitchell wrote that, 'excepting perhaps a real old Irish constituency', he knew 'none to surpass the Ohinemuri electors in their almost frantic zeal on the days of election'. They were especially anxious to see their favourite candidate head the poll:

At the last election for the County Council Mr Adam Porter had the signal honour of occupying this distinguished position, and no doubt lays the flattering unction to his soul that on some future occasion a similar one will be awarded him. But judging from the signs of the times, there will arise a material question to such an issue. His former supporters will first have to be consulted and then satisfied that he has righteously acted his part in the trust confided to him in the past; and unfortunately opinions on the point are very diverse. I am not addicted to being censorious without a cause, but when artifice in public affairs is resorted to in order to accomplish a personal end, the act is deserving of more than passing allusion. Probably the most adroit of this kind of performance was enacted very recently, and without further preface, here it is. There was an election of the School Committee and the imperturbable Adam must at any price secure re-election, and that in the face of a most hostile opposition at the Paeroa, where if his apparent popularity could be measured by a Fahrenheit thermometer, it would be indicated by many degrees below zero. But elected he must be and "hang the expense," so he has recourse to "the forlorn hope," so to speak, of all his expedients. He discovers that there is a little roadwork to be done in the immediate vicinity of the polling booth and that it is moreover urgent that this be effected on the very day of election. Accordingly his staunch supporters from Owharoa are introduced ostensibly for the purpose, which, of course, they do at the ordinary rate of Council wages, 7 shillings per diem. Now the human heart is, in the generality of bosoms, the most susceptible of all the physical organs, and in this instance did not belie its generous functions. These *free and independent* electors acknowledged the boon conferred by, of course, recording plumpers for Adam, and the Council unwittingly, no doubt, plumped down the few days' pay, but to all intents and purposes on behalf of Councillor Porter's return as member of the Ohinemuri School Committee.¹⁹³

¹⁹¹ *Thames Star*, 27 January 1880, p. 2; *Thames Advertiser*, 28 January 1880, p. 3.

¹⁹² *Thames Advertiser*, 9 May 1876, p. 3, 18 January 1877, p. 3; *Thames Star*, 27 January 1880, p. 2.

¹⁹³ Ohinemuri Correspondent, *Thames Advertiser*, 16 March 1880, p. 3.

This diatribe prompted one elector to write that, when nominated, Porter ‘positively refused to stand, although he afterwards (to my surprise) did stand and was elected with a tremendous majority in spite of the so-called “most hostile opposition at the Paeroa,” which consisted (as I found out) of a few, and very few, personal enemies’.

He was told, ‘on good authority, that at the time of the election there were only four or five men working for the County, and no matter which way they voted it would not have made any material difference, Adam Porter would still be where he deserves to be, viz, at the head of the poll’. He regarded Porter as being one of the two men who did the ‘real work of the committee for the last two years’.¹⁹⁴ It seems likely that Porter was indeed popular at Owharoa, where ‘through him the first school was established’.¹⁹⁵

In January 1881, Porter stood down from the contest for what was now the Paeroa committee to avoid the need for an election, according to the *Thames Star*.¹⁹⁶ A Paeroa resident repeated the allegations about the 1880 election in the *Thames Advertiser*, and made new ones about the subsequent one. He pictured the committee as a ship with a mutinous crew, all of whom wanting to be the captain:

Last year, Mr Councillor Adam Porter assisted as one of the educational crew, and how he got in is told as a very good joke. There is no man like Adam who appears so anxious for the expenditure of County money, and when he makes a slant [seizes an opportunity to get a favourable result]¹⁹⁷ and gets a job under weigh, it is not long before the self-same Adam sets the men to work; and, like a good Samaritan, he brings them up from the Thames, and finds them lodgings, too. Prior to the election last year a contest was anticipated, Adam wished to become a member of committee, and the story says he worked his point thiswise: A day or two previous to the day of election, a County job was successfully arranged - for all the people like good roads - and the thoughtful little man went to Mr C.F. Mitchell and hired a house for two workmen. These of course became householders, and were, as a consequence, entitled to record their votes at the school board election. Seven constitutes the board, and by the said two men plumping for Adam, twice seven made fourteen, and they

¹⁹⁴ Letter from ‘Scaramouche’, *Thames Advertiser*, 19 March 1880, p. 3.

¹⁹⁵ *Ohinemuri Gazette*, n.d., cited in *Observer*, 9 September 1894, p. 3.

¹⁹⁶ *Thames Star*, 25 January 1881, p. 2.

¹⁹⁷ Partridge, p. 1084.

carried their man, the next day quitting their house for another and more suitable locality. Thus Councillor Porter is said to have become a ruler in matters educational. At the recent election matters did not go so favourable, and to do Mr Porter justice he declined to contest the seat.

Mitchell also declined 'on the ground that he had no wish to hold office again', although according to the *Thames Star* he stepped down for the same reason as Porter, to avoid having an election.¹⁹⁸ 'A Straggler' believed Porter retired 'not altogether on his own sweet will' but because 'a combination of circumstances made this course inevitable'. As nine men were nominated, a poll was required, but Mitchell had challenged Porter to show 'where he resided, and in what part of the school district was his residence situate. This proved a poser, and, unfortunately, Adam had no course open but to admit that he was not a *bona fide* resident, and accordingly he withdrew'.¹⁹⁹ In this account, Porter imported his extra two voters from Thames, though it did not show that they made much difference. Although registered as living at Karangahake in 1879,²⁰⁰ Porter had indeed moved from the district by 1881, and when living in Auckland in 1884 stood for the Auckland Board of Education.²⁰¹ He received only 15 votes, the lowest of the six candidates; the highest vote was 105.²⁰² Nominated again in 1891, he declined to stand, professing himself happy with those who had been proposed.²⁰³

AUCKLAND, AND MATRIMONY

Although Porter described himself as a miner in May 1880, eight months earlier he had given his occupation as that of 'agent' and in September 1882 he gave it as 'mining agent'.²⁰⁴ Whilst he had a house in Thames and was also referred to as being a resident of Ohinemuri, by 1878

¹⁹⁸ *Thames Star*, 25 January 1881, p. 2.

¹⁹⁹ Letter from 'A Straggler', *Thames Advertiser*, 9 February 1881, p. 3.

²⁰⁰ *Thames Electoral Roll, 1879*, p. 66.

²⁰¹ *Auckland Weekly News*, 12 January 1884, p. 20.

²⁰² *Te Aroha News*, 15 March 1884, p. 7.

²⁰³ *Observer*, 7 February 1891, p. 7.

²⁰⁴ *New Zealand Gazette*, 6 September 1879, p. 926, 20 May 1880, p. 789; Birth Certificate of Ethel Maria Porter, 1882/13756, BDM.

on occasions he lived in Jermyn Street in Auckland.²⁰⁵ His income was sufficient to enable the employment of a servant in Auckland, who alerted him to a fire, which they extinguished.²⁰⁶ From 1881 onwards, he was a permanent resident of Auckland, where he became a partner in the coach-building firm of Atkin and Sons, later Cousins and Atkin,²⁰⁷ after marrying Elizabeth Maria, the only daughter of Charles Atkin.²⁰⁸

His marriage came as a surprise, causing a flutter in the gossip columns of the *Observer*, which reported a rumour in August 1881 ‘that a Newton damsel is smitten with the autumnal charms of Mr Adam Porter, and that he reciprocates’.²⁰⁹ Six weeks later, it declared that it was ‘not true that Adam Porter, the irrepressible, is a misogynist’, for he would be married in two months’ time.²¹⁰ ‘Thames Tittle Tattle’ reported the response there:

A report is in circulation, and has created no little surprise in certain circles, to the effect that the dapper little representative of the Ohinemuri riding of the County Council is about to lead to the hymeneal altar one of Auckland’s fair damsels, to whom he has been paying his addresses for some time past. Since Adam’s return from the provincial metropolis he has been freely congratulated by his friends many of whom had long ago become convinced that a shaft from the bow of Cupid would never effect a lodgment in the heart of the lucky Ohinemuri speculator.²¹¹

The following issue jested that ‘Adam Porter says he wouldn’t mind marrying right off the reel if some nice girl would only come and pop the question to him. He is so bashful, you know’.²¹² Presumably doubts continued that he would marry, for later in October it reported that he ‘says the auspicious event is really coming off shortly’.²¹³ When the marriage took place in mid-December, in the home of his father-in-law, Porter was aged 37

²⁰⁵ *Thames Advertiser*, 9 April 1878, p. 3, 22 December 1879, p. 3; *Thames Star*, 27 April 1880, p. 2.

²⁰⁶ *Auckland Weekly News*, 13 April 1878, p. 8.

²⁰⁷ For details of this firm, see Company Files, BADZ 5181, box 169 no. 1052, ANZ-A.

²⁰⁸ *New Zealand Herald*, 20 August 1894, p. 5; *Thames Advertiser*, 14 December 1881, p. 3.

²⁰⁹ *Observer*, 20 August 1881, p. 564.

²¹⁰ *Observer*, 1 October 1881, pp. 36, 38.

²¹¹ ‘Thames Tittle Tattle’, *Observer*, 1 October 1881, p. 31.

²¹² *Observer*, 8 October 1881, p. 58.

²¹³ *Observer*, 22 October 1881, p. 92.

and his bride 23.²¹⁴ After the honeymoon, the couple moved into a new house in Eden Terrace.²¹⁵ This property was valued the following year at £120,²¹⁶ and by this time Porter's finances meant he could acquire a large steam launch to take his friends for fishing trips and on other excursions.²¹⁷ Two daughters were born, the first almost exactly nine months after the wedding, the second in 1889;²¹⁸ they would be aged 12 and five when their father died.²¹⁹

INTEREST IN TE AROHA BEFORE THE 1880 DISCOVERY

According to the *Thames Star*, Porter, along with Thomas Baird,²²⁰ a miner, and James Mackay, the former Civil Commissioner at the Thames, in 1870 found a little gold at Te Aroha, some distance from Werahiko's discovery ten years later, but did not work it and 'for obvious reasons' kept their discovery secret.²²¹ As Baird had died before this report was published,²²² either Porter or Mackay must have told the newspaper, but neither of them pegged out any claim in such a location. Perhaps the report was a garbled version of Porter's exploration of Karangahake.

Porter certainly was interested in the auriferous potential of Te Aroha, in 1878 urging the government to buy all the land there,²²³ presumably for this reason, although he also wanted the settlement of the Upper Thames by farmers.²²⁴ As a member of an 'Upper Thames' deputation to the Native Minister about opening land for settlement, he said that when land in Ohinemuri was taken up the upset price 'was considerably lower than what has been decided that it should be now. The settlers in this place are not overburdened with cash'. Opening land under the Homestead Act 'would

²¹⁴ Marriage Certificate of Adam Alexander Porter, 13 December 1881, 1881/2397, BDM.

²¹⁵ *Observer*, 31 December 1881, p. 252.

²¹⁶ *A Return of the Freeholders of New Zealand ...* (Wellington, 1884), p. P 41.

²¹⁷ *Observer*, 3 June 1882, p. 188.

²¹⁸ Birth Certificates of Ethel Maria Porter, 9 September 1882, 1882/13756; Lizzie Evelyn Porter, 1889/4077, BDM.

²¹⁹ Death Certificate of Adam Alexander Porter, 18 August 1894, 1894/540, BDM.

²²⁰ See, for example, Magistrate's Court, *Thames Star*, 27 November 1874, p. 2.

²²¹ *Thames Star*, 19 October 1880, p. 2.

²²² Death Notice, *Thames Star*, 19 November 1878, p. 2.

²²³ *Thames Star*, 9 October 1878, p. 3.

²²⁴ For example, *Thames Advertiser*, 1 November 1878, p. 2, 4 December 1879, p. 3.

save any outlay in the event of the Government becoming at once the purchasers'. He argued that 50 acre lots were 'far too small', and suggested that, as in the South Island, they should be 320 acres.

I have no hesitation to say that the welfare of the country has been retarded by the state of things which has existed at the Upper Thames. At the same time the settlers have made improvements that will bear a favourable comparison with special settlements which I could name. A great deal of money has been expended on these improvements. The work actually done would compare favourably with the special settlement of Katikati, for instance, or of special settlements elsewhere, where the land has been obtained on much more favourable terms.

He wanted to know how much land had been set aside for Maori reserves, for there was an 'impression that some 20,000 acres have been saved for this purpose'. He criticized the proposed Broomhall settlement near Te Aroha,²²⁵ for Broomhall was asking 'for a bonus of £5000' for acquiring the land. 'I was always opposed to these special settlements. When Sir Donald McLean was up there, myself and others were appointed to interview him. He said he had paid off the Ngatihaua, and the land would soon be thrown open. But I said then that I feared there would be no land for settlement for the people of the Thames'.²²⁶

Being a councillor enabled him to visit Te Aroha, along with Mackay and others, in October 1879 to determine the site for a bridge.²²⁷ In trying to obtain a share of the reward for Werahiko's discovery, in 1884 he informed the Gold Fields Committee of Parliament that, before applying for assistance with prospecting, 'I myself had been prospecting the district'. He had 'for three or four years knocked about the district and got gold more or less', and produced his letter to the Auckland Waste Lands Board in January 1880 'pointing out the inadvisability of allowing land to be dealt with privately'.²²⁸ His letter proved that either he had prospected the area or had been advised by someone who had. It recommended that the board reserve from sale that portion of the Aroha Block from Mangaiti Creek to

²²⁵ See paper on special settlements in the Te Aroha District.

²²⁶ *Auckland Weekly News*, 16 March 1878, p. 16.

²²⁷ *Auckland Weekly News*, 25 October 1879, p. 8.

²²⁸ Evidence of Adam Porter, 26 September 1884, Gold Fields and Mines Committee, Legislative Department, LE 1, 1884/14, ANZ-W.

‘the large Creek above the Hot Springs’, meaning the Waiorongomai Stream,

as in that portion of the Block there are several Quartz reefs that are auriferous and it would be undesirable that they should fall into private hands until such time that portion of the District has had a fair trial by the Miners, this they have had no chance of doing up to the present and several parties are anxious of giving the District a trial as soon as it is open for prospecting.²²⁹

As the land was part of the Ngati Rahiri reserves, the board could not act.²³⁰

PROSPECTING TE AROHA IN 1880

In November 1880, the *Observer* described Porter as the only man to give the government ‘timely notice’ of the discovery of gold ‘and paid away money to try the district’.²³¹ Although he did spend his own money, he also received government assistance. On 22 June, with the support of the warden, Harry Kenrick,²³² he asked for financial aid, and received a subsidy of half the cost of employing prospectors at 8s a day on condition he reported to Kenrick and submitted pay sheets and vouchers.²³³ Kenrick would not employ more than six men.²³⁴ The party led by Werahiko, was paid £31 16s, Porter himself not doing any prospecting.²³⁵ According to one obituary, Porter ‘in company with’ Werahiko prospected Ohinemuri and Te

²²⁹ Adam Porter to Chairman, Waste Lands Board, Auckland, 7 January 1880, Mines Department, MD 1, 85/1006, ANZ-W.

²³⁰ Waste Lands Board, *Auckland Weekly News*, 31 January 1880, p. 15.

²³¹ *Observer*, 6 November 1880, p. 60.

²³² See paper on his life.

²³³ Warden (Harry Kenrick) to Under-Secretary, Gold Fields, 13 July 1880, Register of Inwards Correspondence, 80/690, Mines Department, MD 2/1; Under-Secretary, Gold Fields, to Adam Porter, 23 July 1880, Mines Department, MD 1, 85/1006, ANZ-W.

²³⁴ Letter from Adam Porter, *Thames Advertiser*, 28 October 1880, p. 3.

²³⁵ Harry Kenrick to Under-Secretary, Gold Fields, 28 December 1880, Register of Inwards Correspondence, 80/1190, Mines Department, MD 2/1, ANZ-W; Harry Kenrick to Under-Secretary, Gold Fields, 2 May 1881, *AJHR*, 1881, H-17, p. 12; Harry Kenrick to Under-Secretary, Gold Fields, 27 September 1884, Legislative Department, LE 1, 1884/14, ANZ-W.

Aroha 'before those fields were opened',²³⁶ but there were no other reports that they explored together. At the beginning of August, it was announced that the party in which Porter 'had been for some time interesting himself' was shortly to leave for Te Aroha.²³⁷ Although described in September as 'the head of the prospecting party',²³⁸ his role was restricted to being the contact between this party, Kenrick, and the government.

THE DISCOVERY

At the end of October, in response to 'all sorts of rumours' and 'several accusations' about the potential goldfield and what he considered to be 'several sneering remarks' by the *Thames Advertiser*, Porter tried 'to set myself right in the eyes of the public' by giving the history of the party.

At the end of July, I arranged with four men to proceed on the expedition and gave them all the information I had of the district. Two of the party only stayed a short time, and they wrote to me on the 29th of August, saying that they had not obtained sufficient prospects to justify them in staying longer in the district, and they then went back to Waitekauri. Hone Werahiko, in the meantime, had met with prospects sufficient to convince him that good stone would be found, and with John [Mc]Sweeney²³⁹ put in several cuttings on the hill that has since been pegged off. At the beginning of September Hone gave me some good stone which he picked up on the surface, and asked me to get protection to try the ground. This I at once applied for.²⁴⁰

He wrote to Kenrick on 11 September:

I am happy to inform you that the prospecting party for which I applied for Government aid has met with success. Gold has been found in several places, but the best prospects have been obtained on land which I believe to be in Te Aroha reserve. Should such prove to be the case I trust the Government will reserve the right to all minerals found on that reserve, as I am of opinion that the district is highly auriferous, and it would be a pity if the same complications should be allowed to take place that caused so

²³⁶ *Auckland Star*, 18 August 1894, p. 5.

²³⁷ *Thames Star*, 4 August 1880, p. 2.

²³⁸ *Thames Star*, 25 September 1880, p. 2.

²³⁹ See paper on his life.

²⁴⁰ Letter from Adam Porter, *Thames Advertiser*, 28 October 1880, p. 3.

much trouble on the Thames goldfield. I have to apply for protection for, say 25 acres, to see if the reefs are payable; also for a portion of the reward offered should the find prove of any value. Should the ground be a portion of the 1000-acre reserve, arrangements would have to be made with the Waste Lands Board. It is my intention to proceed to Auckland at once, for the purpose of seeing the boundaries of the different blocks of land in that district, and I will give you full information on my return.²⁴¹

Because of his concern over ‘complications’ created by the gold being found on Ngari Rahiri land, he informed the Gold Fields’ Secretary, Oliver Wakefield, that ‘the Te Aroha Prospecting Party have found some splendid loose stone’, but not on Crown land. He recommended that steps be taken ‘to secure the right to all minerals on the Native Reserves on the Upper Thames, as the more I see of the district the more I am convinced that payable quartz reefs will be found’. When a surveyor inspected the site, Porter was ‘asked to say nothing until arrangements were made respecting the land’. He considered the ‘sensational writing’ of the *Thames Advertiser* and its correspondents, along with ‘injudicious remarks’ by Josiah Clifton Firth,²⁴² had revealed the location of the find, which had prevented further prospecting by the party.²⁴³ Porter certainly had been discreet, for when he visited Te Aroha in mid-September after being informed by Werahiko of his find, he went with the county engineer, thereby implying he was on council business. But the Te Aroha correspondent of the *Thames Advertiser* knew that, in addition to checking on council works, he was ‘looking up his children the prospectors. I hope they are able to give a good account of themselves’.²⁴⁴

John Dixon, or Dickson, a prospector who claimed to have found gold at Te Aroha in 1871 and later,²⁴⁵ stated in November that, when returning there at the beginning of September, he met Porter. In his account, which Porter neither confirmed nor denied, the latter told him that if he did not interfere with Werahiko’s prospecting ‘he would give me one share in the ground and get me 20s a week to prospect elsewhere, as he believed I knew

²⁴¹ Adam Porter to Harry Kenrick, 11 September 1880, Mines Department, MD 1, 12/353, ANZ-W; printed in *Thames Advertiser*, 27 October 1880, p. 3.

²⁴² See paper on the Battery Company.

²⁴³ Letter from Adam Porter, *Thames Advertiser*, 28 October 1880, p. 3.

²⁴⁴ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Thames Advertiser*, 20 September 1880, p. 3.

²⁴⁵ See paper entitled ‘Rumours of Gold at Te Aroha’.

of gold elsewhere'. Dixon claimed Porter had told him a reef had been found, which was untrue. Porter refused to give Dixon 'the share as promised and denied having ever promised me one, but offered to give me more money to go on prospecting, which I refused. I had then received £4 as one of the prospectors. I refused to take any more money'.²⁴⁶ Implicit support for Dixon was given by Mitchell, who referred to a 'man who found one, at least, of the recent finds' not having received 'any public money for years after. He has for two or three weeks past received £1 a week'.²⁴⁷

Late in October, Porter referred to Mitchell's boast of having found ore of extraordinary value,²⁴⁸ describing him as 'the 200oz hero' who had prospected from Paeroa to Matamata 'and never found the colour; he must have tried very little of the country, or he would have found gold in several of the creeks, as my letter to the Waste Lands Board ... clearly showed that gold was to be found in several places'. Porter claimed the board had 'promised to carry out the recommendations',²⁴⁹ but, as noted, this was incorrect, the board having no jurisdiction.

On 25 October, the *Thames Advertiser* published an article by its special reporter at Te Aroha, headlined 'ANOTHER ACCOUNT.- A LITTLE DAYLIGHT LET IN: HOW ORACLES ARE WORKED', meaning raising money deviously or illegally,²⁵⁰ which claimed to provide 'the true story of the original discovery'. Porter, who claimed 'to be the Simon Pure' ['the real or authentic person'],²⁵¹ was 'not the discoverer at all' but had merely arranged the finance. When Porter showed Werahiko's samples to people in Thames and Auckland,

Hone was afraid, after what he had done, that Porter would claim not only the credit, but the land, too, if he could get it, and his surmise was verified by subsequent events, for a week ago the so-called prospector came up in company with certain County magnates on supposed County inspection and boundary work, but in reality to try and inveigle the owner of the land where the discovery had been made to part with his right, title, and interest in the block, or at least 35 acres, for the sum of £20 and £50 a-

²⁴⁶ *Thames Advertiser*, 19 November 1880, p. 3.

²⁴⁷ Paeroa Correspondent, *Thames Advertiser*, 27 October 1880, p. 3.

²⁴⁸ Upper Thames Correspondent, *Thames Advertiser*, 20 October 1880, p. 3.

²⁴⁹ *Thames Advertiser*, 28 October 1880, p. 3.

²⁵⁰ Partridge, p. 1351.

²⁵¹ Partridge, p. 1070.

year rental. But Morgan [Mokena Hou]²⁵² was too canny for the wily schemers. The lease, carefully drawn, and looking like the production of an Attorney-General himself, would not go down with Morgan, and so the party returned with their tails down, after a bath in the Springs and sundry refreshers at [George Stewart] O'Halloran's [Hot Springs Hotel],²⁵³ where they sought to drown their disappointment in pure spring water and Hennessy's best.... The plea urged by the lease applicant was that 25 acres were wanted for the claim and 10 acres for a machine site, and all water rights available were to be thrown in. Morgan is quite willing to see the district thrown open if the pakeha is satisfied there is sufficient inducement, but he insists that the claims of any persons who have been prospecting and found gold should be respected, and that Porter should not possess a sheep-run because Hone, the real discoverer, entrusted him with certain stone, and desired him to get protection for the piece he had chosen.²⁵⁴

The comment about the lease 'looking like the production of an Attorney-General himself' was a reference to Frederick Whitaker, who in addition to holding this position was regarded as a land shark.²⁵⁵ Immediately after being told by Werahiko of his discovery, Porter, when in Auckland, had reported it to Whitaker.²⁵⁶ Two days later, Mitchell again criticised Porter, hinting once more at Whitaker's involvement. 'A man is entrusted with the administration of public funds to prospect for gold, and one of the men employed points out the locality of a previous find. A lease is then prepared in a well-known lawyer's office in Auckland', a reference to Whitaker, and this lease, 'for seven times as much ground as the law allows', was presented to the Maori landowners with an unspecified 'sum of money' if they signed. This was done 'by the trustee of public money' while 'the most absolute denial' was made to reports of 'any discovery of gold or gold-bearing stone!' Mitchell did not consider that prior prospecting entitled Porter and others 'to endeavour to lease the auriferous lands'.²⁵⁷ Porter's

²⁵² See paper on his life.

²⁵³ See paper on his life.

²⁵⁴ Special Reporter, *Thames Advertiser*, 25 October 1880, p. 3.

²⁵⁵ Russell Stone, 'Frederick Whitaker', *The Dictionary of New Zealand Biography*, vol. 1, 1769-1869 (Wellington, 1990), pp. 586-587.

²⁵⁶ Evidence of Adam Porter, 26 September 1884: Gold Fields and Mines Committee, Legislative Department, LE 1, 1884/14, ANZ-W.

²⁵⁷ Paeroa Correspondent, *Thames Advertiser*, 27 October 1880, p. 3.

reply named Mitchell as being the 'Paeroa Correspondent' making these charges. He explained that 'in the middle of the present month', Maori had told him 'that some parties agreed to lease five acres, and they were sorry that they had not come up before to try the country', whilst other Pakeha enticed them to join their parties 'and open the ground themselves for mining. Such being the case I at once offered to lease from Morgan 25 acres, provided gold was found on his land. My offer was put in writing by his son', Rewi Mokena, and was in Porter's possession. It was 'utterly false that I took up a deed asking the natives to sign it'. Replying to questions about £400 Mitchell and others imagined had been granted, Porter stressed Mitchell's ignorance. 'The Government cannot grant to any party a sum exceeding £200, and up to the present the prospectors have not received one shilling of Government money, but no doubt they will get it, when the Warden is satisfied that work has been done to the amount of money asked for'. His letters to Kenrick and Wakefield proved that he did not claim to be the prospector as an editorial 'so sneeringly wrote about'.

But I do claim to be one of the party, having paid all the money that has been paid and having agreed with them to do my share of the work. If I had wanted to get land from the natives, and so deprive any others of the chance of getting a claim, why did I point out to the Government Surveyor the spot that I am supposed to have wanted for myself? and why did I take the trouble to get the Surveyor on the ground if I had wanted to keep the Government in the dark, as before doing so I could have taken up all my friends, put them on the ground, and asked for a prospecting claim for the lot, instead of which I have acted only on behalf of those who originally found the gold.

He denied showing specimens to people in Thames, although anyone was 'at liberty to see' some that had 'not been out of my box for some time'. He had asked the press 'to say nothing' until 'something definite was found', but the *Thames Star's* correspondent had immediately wired the news to Auckland. 'I think the public will agree with me, that I have done nothing but what was fair and legitimate, in trying to protect the interests of the party, and I would have been false to them and myself had I neglected taking measures for their protection'. He concluded by referring to a meeting of miners at Te Aroha that 'liberally agreed to allow 6 men's ground, if the law allows no more they will be satisfied, but whatever is

allowed by law will be asked for, and nothing short will satisfy the prospectors'.²⁵⁸

In responding, a *Thames Advertiser* editorial described Porter as assuming 'the character of the Irishman who invited others to tread on the tail of his coat'. This was 'not always a wise proceeding, because the nether garment may be trodden upon, and it may be found so rotten as to crumble to pieces in the contact, leaving the wearer in a foolish predicament'. It considered that Porter was

smarting under a severe disappointment, because he was not successful in securing a nice patch of auriferous ground for himself, after his prospector friend the Maori had laid him on. We notice that he carefully avoids any contradiction of the statement that he sought to obtain a private lease of the ground after the discovery had been made by a subsidised Government prospector, and that it was to enable him to obtain this lease so much reticence was enjoined on all parties.

It challenged Porter 'to question the accuracy of one iota of its version of events, which was that about seven weeks previously Werahiko had revealed the discovery to him, 'supplying him with the stone which he has since hawked about Auckland and the Thames'. In Auckland he investigated the tenure of the land, which was thought could be outside the Ngati Rahiri reserves. This was found to be wrong and a surveyor was sent by the Waste Lands Board to confirm the matter. Not till 18 September did this newspaper publish any mention of the discovery, which had been revealed to it a few days before, though not by Porter. Its report 'brought the prospecting agent down from Te Aroha, where we believe he had been in company with the Waste Lands representative a few days previously. Then he condescended to corroborate the facts given above, and offered to show the stone, but forgot to do so'. Having decided the discovery was genuine, the newspaper published an optimistic article. 'We quite agree with our correspondent that he was looking after the interests of the prospectors, but at the same time he was carefully looking after number one when he sought to acquire a lease'. Werahiko 'also thought so, because we next find him making his own application to the Warden, and setting forth all the circumstances of the discovery'.²⁵⁹

²⁵⁸ Letter from Adam Porter, *Thames Advertiser*, 28 October 1880, p. 3.

²⁵⁹ Editorial, *Thames Advertiser*, 28 October 1880, pp. 2-3.

Porter did not reply directly, but did confide in the *Observer*, which on 6 November asked whether it was true ‘that a certain paper, published at the Thames, “slates” Adam Porter because he didn’t promise the “boss” a share of the Te Aroha prospecting claim? Adam says so, and he also seems to think the party in question has something to do with an opposition shop who talk of jumping his claim.’²⁶⁰ These suspicions were unfair, for William Wilkinson, the ‘boss’ of the *Thames Advertiser*,²⁶¹ did not acquire any interests in any Te Aroha claims.

When writing to Whitaker on 27 October, Kenrick indicated that Porter had indeed claimed to be the discoverer:

Mr Adam Porter claims to be the head of the prospecting party, he having applied for and obtained a subsidy from the government to enable him to prospect the District. His claim to this is disputed by Hone Werahiko who states that he is the prospector - that Mr Porter simply acted as his agent in getting the subsidy, and that he, Hone Werahiko has alone worked the ground with men - Mr Porter never having worked at all. He also states that it was on his previous knowledge of the ground that he started to work in this locality. Mr Porter claims that he supplied this information.²⁶²

Kenrick considered that, as Porter did not prospect, only Werahiko should receive a reward.²⁶³ He allotted Werahiko five shares in the Prospectors’ Claim, Porter three, and McSweeney two.²⁶⁴ Porter did not work his interest, as McSweeney ‘represented Porter from the first’.²⁶⁵ Before the field was opened he continued to inspect the prospecting and took samples to show to potential investors.²⁶⁶ Just before the proclamation of the goldfield, he was made a provisional director of the Aroha Company, which was to work the Prospectors’ Claim.²⁶⁷

²⁶⁰ *Observer*, 6 November 1880, p. 59.

²⁶¹ See *New Zealand Herald*, 23 September 1921, p. 6.

²⁶² Harry Kenrick to Frederick Whitaker, 27 October 1880, Mines Department, MD 1, 12/353, ANZ-W.

²⁶³ Harry Kenrick to Under-Secretary, Mines Department, 28 September 1884, Mines Department, MD 1, 85/1006, ANZ-W.

²⁶⁴ *Thames Star*, 17 November 1880, p. 2.

²⁶⁵ *Auckland Weekly News*, 20 November 1880, p. 9.

²⁶⁶ *Thames Star*, 8 November 1880, p. 2; *Auckland Weekly News*, 13 November 1880, p. 17.

²⁶⁷ *New Zealand Herald*, 24 November 1880, p. 5.

INVOLVEMENT IN TE AROHA UNTIL THE END OF 1881

Porter sold one share in the Prospectors' Claim before opening day,²⁶⁸ when he registered the sale of half of his interest.²⁶⁹ Five days later, he obtained a half share in the Morning Star.²⁷⁰ Early in December, he accompanied Werahiko to Thames to supervise the crushing of a parcel from the Prospectors' Claim.²⁷¹ By mid-December, he was both managing director and chairman of directors of the Aroha Company, provisional director of the Te Aroha No. 1 South Company, and director and manager *pro tem* of the Morning Star Company.²⁷² He held 1,617 of the 12,000 shares in the Aroha Company; the next largest shareholding was 833, most of the remainder being very much smaller.²⁷³ His holdings in the other two companies were modest: 625 in the Morning Star, and 171 in Te Aroha No. 1 South.²⁷⁴ In 1881, he was elected chairman of directors of the Morning Star.²⁷⁵

An illustration of Porter's being one of the most prominent members of the new settlement was his election to the Church of England vestry,²⁷⁶ despite being a Presbyterian.²⁷⁷ In early January 1881, he was elected 'by acclamation' to accompany Henry Ernest Whitaker²⁷⁸ to ask the county council to make roads in the township.²⁷⁹ He continued to ask for these,²⁸⁰

²⁶⁸ *Thames Star*, 22 November 1880, p. 2.

²⁶⁹ Te Aroha Warden's Court, Register of Te Aroha Claims 1880-1888, folio 150, BBAV 11567/1a, ANZ-A.

²⁷⁰ Te Aroha Warden's Court, Register of Te Aroha Claims 1880-1888, folio 153, BBAV 11567/1a, ANZ-A.

²⁷¹ *Thames Advertiser*, 6 December 1880, p. 3.

²⁷² *Thames Advertiser*, 6 December 1880, p. 2, 16 December 1880, p. 3; *Waikato Times*, 9 December 1880, p. 2, 14 December 1880, p. 2; *Auckland Weekly News*, 11 December 1880, p. 17.

²⁷³ *New Zealand Gazette*, 30 December 1880, p. 1796.

²⁷⁴ *New Zealand Gazette*, 20 January 1881, p. 111, 24 February 1881, p. 258.

²⁷⁵ *Thames Star*, 5 April 1881, p. 2.

²⁷⁶ *Church Gazette*, January 1881, p. 3.

²⁷⁷ *Thames Advertiser*, 18 January 1879, p. 3; *Thames Star*, 12 March 1881, p. 2; note Death Certificate of Adam Alexander Porter, 18 August 1894, 1894/540, BDM.

²⁷⁸ See chapter on Harry and Charles: Henry Ernest Whitaker and Charles Stanislaus Stafford.

²⁷⁹ *Thames Star*, 8 January 1881, p. 2.

and it was reported that through his ‘exertions’ Te Aroha was ‘likely to possess a public school at no distant date’.²⁸¹

At the beginning of February 1881, reportedly ‘the question which has been passing from mouth to mouth for the past week’ in the Waikato was, “What is Adam P. doing up here just now?”²⁸² The answer was that he was canvassing for shareholders in the battery company. On 1 December he had made ‘arrangements for the erection of a 15 stamp crushing mill, to be driven by steam’, for ‘the use of the general public’.²⁸³ Early in January, he chaired the Te Aroha meeting that formed the Te Aroha Quartz Crushing Company, was elected to its provisional directorate, and was especially active in raising capital.²⁸⁴ He held 100 of the 2,922 shares subscribed.²⁸⁵ Despite touring the Waikato, Auckland, and Thames raising capital, for which he received the thanks of shareholders, he was defeated in the election for directors.²⁸⁶ He assured those attending the luncheon to celebrate the opening of the battery in April that ‘prospects warranted the erection of a battery’, and used the opportunity to ask the council to provide roads for the goldfield. ‘He had written to the Council, offering on behalf of the miners a proportion of the cost of making roads, but he had not even had a reply’.²⁸⁷ A local correspondent suggested that, as the council was not giving assistance, Te Aroha should ‘go in for separation, forming a county of our own, with Adam Porter as our chairman!’²⁸⁸

At the beginning of April, Porter again inspected the goldfield.²⁸⁹ When attending the opening of the battery in late April, Porter chaired a meeting of shareholders in the Smile of Fortune and Morning Star claims.²⁹⁰ No further active involvement was recorded until early August, when his request that the council refund half the cost of a road made by two

²⁸⁰ *Thames Star*, 10 January 1881, p. 2.

²⁸¹ *Thames Star*, 12 January 1881, p. 3.

²⁸² ‘Waikato Whisperings’, *Observer*, 5 February 1881, p. 210.

²⁸³ *Thames Advertiser*, 3 December 1880, p. 3.

²⁸⁴ *Thames Star*, 8 January 1881, p. 2, 10 January 1881, p. 2.

²⁸⁵ *New Zealand Gazette*, 28 April 1881, p. 476.

²⁸⁶ *Thames Star*, 7 February 1881, p. 2; *Waikato Times*, 8 February 1881, p. 2.

²⁸⁷ *Thames Star*, 25 April 1881, p. 2.

²⁸⁸ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Thames Advertiser*, 30 April 1881, p. 3.

²⁸⁹ *Thames Star*, 5 April 1881, p. 2.

²⁹⁰ *Waikato Times*, 26 April 1881, p. 2.

companies was declined.²⁹¹ One of these was the *Morning Star*, on whose behalf he wrote a long letter seeking reconsideration, again unsuccessfully.²⁹²

EARLY MINING AT WAIHI

During 1881 he was mainly involved with the new Waihi field, his first recorded link to it being in February, when he was granted permission to construct a water race.²⁹³ Two months later, he applied for the *Maria*, which he sold in July.²⁹⁴ When the *Martha Gold Mining and Quartz Crushing Company* was registered in May, he held 1,000 of its 18,000 shares.²⁹⁵ In July, Henry Christian Wick, Porter, and their party had ‘a little more than an acre ploughed up and planted with vegetables, in order to supply the necessities of the miners’.²⁹⁶ Porter applied for a 50-acre agricultural lease in that month, but the application lapsed.²⁹⁷ In mid-July, he was elected a director of the *Waihi Company*, and with another leading investor decided on the site for a battery and on how to develop their property.²⁹⁸ In February 1882, his application for another water race was refused.²⁹⁹

In October 1881, one stanza of a Thames versifier’s ‘Ode on Waihi Plains’ referred to his involvement in the district:

Adam was the first man to start the water race;
No doubt he’ll make a fortune at a very rapid pace,
He’s a cutish sort o’ character and sees a thing or two,

²⁹¹ Piako County Council, Minutes of Meeting of 13 August 1881, Matamata-Piako District Council Archives, Te Aroha.

²⁹² Piako County Council, *Waikato Times*, 15 October 1881, p. 2.

²⁹³ Thames Warden’s Court, Register of Rights, Tunnels, etc, 1875-1882, folio 177, BACL 14431/2a, ANZ-A; *Thames Advertiser*, 19 February 1881, p. 2.

²⁹⁴ *Thames Star*, 21 April 1881, p. 3; Thames Warden’s Court, Register of Licensed Holdings 1875-1882, folio 133, BACL 14397/10a, ANZ-A.

²⁹⁵ *New Zealand Gazette*, 12 May 1881, p. 546.

²⁹⁶ *Thames Advertiser*, 16 July 1881, p. 3.

²⁹⁷ Thames Warden’s Court, Register of Applications for Agricultural Leases and Licensed Holdings 1878-1886, folio 13, BACL 14452/1a, ANZ-A.

²⁹⁸ *Thames Star*, 21 July 1881, p. 2; *Coromandel Mail*, 23 July 1881, p. 4.

²⁹⁹ Thames Warden’s Court, Register of Rights, Tunnels, etc, 1875-1882, folio 180, BACL 14431/2a, ANZ-A.

And when he spies a little chance he knows just what to do.³⁰⁰

‘Cutish’, for contemporaries, meant ‘acute, clever, keen-witted’.³⁰¹ The most detailed surviving share transactions concerned the Young Colonial. He bought seven of its 30 shares on 12 July, ten and a half on 16 July, and one on 17 August. On 14 July he sold one, and again on 16 July; a one-hundredth interest was sold on 18 July, two and a half shares on 26 July, a one hundred and twentieth interest on 1 August, and a two-hundredth interest on 17 August. A one-sixteenth interest was sold on 7 September and another on 28 September.³⁰² The prices are not known, but it must be assumed that he profited. A director of the company formed in November, he was described as the ‘principal shareholder’, having 4,863 of its 21,000 shares.³⁰³

As John McCombie and Robert Lee had pegged out the Waihi outcrop in 1879,³⁰⁴ to enable the applicants for the Martha, Dulcibel, and Young Colonial claims to have their ownership recognized Porter sued them for non-working. As McCombie and Lee were willing to abandon their ground, at the hearing, on 11 August, Kenrick awarded it to the applicants. Porter raised questions about legalities, but did not have a difficult task, as Kenrick sympathized with his arguments.³⁰⁵ A Thames gossip writer noted that he had ‘appeared in a new character last week, and filled it very creditably indeed. I refer to his pleading in the cases at Waihi, in which £20,000 or £30,000 was at stake. I verily believe that if Adam had been educated for a lawyer he would long ago have proved an ornament to the profession. He’s got the grit in him’.³⁰⁶ On 26 August, he conducted his own case against an attempt to take the Maria off him and cross-examined all the witnesses. He explained he had sold it to the Young Colonial owners ‘for a consideration’.³⁰⁷ After Kenrick ‘pointed out the peculiarities of the case,

³⁰⁰ D.T., ‘Ode on Waihi Plains’, *Thames Advertiser*, 4 October 1881, p. 3.

³⁰¹ Jonathon Green, *The Cassell Dictionary of Slang* (London, 1998), p. 305.

³⁰² Thames Warden’s Court, Register of Licensed Holdings 1875-1882, folio 143, BACL 14397/10a, ANZ-A.

³⁰³ *Thames Advertiser*, 1 October 1881, p. 3; *New Zealand Gazette*, 24 November 1881, p. 1589; *Observer*, 24 December 1881, p. 230.

³⁰⁴ See paper on Billy Nicholl.

³⁰⁵ Warden’s Court, *Thames Advertiser*, 12 August 1881, p. 3.

³⁰⁶ ‘Thames Tittle Tattle’, *Observer*, 20 August 1881, p. 570.

³⁰⁷ Warden’s Court, *Thames Advertiser*, 27 August 1881, p. 3.

and how the misunderstanding had arisen', the plaintiff's counsel 'elected to take a non-suit'.³⁰⁸ The case provoked much interest and comment:

Mr Adam Porter really made his mark as an exponent of mining law at the Warden's Court yesterday, in conducting the case in connection with his claim at Waihi. The irrepressible little man came upon the scene with more pomp and grandeur than is usual among local solicitors, having a qualified amanuensis at his elbow jotting down the evidence for reference in cross-examining the witnesses. Mr Porter's cross-questioning would have done credit to any professional, and the real humour interspersed in his remarks kept the on-lookers in a furore. The most lively scene occurred, however, when Mr [Joshua] Cuff,³⁰⁹ the complainant's counsel, called upon the lively little "miner" to give evidence. Adam stepped into the box with a don't-care-for-anybody air, and after being sworn by the attendant constable confronted his "learned friend," and the following colloquy ensued:- Mr Cuff: What are you? Witness: A miner. Counsel: What's that? The witness (with a glance expressive of pity for the learned gentleman's assumed ignorance), referred him to the dictionary, upon which Mr Cuff, evidently equipped to suit any circumstances, opened a volume close by that turned up the word ("a man who digs for metals"). He then required information as to where Mr P. had followed that occupation, when the little man referred him to his numerous qualifications as manager of claims at Owharoa, Karangahake, etc, and stated that he was now in receipt of pay for supervising the operations of a claim. After this explanation the case proceeded more smoothly. It is rumoured that Sir George Grey's law practitioners' bill has been drafted expressly to suit the future intentions of the "Young Colonial" hero of Waihi. Outside the Court an attempt was made to carry Mr Porter shoulder-high to the nearest refreshment bar, but on his protesting his admirers desisted, and away he went to prepare his next brief.³¹⁰

When the Maria became a company in 1882, Porter was one of its directors.³¹¹ The following year, he was elected a director of the Martha Extended, in due course becoming its chairman.³¹² In January 1886, he held 400 of the 24,000 shares in the Silverton Company and was a director, a

³⁰⁸ Warden's Court, *Thames Star*, 26 August 1881, p. 2.

³⁰⁹ See *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 1 (Wellington, 1897), p. 1281.

³¹⁰ *Thames Advertiser*, 27 August 1881, p. 3.

³¹¹ *Auckland Weekly News*, 30 September 1882, p. 20.

³¹² *New Zealand Gazette*, 31 May 1883, p. 721; *Te Aroha News*, 8 January 1887, p. 2.

post he retained for the rest of his life.³¹³ Being a director was not a nominal role for him in this or other companies; shortly before he died, with McCombie he chose the site for the main Silverton shaft.³¹⁴

WAIORONGOMAI IN THE 1880s

Porter's only involvement with Waiorongomai in late 1881 was to acquire one of the 16 shares in the New Find and to chair a meeting of its shareholders in late October.³¹⁵ He bought two shares in the Gentle Annie in March the following year for the same price that he sold them to Firth, on behalf of the Battery Company, over two months later.³¹⁶ On the same day, he bought two shares in the Canadian, selling one of these to the same company at the price at which he had acquired two.³¹⁷ On 31 March, he bought two shares in the Coquette for £46, selling them two months later to this company for a profit of £2.³¹⁸ In March he was allotted shares in the New Find, Premier, and Army companies, and was a director in the first two.³¹⁹ In the following month, he was allotted shares in the Waitoki Company,³²⁰ and in September became a shareholder in the Canadian.³²¹ 'Thames Tittle Tattle' believed he stood 'to make a fortune if Te Aroha goldfield turns out anything at all'.³²² In July, he attended a meeting with 'a

³¹³ *New Zealand Gazette*, 28 January 1886, p. 141; *Thames Advertiser*, 27 December 1886, p. 2; *New Zealand Gazette*, 2 July 1891, p. 783; *Ohinemuri Gazette*, 11 June 1892, p. 4.

³¹⁴ *Auckland Weekly News*, 2 February 1895, p. 30.

³¹⁵ *Thames Advertiser*, 28 October 1881, p. 3; Te Aroha Warden's Court, Register of Licensed Holdings 1881-1887, folio 30, BBAV 11500/9a, ANZ-A.

³¹⁶ Te Aroha Warden's Court, Register of Licensed Holdings 1881-1887, folio 24, BBAV 11500/9a; Transfers and Assignments 1882, no. 108, BBAV 11851/1a; Transfers and Assignments 1882, no. 414, BBAV 11851/2a, ANZ-A.

³¹⁷ Te Aroha Warden's Court, Register of Licensed Holdings 1881-1887, folios 53, 54, BBAV 11500/9a; Transfers and Assignments 1882, no. 417, BBAV 11851/2a, ANZ-A.

³¹⁸ Te Aroha Warden's Court, Register of Licensed Holdings 1881-1887, folio 8, BBAV 11500/9a; Transfers and Assignments 1882, nos. 280, 306, BBAV 11851/1a; Transfers and Assignments 1882, no. 418, BBAV 11581/2a, ANZ-A.

³¹⁹ *New Zealand Gazette*, 23 March 1882, p. 490; *Thames Advertiser*, 7 March 1882, p. 3; Company Files, BBAE 10286/10a, ANZ-A.

³²⁰ *New Zealand Gazette*, 27 April 1882, p. 646.

³²¹ *New Zealand Gazette*, 14 September 1882, p. 1264.

³²² 'Thames Tittle Tattle', *Observer*, 22 April 1882, p. 84.

gentleman representing a number of mining capitalists of Victoria' who had inspected Waiorongomai and was considering investing there.³²³ Three months later he donated his specimens of quartz and other minerals from the Te Aroha district to the Auckland Institute Museum.³²⁴

The next time that active involvement with Waiorongomai was recorded was in July 1883, when he went to Wellington not only to seek a share of the reward for the 1880 discovery but also to assist in obtaining 'various grants'.³²⁵ Two months later, he was elected chairman of directors of the Lady Ferguson Company,³²⁶ and also in that month successfully sued for £98, 'balance of cost of shares sold' in the New Find Company.³²⁷ In December, at the banquet held to celebrate the first crushing, Firth praised his help in advancing the interests of Waiorongomai: 'single-handed, under much discouragement, putting his hand into his pocket largely to further prospecting'.³²⁸

In August 1886, as chairman of directors of the New Find Company Porter wrote to the chairman of the council:

On two occasions, as Chairman of your Council, you have referred to the management of the New Find Mine in terms anything but complementary, and as the directors are responsible for the proper management they would be glad if you would point out to them how the mine could be worked better and cheaper than at present; and also, how steady dividends could be declared. By forwarding the information as early as possible you would oblige.³²⁹

In that year, he also became a director of the Waiorongomai Company.³³⁰ His last act as a director in this field was to chair the December 1887 meeting of the New Find Company that resolved to sell its

³²³ *Thames Star*, 27 July 1882, p. 2; *Auckland Weekly News*, 29 July 1882, p. 9.

³²⁴ *Auckland Weekly News*, 28 October 1882, p. 8.

³²⁵ 'Thames Tittle Tattle', *Observer*, 28 July 1883, p. 6.

³²⁶ *Thames Advertiser*, 15 September 1883, p. 3; for his shareholdings, see *New Zealand Gazette*, 22 November 1883, p. 1675.

³²⁷ Te Aroha Warden's Court, *Plaint Book 1880-1898*, 24/1883, BBAV 11547/1a, ANZ-A.

³²⁸ *Thames Star*, 7 December 1883, p. 2; *Thames Advertiser*, 7 December 1883, p. 3.

³²⁹ Adam Porter to Chairman, Piako Country Council, printed in *Waikato Times*, 5 August 1886, p. 2.

³³⁰ *Te Aroha News*, 18 September 1886, p. 2.

property.³³¹ No further involvement was recorded, apart from his writing to the *Te Aroha News* in 1889 after he read a report of a meeting about forming Te Aroha and Waiorongomai into a borough:

I was surprised that none of the speakers pointed out that when Ohinemuri separated from Thames they were loaded to the extent of £2000, notwithstanding the water-race being handed over to the Thames for their own use and benefit; and there is no doubt but that in the event of you at Te Aroha forming a Borough you would be settled with a fair proportion of the debt. And as the tramway has, to a large extent, caused the present indebtedness of the County, ³³² it is just probable you might be called on to take over the assets and these liabilities situated within the proposed district. For my own part I cannot see what you can gain by the proposed separation; you might spend cash on your footpaths, but it could only be done at the cost of the other portions of the goldfield, and I am quite sure that mine owners are as well treated by the present form of government as they could be by the proposed.³³³

PORTER AND WERAHIKO AFTER 1880

It is not known how much personal association Porter had with Werahiko after the end of 1880, but they continued to have business contact. On 11 May 1882, Werahiko sold his residence site in Lipseytown to Porter for £5, and two months later Porter purchased Werahiko's business site.³³⁴ The latter had been used by Werahiko as a residence site and both land and house were mortgaged to Porter to secure repayment of £68 12s 6d;³³⁵ it is not known how this debt arose. During 1882 they jointly applied for a reward for discovering gold at Te Aroha and Waiorongomai and for

³³¹ *Auckland Weekly News*, 17 December 1887, p. 15.

³³² See paper on the Piako County tramway at Waiorongomai.

³³³ Letter from Adam Porter, *Te Aroha News*, 24 July 1889, p. 2.

³³⁴ Te Aroha Warden's Court, Rent Register, Residence and Business Sites 1881-1889, folios 71, 386, BBAV 11501/1a; Transfers and Assignments 1882, 307/152, BBAV 11581/1a, ANZ-A.

³³⁵ Te Aroha Warden's Court, Register of Applications 1880-1882, folio 708, no. 12, BBAV 11505/3a, ANZ-A.

assisting to open the field.³³⁶ Porter wrote in August 1883 that, ‘As there have been doubts expressed as to the Paible Nature of the field’, he proposed to wait ‘until it Has been tested Which Will not be long now. When the Government will be in a Position to judge what Reward We should receive’.³³⁷ Porter gave evidence to the Gold Fields and Mines Committee of Parliament, which did not report because Porter withdrew his application ‘to enable the permanency of the gold field to be established’.³³⁸ In May the following year, in asking once more for the reward, he reminded the Minister that ‘a large amount of Gold has been obtained and a large population is settled permanently in the district’.³³⁹ Porter applied on behalf of himself and Werahiko’s estate, giving evidence in September in which he claimed to have discovered the gold.³⁴⁰ Kenrick advised that because Porter had only obtained the subsidy, the reward should go to Werahiko’s widow.³⁴¹ The committee agreed that Werahiko alone deserved the reward, to be paid to ‘his legal representative’.³⁴² In his will, written in March 1883, Werahiko had appointed Porter (whose occupation he recorded as ‘Speculator’) as sole executor of his estate.³⁴³ After Werahiko’s death in May 1884, Porter sorted out his financial affairs,³⁴⁴ although not to the satisfaction of his widow, who wrote to the Minister of Native Affairs in January 1885 asking that no reward be paid to Porter. ‘He sold a good deal of Hone Werahiko’s property at Te Aroha and I did not receive any of the

³³⁶ Hone Werahiko and Adam Porter to Minister of Lands, 2 March 1882, Mines Department, MD 1, 85/1006; Hone Werahiko and Adam Porter to Minister of Mines, 2 August 1882, Register of Inwards Correspondence, MD 3/1, 82/289, ANZ-W.

³³⁷ Adam Porter to Minister of Mines, 8 August 1883, Mines Department, MD 1, 85/1006, ANZ-W [spelling and capitalisation as in original].

³³⁸ T.A. Hamer to Under-Secretary, Mines Department, 4 June 1884, Mines Department, MD 1, 85/1006, ANZ-W.

³³⁹ Adam Porter to Minister of Mines, 21 May 1884, Mines Department, MD 1, 85/1006, ANZ-W.

³⁴⁰ Evidence of Adam Porter, 26 September 1884, Gold Fields and Mines Committee, Legislative Department, LE 1, 1884/14, ANZ-W.

³⁴¹ Harry Kenrick to Under-Secretary, Mines Department, 28 September 1884 (telegram), Mines Department, MD 1, 85/1006, ANZ-W.

³⁴² Resolution of Gold Fields and Mines Committee, 9 October 1884, Mines Department, MD 1, 85/1006, ANZ-W.

³⁴³ Will of Hone Werahiko, 2 March 1883, Probates, BBAE 1568/1167, ANZ-A.

³⁴⁴ *Thames Advertiser*, 21 November 1883, p. 3.

proceeds'. She wanted the reward money given to Kenrick, whom she trusted to pass it on to her.³⁴⁵ No money was paid until late that year, and then only after Porter prompted the Minister to carry out the committee's recommendation 'in a liberal manner'.³⁴⁶ In his capacity as the deceased's legal representative, he received £350,³⁴⁷ and as there were no more complaints from Werahiko's widow it must be assumed that she received the full amount.

INVOLVEMENT IN TUI MINING

In April 1886, Porter purchased four and a half shares in each of the Champion Lodes Nos.1-3 from Clem Cornes³⁴⁸ for £100, and less than three months later sold them back for £10,³⁴⁹ figures that suggest that they were partners and that the amounts were notional. He was reported to be a 'principal holder' of Tui shares in 1888,³⁵⁰ but no surviving records provide details. At the start of that year, he visited Te Aroha in company with 'some gentlemen connected with Home capitalists' who wanted to inspect the mines.³⁵¹ In mid-year, he revisited all the mines.³⁵² Appointed to a committee whose task was to prepare plans to develop the Champion mines,³⁵³ he then became chairman of the colonial directors of the Champion Gold and Silver Mining Company, an English firm.³⁵⁴ In this capacity, he made several inspections.³⁵⁵ As shown in the chapter on mining

³⁴⁵ Mihimera Arokura and Hare Arokura to Minister of Native Affairs, 25 January 1885, Mines Department, MD 1, 85/1006, ANZ-W.

³⁴⁶ Adam Porter to Minister of Mines, 15 June 1885, Mines Department, MD 1, 85/1006, ANZ-W.

³⁴⁷ Report of Gold Fields and Mines Committee, 21 August 1885, Mines Department, MD 1, 85/1006, ANZ-W.

³⁴⁸ See paper on Clement Augustus Cornes.

³⁴⁹ Te Aroha Warden's Court, Register of Licensed Holdings 1881-1887, folios 188-190, BBAV 11500/9a; Certified Instruments 1886, BBAV 11581/7a, ANZ-A.

³⁵⁰ *Te Aroha News*, 3 March 1888, Supplement, p. 8.

³⁵¹ *Te Aroha News*, 7 January 1888, p. 2.

³⁵² *Te Aroha News*, 2 July 1888, p. 2.

³⁵³ *Te Aroha News*, 4 August 1888, p. 2.

³⁵⁴ *Te Aroha News*, 17 November 1888, p. 2.

³⁵⁵ *Te Aroha News*, 9 January 1889, p. 2, 3 August 1889, p. 2, 10 May 1890, p. 2.

at Tui, his involvement with this company brought him many problems and no compensating financial rewards.

THAMES MINING AFTER 1880

In mid-1881, Porter sought permission 'to prospect in Tararu for other minerals than gold which he believed existed in the locality. The request was granted',³⁵⁶ but did not produce any discoveries. The following year, he sought to acquire one claim that was, he said, not being worked by its owners,³⁵⁷ and purchased shares in nine mining companies operating at Thames.³⁵⁸ He was a shareholder in two other companies formed in 1883 and a director of one of these.³⁵⁹ He was also appointed a director of the Thames Winding Company, which was not floated,³⁶⁰ and topped the list of unsuccessful candidates for directors of the Queen of Beauty Company.³⁶¹ Porter became a shareholder and director of only one company in the following year.³⁶²

The next time that Porter was recorded as being actively involved with Thames mining was in late 1887, when he attended an Auckland meeting 'of gentlemen interested in the development of the mining industry' seeking increased government funding.

Mr PORTER considered that the committee to whom the moneys would be entrusted should be comprised of members of the Thames local bodies. The Thames and Ohinemuri County Councils had done a great deal in developing the mining industry, and these bodies should not be forgotten in the matter. The Minister of Mines, Mr Larnach, had told them that one of the Auckland members [of parliament] - Mr Peacock - had opposed the granting of aid to the mining industry, and he would now like to hear that gentleman's explanation. He (Mr Porter) thought

³⁵⁶ *Coromandel Mail*, 25 June 1881, p. 4.

³⁵⁷ *Thames Star*, 7 September 1882, p. 2.

³⁵⁸ *New Zealand Gazette*, 14 September 1882, p. 1263, 21 September 1882, p. 1311, 28 September 1882, p. 1363, 19 October 1882, p. 1521, 7 December 1882, p. 1852, 14 December 1882, p. 1886, 21 December 1882, pp. 1915, 1916.

³⁵⁹ Company Files, BBAE 10286/12b, ANZ-A; *New Zealand Gazette*, 22 February 1883, p. 268, 9 August 1883, p. 1147.

³⁶⁰ Company Files, BADZ 5181, box 44 no. 283, ANZ-A.

³⁶¹ *Auckland Weekly News*, 17 November 1883, p. 9.

³⁶² *New Zealand Gazette*, 24 April 1884, p. 729; Company Files, BBAE 10286/14f, ANZ-A.

that that money was not intended as useful expenditure; the vote was for travelling expenses and hotel bills. (Hear, hear.) Had the big pump been stopped ten years ago, it would have been a big benefit to the province. If the Auckland members were posted in the history of the big pump, they would know that £200,000 had already been spent upon the big pump, and that the Government had given £50,000 in its aid, though they had obtained good security for it from the mines and machinery. As for the question of forming tracks, he did not know of any discovery that had been made by the help of tracks; the miners would prefer to travel where tracks were not made. He would, however, advocate the giving of rewards for new discoveries.

In explaining himself, Peacock supported his suggestion that local bodies should spend money granted. The meeting accepted Porter's motion to appoint a committee to provide parliamentarians with information that would enable them to promote the interests of mining, and added his name to the list of names he proposed.³⁶³

Two Ohinemuri correspondents were amazed at what they considered to be his nonsensical view that cutting tracks was not necessary for prospecting.³⁶⁴ 'Quaintan Queer' condemned Porter forthrightly, without naming him:

Some persons there are with just enough brains to entitle them to mix with sane men, but with a super-abundance of conceit, who have the superlative assurance to pose as representatives of the miner, and authorities on the matter, stand up and say the miners would rather not have tracks to assist them in the work of prospecting. If these gentlemen were to make such injuriously silly statements to a public meeting and the Thames and their friends able to recognize them ten minutes after, I would forfeit the price of a bucket of tar and a bag of feathers.³⁶⁵

In May 1888, he was one of those proposing to purchase a mine at Tararu,³⁶⁶ and in December he failed to be elected a director of the New Moanataiari Company.³⁶⁷ In 1890, he acquired an interest in two claims.³⁶⁸

³⁶³ *Auckland Weekly News*, 8 October 1887, p. 20.

³⁶⁴ Ohinemuri Correspondent, *Thames Advertiser*, 8 October 1887, p. 2; Ohinemuri Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 13 October 1887, p. 3.

³⁶⁵ 'Quaintan Queer', 'Trip to Thames', *Auckland Weekly News*, 5 November 1887, p. 8.

³⁶⁶ *Auckland Weekly News*, 26 May 1888, p. 9.

³⁶⁷ *Thames Advertiser*, 6 December 1888, p. 3.

He also became a shareholder in a new company,³⁶⁹ and a director of five other companies formed that year.³⁷⁰ He later became director of at least one other company.³⁷¹ In 1891, his Cardigan was enlarged into a special claim, Porter purchasing his one-sixth interest for £30 from his mate Charles McLean, a prominent Thames miner,³⁷² with whom Porter had been associated for nearly 30 years.³⁷³ The last year in which he acquired Thames claims was 1892, when he obtained two, one, for £3, at an auction.³⁷⁴ Later that year he was openly sceptical about the belief that Thames was about to experience a bonanza.³⁷⁵

At the beginning of the 1890s, Porter was elected to the Thames Drainage Board, became its chairman,³⁷⁶ and was a leading advocate of testing the deep levels. In late 1891, at a meeting of chairmen of directors he warned of the cost and said that boring for gold was ‘not always satisfactory’ compared with boring for coal and oil, ‘which covered large areas. It was useless to get experts from Australia’. He was elected to a committee to formulate a scheme to work these levels.³⁷⁷ In March 1892, he told the Auckland Chamber of Commerce that as the amount of gold produced was unsatisfactory, every member should consider ‘the question of deep sinking’.

There is every reasonable ground for believing that larger and richer shoots of gold will be found at lower depths than have hitherto been worked on the surface, and I consider it is the duty of this Chamber to help, by the introduction of local and foreign

³⁶⁸ Thames Warden’s Court, Register of Licensed Holdings 1887-1891, folio 103, BACL 14355/1a, ANZ-A; *Thames Star*, 2 September 1890, p. 3.

³⁶⁹ *New Zealand Gazette*, 11 September 1890, p. 995.

³⁷⁰ Company Files, BADZ 5181, box 8 no. 47, box 10 no. 61, box 56 no. 373, box 59 no. 401, ANZ-A; *Thames Star*, 3 September 1890, p. 2.

³⁷¹ *Thames Advertiser*, 1 October 1892, p. 2.

³⁷² See *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 2, p. 502.

³⁷³ *Thames Advertiser*, Warden’s Court, 2 October 1891, p. 2 24 September 1895, p. 3.

³⁷⁴ Thames Warden’s Court, Register of Applications for Licensed Holdings and Special Claims 1887-1896, folio 92, BACL 14376/1a, ANZ-A; *Thames Advertiser*, 5 February 1892, p. 2, Warden’s Court, 1 April 1892, p. 3.

³⁷⁵ *Observer*, 1 October 1892, p. 13.

³⁷⁶ *Thames Advertiser*, 13 February 1891, p. 3, 17 January 1892, p. 2; *New Zealand Herald*, 20 August 1894, p. 5.

³⁷⁷ *Auckland Weekly News*, 7 November 1891, p. 21.

capital, the prospecting of our deeper workings. Surely a district which has produced in the last twenty years some £7,000,000 in bullion, is worthy of development by the inhabitants of this province and the Government of the colony.³⁷⁸

One year later, he regretted that no attempt had been made to test the lower levels:

Mining, which ought to be one of our principal industries, is at the present time dull and unproductive, and the lack of interest shown by the Government in giving aid to thoroughly test and develop our mines at deep levels, when compared with other colonies, is not praiseworthy. At the same time more could be done by our mine-owners, in drawing up and submitting a workable scheme for the consideration of the Government and all interested in this great industry.³⁷⁹

Another year later, he referred to the visit of an expert who was expected to recommend that the deeper levels be tested, as there was 'no known reason why deep mining should not pay as well' at Thames as elsewhere. The government would 'no doubt help an industry that has done so much for the colony, by placing a sum of money on the Estimates, as has been done in the Australian colonies'. As finding payable gold at depth would be 'an impetus to trade' generally, he argued that 'deep sinking should be considered more a colonial than a provincial question'.³⁸⁰

He consistently called for government assistance.³⁸¹ At an Auckland meeting in late February 1893 'of gentlemen interested in the question of developing the deep levels', he recommended that the probable cost be first determined:

So far as could be seen at present the scheme of testing lower levels was going to cost a large sum of money - a larger sum than probably Auckland would be able to raise even with Government support. He would suggest that a committee formed say of the chairman of each Board of directors, and a representative of the Drainage Board be a committee to take the matter into consideration as soon as the information they wanted was available. Then the whole of the mine owners could be got

³⁷⁸ *Auckland Weekly News*, 5 March 1892, p. 28.

³⁷⁹ *Auckland Weekly News*, 4 March 1893, p. 28.

³⁸⁰ *Auckland Weekly News*, 3 March 1894, p. 28.

³⁸¹ For example, *Thames Advertiser*, 24 February 1893, p. 3.

together and it could be seen whether they were prepared to fall in with the scheme, because it must be evident to every one that no matter what the opinion of the experts and directors might be unless the owners agreed the whole thing would be a useless waste of time.

He did not want to bring experts on 'a useless journey if there was no probability of their scheme being carried out. If that scheme was a feasible one every man would do his best to bring it to a successful issue'. His motion that mine managers attend any future conference 'and give such information to help in drawing up a scheme as they may think desirable' was carried, and he was appointed to a committee to act with one elected at Thames. 'He had been informed that a rock drill to bore 1500 feet could be obtained for £500. If ten people could be found to give £50 each he would be one'.³⁸² Although no others volunteered, he continued to call for this work to be done.³⁸³

OHINEMURI MINING AFTER 1880

In Ohinemuri, Porter was equally active, for example arranging for the repair of a mining tramway in February 1881.³⁸⁴ Later that month 'Paul Pry' was so impressed with his energy in a variety of matters both personal and private that he wrote the following, prompted by 'a good joke' in the police court:

Now everybody knows Adam, but nobody seems to know where he sleeps, if he ever sleeps at all. If a case is proceeding in any of our public Courts, Adam is there; take a trip to Auckland, and about the first man you will fall across will be Adam. If you chance to pay a flying visit to Paeroa, and look in at [Francis] Lipsey's [hotel], lo, and behold, a little man turns up, and a voice is heard asking "Have you a letter for Adam Porter to-day?" And in a few moments' time the once raw Scotch youth, but now a full-blown County Councillor, is seen smiling at the ladies, and assuring them that the bad footpath they are trudging on will be repaired after the next sitting of the Council. "I will get a vote for the costs" is the assurance given. If you go to Te Aroha, Katikati, or anywhere else, behold Adam is there. In cross-examining a

³⁸² *New Zealand Herald*, 28 February 1893, p. 5.

³⁸³ *Observer*, 30 June 1894, p. 9.

³⁸⁴ *Thames Advertiser*, 26 February 1881, p. 3.

witness last week - Adam was present and heard it - the question was put, "Do you know where Mr Adam Porter sleeps?" "No," said the witness; and it is stated that all the witnesses in creation would utter the same reply. Adam smiled, but kept his secret.³⁸⁵

A reporter visiting the Smile of Fortune at Owharoa in January 1881 discovered the largest shareholders were Porter and William Fraser, the former warden.³⁸⁶ The first third of what was now a 300-foot tunnel had been driven for no payable returns, after which Porter and his partner, Wick, put in the remainder during the two years they held the mine and battery on tribute. 'During their term of occupation the tribute percentage paid off half the battery purchase money'. The mine was now let on tribute to another miner.³⁸⁷ He was granted a residence site there in March that year.³⁸⁸ His last investment at Owharoa was in 1882, buying a fifth of the interest in the Lucky Hit; it was forfeited nearly three years later.³⁸⁹ He continued to own land there, in 1884 claiming to have a kauri tree 52 feet in circumference.³⁹⁰

Porter's only Waitekauri share purchase was acquired in October 1881, when he bought one of the 25 shares in the Just in Time.³⁹¹ When he inspected the Maratoto find of 1887 he claiming the ore contained one-third bullion, which was 'too good to be true' in the estimation of 'Puff',³⁹² a view soon shared by Porter himself, for he only applied for one claim, in the following May.³⁹³

Apart from this minimal interest in other Ohinemuri fields, during the 1880s his involvement there centred on Karangahake, where he had the

³⁸⁵ 'Paul Pry', 'At the Corner', *Thames Advertiser*, 28 February 1881, p. 3.

³⁸⁶ See paper on Harry Kenrick.

³⁸⁷ Special Reporter, *Thames Star*, 22 January 1881, p. 2.

³⁸⁸ Thames Warden's Court, Register of Rights, Tunnels, etc, 1875-1882, folio 41, BACL 14431/2a, ANZ-A.

³⁸⁹ Thames Warden's Court, Register of Licensed Holdings 1875-1882, folio 137, BACL 14397/10a, ANZ-A.

³⁹⁰ *Thames Advertiser*, 8 May 1884, p. 2.

³⁹¹ Thames Warden's Court, Register of Licensed Holdings 1875-1882, folio 181, BACL 14397/10a, ANZ-A.

³⁹² Letter from 'Puff', *Hauraki Tribune*, 23 September 1887, p. 4.

³⁹³ Thames Warden's Court, Register of Applications for Licensed Holdings and Special Claims 1887-1896, folio 45, BACL 14376/1a, ANZ-A.

reputation of having ‘a practical knowledge of every portion of the field, knowing the workings of most of the mines as well as though he were manager of them’.³⁹⁴ For a time there was an Adam Porter claim, owned by his friend Charles McLean.³⁹⁵ In 1882, he was a shareholder and director in two new companies,³⁹⁶ and with three others acquired another claim there.³⁹⁷ The following year, he was an initial shareholder and director in three new companies, the most notable being the Crown;³⁹⁸ by 1886 he was its managing director.³⁹⁹ His application for a water race was refused in July 1883.⁴⁰⁰ In 1884 he became a shareholder in and director of another new company.⁴⁰¹ He owned 1,000 of the 19,000 shares in the Karangahake Welcome Company, registered in August 1885, and was one of its first directors.⁴⁰² He was a director of yet another Karangahake company in that year.⁴⁰³

Porter was interested in new technology, and when in Wellington in 1883 attended a trial of Ashcroft’s Gold Separator.⁴⁰⁴ At the Auckland Mining Exchange the following year, he exhibited a model of ‘a gold-saving apparatus’ patented by an Otago engineer.⁴⁰⁵ In 1886, he attended a meeting at which another inventor explained how his smelter and condenser worked.⁴⁰⁶ His main interest was the LaMonte process, an

³⁹⁴ *Ohinemuri Gazette*, n.d., cited in *Observer*, 8 September 1894, p. 3.

³⁹⁵ *Thames Advertiser*, 3 June 1882, p. 3.

³⁹⁶ *New Zealand Gazette*, 19 October 1882, p. 1521, 14 December 1882, p. 1886, 31 May 1883, p. 721.

³⁹⁷ Thames Warden’s Court, Register of Applications for Agricultural Leases and Licensed Holdings 1878-1886, folio 80, BACL 14452/1a, ANZ-A.

³⁹⁸ *New Zealand Gazette*, 23 August 1883, p. 1214, 29 November 1883, p. 1704, 27 December 1883, p. 1815; Company Files, BBAE 10286/13b, 10286/13j, 10286/14c, ANZ-A.

³⁹⁹ *Thames Advertiser*, 14 August 1886, p. 2.

⁴⁰⁰ Thames Warden’s Court, Register of Rights, Tunnels, etc, 1875, folio 186, BACL 14431/2a, ANZ-A.

⁴⁰¹ *New Zealand Gazette*, 28 August 1884, p. 1318.

⁴⁰² *New Zealand Gazette*, 20 August 1885, p. 990; *Thames Advertiser*, 5 August 1885, p. 3; Company Files, BBAE 10286/15f, ANZ-A.

⁴⁰³ *Te Aroha News*, 7 November 1885, p. 7; for his shareholding in this company, see *New Zealand Gazette*, 25 March 1886, p. 376.

⁴⁰⁴ *Waikato Times*, 24 July 1883, p. 2.

⁴⁰⁵ *Auckland Weekly News*, 18 October 1884, p. 18.

⁴⁰⁶ *Auckland Weekly News*, 17 July 1886, p. 18.

American invention, and in May 1885 was a member of the committee appointed to form a company to use it.⁴⁰⁷ When the New Zealand Smelting Company was formed late that year, he was a director, with 600 of the 60,000 shares; by 29 November he had sold 210.⁴⁰⁸ Two days before that date, at a meeting of shareholders informed that the process was not as successful as anticipated, Porter explained his involvement with the trial of a parcel from the Crown mine, which he did not consider to have had 'a fair test'.⁴⁰⁹ As LaMonte's process did not work, in April 1886 Porter moved that to avoid more losses the furnace be sold to LaMonte and the company wound up. 'The loss to the shareholders would be 7s a share, less anything they might have made in transfer of scrip'.⁴¹⁰ He led the opposition to LaMonte's proposal that the directors take over his furnace.⁴¹¹ One legacy of his involvement with this company was a case before the Supreme Court in December, in which he sought to have his sale of shares to William Fraser recognised by the company. Porter deposed that he had transferred sufficient shares to qualify Fraser to be a director, and denied knowing that the company would refuse to register him. The defense argued that Porter 'sold the shares to Fraser well knowing that he (Fraser) was opposed to winding up the company, and he bought the shares to prevent Porter using his influence to wind up the company'. After the hearing was adjourned,⁴¹² the case was settled out of court.

Porter continued to assist Karangahake, for instance in 1886 urging the council to make a road up the Waitawheta gorge.⁴¹³ Late that year, he chaired a meeting of company representative discussing constructing a tramway to another reduction works, and was elected to the committee to collect half the cost.⁴¹⁴ In January 1887, it was announced that he would be sued by the council for the balance of the amount due on the survey for the proposed Waitawheta gorge tramway,⁴¹⁵ but as this case did not end up in court he must have paid it.

⁴⁰⁷ *Thames Advertiser*, 30 May 1885, p. 3; *Auckland Weekly News*, 30 May 1885, p. 20.

⁴⁰⁸ Company Files, BADZ 5181, box 48 no. 316, ANZ-A.

⁴⁰⁹ *Auckland Weekly News*, 5 December 1885, pp. 18-19.

⁴¹⁰ *Auckland Weekly News*, 24 April 1886, p. 20.

⁴¹¹ *Thames Advertiser*, 20 April 1886, p. 2.

⁴¹² Supreme Court, *New Zealand Herald*, 22 December 1886, p. 3, 5 January 1887, p. 3.

⁴¹³ *Thames Advertiser*, 12 May 1886, p. 2.

⁴¹⁴ *Auckland Weekly News*, 4 December 1886, p. 9.

⁴¹⁵ *Thames Advertiser*, 19 January 1887, p. 2.

Porter was a member of a party representing Auckland investors that visited Waihi and Karangahake with the Minister of Mines in April 1887.⁴¹⁶ With another investor, he purchased a Karangahake claim in that year, in 1888 acquiring his partner's half interest, and then transferring the ground to the New Zealand Crown Mines Company.⁴¹⁷ At the beginning of 1888, he accompanied two representatives of an English syndicate that inspected the Woodstock and Crown mines in preparation for floating them on the London market, and became the local director of the subsequent New Zealand Crown Mines Company.⁴¹⁸ In March, he bought two forfeited claims for a total of £26 and in July was registered as the owner of these plus one other.⁴¹⁹ One of these was transferred to New Zealand Crown Mines later in the year, as were two more that he acquired, with a partner, the following year.⁴²⁰ His delay in providing the remainder of the purchase price for one mine prompted James Russell, an Auckland lawyer who was his partner in this deal, to urge him to pay promptly 'for your protection as we may possible lose all that we have paid already if this amount is not sent soon'.⁴²¹ In mid-1890 he was granted a machine site.⁴²² He continued to be elected a director,⁴²³ and periodically inspected Karangahake.⁴²⁴ Four months before his death, he toured all Ohinemuri mining areas with two visiting British experts.⁴²⁵

⁴¹⁶ *Thames Advertiser*, 13 April 1887, p. 2.

⁴¹⁷ Warden's Court, *Thames Advertiser*, 11 November 1887, p. 2; Thames Warden's Court, Register of Licensed Holdings 1887-1891, folio 22, BACL 14355/1a, ANZ-A.

⁴¹⁸ *Thames Advertiser*, 7 January 1888, p. 2; *Te Aroha News*, 9 January 1889, p. 2.

⁴¹⁹ *Thames Advertiser*, 2 March 1888, p. 2; Thames Warden's Court, Register of Applications for Licensed Holdings and Special Claims 1887-1986, folio 27, BACL 14376/1a, ANZ-A.

⁴²⁰ Thames Warden's Court, Register of Licensed Holdings 1887-1891, folio 119, BACL 14355/1a; Paeroa Warden's Court, Register of Licensed Holdings 1887-1896, folios 1, 9, ZAAP 13293/1a, ANZ-A.

⁴²¹ James Russell to Adam Porter, 31 May 1888, Letterbook no. 37, p. 258, Jackson and Russell Papers, MS 360, Library of the Auckland Institute and Museum.

⁴²² Te Aroha Warden's Court, Register of Ohinemuri Holdings 1875-1891, folio 28, BCDG 11292/1a, ANZ-A.

⁴²³ *Thames Advertiser*, 10 March 1890, p. 2; *Thames Star*, 25 September 1890, p. 2; Company Files, BADZ 5181, box 10 no. 61, ANZ-A.

⁴²⁴ For example, *Thames Advertiser*, 5 April 1890, p. 2.

⁴²⁵ *Thames Advertiser*, 6 April 1894, p. 2.

COROMANDEL MINING

Porter had little involvement with Coromandel mining, his main involvement being in 1888, when with others he acquired the Preece's Point mine, which was floated in London later that year.⁴²⁶ Two years later, he became a director of a Tiki company.⁴²⁷ After gold was discovered at Kuaotunu, he became director of two companies.⁴²⁸ In 1892, after a visit to that district, he convened a meeting to find ways of providing electricity for batteries because, 'with the present cost of motive power, ores which could be made to pay well under other circumstances were unprofitable'. On his suggestion, a committee was established to formulate a scheme and to confer with the government; he was elected to it.⁴²⁹

ASSISTING HAURAKI MINING GENERALLY

Porter attempted to assist Hauraki mining in several other ways. In 1889, for instance, when meeting the Premier in Auckland he argued against parts of the goldfields being sold off as agricultural land, and asked for a better tenure system.⁴³⁰ The following year, he told the Auckland Chamber of Commerce that he opposed their bringing an expert from Freiburg to advise on the best treatment method, for the cyanide process was cheaper and as effective as those used there. 'His own opinion was that if speculators wanted a specialist they should pay for him'.⁴³¹ In 1891 he convened and chaired a meeting of directors, legal managers, and others interested in mining to consider 'the present wholesale forfeiture' of claims 'by instructions from the Mines Department'.⁴³² The small attendance prompted him to criticize the lack of interest of legal managers, who 'were living on the mines, and should, therefore, take a greater amount of work upon their shoulders. However, he had to admit that some of them worked very hard'. He considered 'any wholesale forfeiture' would be 'bad for the

⁴²⁶ *Waikato Times*, 3 November 1888, p. 2.

⁴²⁷ Company Files, BADZ 5181, box 58 no. 393, ANZ-A.

⁴²⁸ Company Files, BADZ 5181, box 55 no. 370, box 57 no. 384, ANZ-A.

⁴²⁹ *Auckland Weekly News*, 26 November 1892, p. 35.

⁴³⁰ *Auckland Weekly News*, 16 February 1889, p. 35.

⁴³¹ *Auckland Weekly News*, 23 August 1890, p. 29.

⁴³² *Auckland Weekly News*, 20 June 1891, p. 17.

miners and for the local bodies'. While not doubting 'that in many mines very little work was being done', he wanted this issue left to the warden, who, he believed, considered 'that mining should not be hampered by any unnecessary restrictions, but should be treated like any other business, so as to be made to pay, if possible'. Protection should be sought when unable to work with a full complement of miners:

It would be no special benefit to miners to throw leases back upon the goldfields unless others were willing to take them up, and the extra expense of re-surveying, and other such matters, must also be considered. As long as the rent was paid, it would be better that the ground should be held, even if it were not worked, than that it should be thrown back upon the goldfields.

As for 'concessions to foreign companies, he certainly did not think they should have any privileges over local companies'. A committee to consider alterations to the regulations did not include him.⁴³³ In May 1894, he told the Minister of Mines, Alfred Jerome Cadman, that he regretted his unwillingness to alter the Mining Act. 'Why should we have laws on the Statute Book that can be made to unduly harass Companies whether they hold ground or not?' He argued that few companies held ground without working it, and wanted a simpler method of winding up companies. Although he wanted to speak to Cadman about his concerns, Cadman did not reply, merely ordering that his letter be filed.⁴³⁴

As a member of the Auckland Chamber of Commerce in the 1880s and 1890s, he used his contacts there to assist mining. In 1887, for instance, with other investors he met parliamentarians and was appointed to a committee seeking government assistance.⁴³⁵ When it established a Goldfields Committee in April 1890, he was its first chairman.⁴³⁶ As an example of its work, in August 1891 it received a telegram from the Reefton Mining Association opposing many clauses in the Mining Bill. The committee supported most of their views, and Porter telegraphed back that they had 'instructed goldfield members to oppose the clauses objected to,

⁴³³ *Auckland Weekly News*, 27 June 1891, pp. 20-21.

⁴³⁴ Adam Porter to Alfred Jerome Cadman, 4 May 1894; memorandum by Cadman, 18 June 1894, Mines Department, MD 1, 1898/219, ANZ-W.

⁴³⁵ *Te Aroha News*, 8 October 1887, Supplement, p. 1.

⁴³⁶ *Auckland Weekly News*, 19 April 1890, p. 28; *Observer*, 19 April 1890, p. 6.

and notified the Government of the same'.⁴³⁷ The following year, his presidential address to the Chamber of Commerce reported that all the 'alterations and improvements suggested' had been adopted. The new laws 'must be considered a great improvement' on the previous ones, although 'further security' was required concerning tenure.⁴³⁸ Two years later, he urged members to 'take an interest in the development of the great mineral wealth of our provincial district'.⁴³⁹ In what was to be his last address to the Chamber, at the quarterly meeting held on 31 May 1894 Porter reported 'a slight improvement' in output, especially at Ohinemuri, to some extent caused by improved treatment. Over 90 per cent of ore was now saved 'where formerly 30 and 40 per cent was all that could be obtained, thus showing what a large amount of wealth has been lost' both to shareholders and to New Zealand.⁴⁴⁰

Another way of assisting the industry was through special exhibitions. For the Melbourne Exhibition of 1888, Porter collected samples from Ohinemuri and Te Aroha.⁴⁴¹ The difficulties encountered provoked a letter to the Auckland press:

After reading your special cable in reference to the mean collection of New Zealand ores in the Melbourne Exhibition, several of us interested in the mining industry at once took steps to have this put right by calling on the managers and directors of most of the companies, and in every instance they at once agreed to get samples of quartz from all the different mining centres, to show the difference in, and the necessity for other treatment than any hitherto adopted by us. Judge of our surprise, after wiring to the Premier on the subject, to receive the following reply from the Minister of Mines:- "Must guarantee to re-import or pay duty." Now, sir, as the expense of collecting and forwarding the stone would be considerable, and as this was being done without calling on the Government to pay anything towards the expenses, and as there is little or no probability of the stone ever being sent back to this colony by those in charge at Melbourne, some of whom with the present Minister of Mines should be embalmed, and placed as unprofitable specimens of barren uselessness to be avoided by the unborn millions of our future mining communities. The cost of assaying the various parcels of ores would be such as would

⁴³⁷ *Auckland Weekly News*, 1 August 1891, p. 17.

⁴³⁸ *Auckland Weekly News*, 5 March 1892, p. 28.

⁴³⁹ *Auckland Weekly News*, 3 March 1894, p. 28.

⁴⁴⁰ *Auckland Weekly News*, 9 June 1894, p. 28.

⁴⁴¹ *Te Aroha News*, 22 August 1888, p. 2.

prohibit any stone being sent on these conditions, as no attempt was to be made to send picked stone, but only a fair sample of the stone at present to grass at Waihi, Te Aroha, Karangahake, Whangamata, Coromandel, and the Thames proper. If these ores were sent for the purpose of being sold, there might be some justice in asking to pay duty, but as the work was being done by private individuals because the Government had neglected their duty in the matter, we consider this but a piece of red-tapeism, the most scandalous ever emanating from Wellington. An industry that has given forty-six millions pounds sterling to enrich the colony, is not to be allowed to send a sample of their production, because some local revenue might be lost to the extent of some *ten shillings* by the transaction. I trust, Sir, that the members who know something of mining will at once take steps to show the Minister *against* Mines the absurdity of his tone to the Auckland Chamber of Commerce.⁴⁴²

The government did revoke this requirement.⁴⁴³ The following year, Porter visited the goldfields collecting samples for the Dunedin Exhibition, where he had arranged a Court of Thames and Ohinemuri mining exhibits.⁴⁴⁴ His 'large and valuable' collection of gold and silver ores from all over New Zealand and abroad included 300 samples from Australia.⁴⁴⁵ It was described as 'probably the best private collection in the colony of its kind'.⁴⁴⁶ He would have used his samples when seeking capital from overseas investors.

OTHER AREAS AND OTHER MINERALS

Porter normally confined his mining interests to Hauraki, but in 1883 he visited the Terawhiti area, near Wellington, where gold had been reported. Afterwards, he commented that the find was 'very much overrated', with 'nothing to justify the scrip mania'.⁴⁴⁷ His impression was correct: it was a fraud.⁴⁴⁸

⁴⁴² Letter from Adam Porter, *Auckland Weekly News*, 18 August 1888, p. 35.

⁴⁴³ *Auckland Weekly News*, 18 August 1888, p. 35.

⁴⁴⁴ *Thames Star*, 27 September 1889, p. 3; *Waikato Times*, 31 October 1889, p. 2.

⁴⁴⁵ *Auckland Weekly News*, 9 August 1890, p. 29.

⁴⁴⁶ *New Zealand Herald*, 20 August 1894, p. 5.

⁴⁴⁷ *New Zealand Herald*, 1 August 1883, p. 5.

⁴⁴⁸ James Brodie, *Terawhiti and the Goldfields* (Wellington, 1986), pp. 276-280.

As noted in his involvement with Thames mining, he was interested in finding other minerals apart from gold.⁴⁴⁹ In mid-1873, he spent some days at Wharekawa, near Maramarua, and brought back samples of coal and other metals.⁴⁵⁰ In the last year of his life he became chairman of directors of the newly-formed Hikurangi Coal Company.⁴⁵¹

NON-MINING COMPANIES

Occasionally after moving to Auckland, Porter gave his occupation as coachbuilder.⁴⁵² This was only notional, for he was only a sleeping partner in his father-in-law's firm.⁴⁵³ In time, ill health obliged him to give up being a partner.⁴⁵⁴ He invested in a variety of companies with no connection with mining, for instance the Union Oil, Soap, and Candle Company.⁴⁵⁵ Not happy with the way this firm operated, in 1884 he informed its annual meeting that shareholders considered that 'those in charge knew nothing at all about their business'. Pointing to the low salary given to the man in charge of manufacturing the candles, he argued that 'no competent man could be got' for that amount. After criticizing how the accounts were kept, when some of his points were answered he moved that the directors be re-elected.⁴⁵⁶ This was not the only time that he was critical of directors. His last speech to the Chamber of Commerce claimed that the collapse of the Loan and Mercantile Company clearly showed 'the false position many have been led into by placing implicit confidence in directors', and hoped the lesson had 'not been given in vain'.⁴⁵⁷

⁴⁴⁹ *Thames Advertiser*, 24 June 1881, p. 3.

⁴⁵⁰ *Thames Advertiser*, 26 June 1873, p. 2.

⁴⁵¹ Company Files, BADZ 5181, box 66 no. 457, ANZ-A; *New Zealand Herald*, 20 August 1894, p. 5.

⁴⁵² For example, *New Zealand Gazette*, 20 August 1884, p. 729.

⁴⁵³ *Observer*, 10 January 1891, p. 15; *New Zealand Herald*, 20 August 1894, p. 5.

⁴⁵⁴ *New Zealand Herald*, 20 August 1894, p. 5.

⁴⁵⁵ *Auckland Weekly News*, 17 November 1883, p. 9.

⁴⁵⁶ *Auckland Weekly News*, 6 December 1884, p. 19; for this company, see Russell Stone, *Makers of Fortune: A colonial business community and its fall* (Auckland, 1973), pp. 81-83.

⁴⁵⁷ *Auckland Weekly News*, 9 June 1894, p. 28.

In 1884 he held 100 of the 30,000 shares in T. & S. Morrin, merchants,⁴⁵⁸ and later was associated with one of the Morrin brothers in mining speculation.⁴⁵⁹ A shareholder in the Devonport and Lake Takapuna Tramway Company, he was appointed one of the two liquidators of it in 1887.⁴⁶⁰ He was a provisional director of the North New Zealand Woollen Manufacturing Company when it was floated,⁴⁶¹ and at the time of his death had 50 shares in the Bank of New Zealand.⁴⁶² In 1883, he was a provisional director of the Auckland Shipping Company, which was not floated.⁴⁶³

PORTER AS AN EMPLOYER

The *Observer*, an uncritical admirer of Porter, wrote in 1890 that ‘a busy worker for many long years, and now a large employer of labour, Porter commands the confidence of all sections of the community’.⁴⁶⁴ Three years later, it described him as ‘truly democratic’. A ‘working man in the strictest sense of the term’, he had ‘risen from a humble station in life by the exercise of exceptional energy, shrewdness and even talent, and his sympathies’ were ‘strongly with the working classes’.⁴⁶⁵ The *Auckland Tribune*, which as its name implied claimed to stand for the interests of the masses, disagreed. After quoting his claim during the 1890 election campaign to be ‘the only working man in the field, I started cutting flax’, it noted that he now belonged to a wealthy firm that exploited its workers. The *Tribune* saw him as a nominee of the Employers’ Association and opposed to trade unionism.⁴⁶⁶ It understood that Cousins and Atkin, of which he was a partner, paid ‘the lowest rates of wages’ and employed ‘an unduly large proportion of apprentices to do men’s work’. It claimed that

⁴⁵⁸ Company Files, BADZ 5181, box 39 no. 249, ANZ-A.

⁴⁵⁹ James Russell to Adam Porter, 31 May 1888, Letterbook no. 37, p. 258, Jackson and Russell Papers, MS 360, Library of the Auckland Institute and War Memorial Museum.

⁴⁶⁰ *Auckland Weekly News*, 2 October 1886, p. 7, 12 February 1887, p. 10.

⁴⁶¹ Company Files, BADZ 5181, box 49 no. 322, ANZ-A; *Waikato Times*, 14 July 1885, p. 3.

⁴⁶² Bank of New Zealand, Shares Register 1894-1905, p. 370, Bank of New Zealand Archives, Wellington.

⁴⁶³ *Thames Star*, 25 June 1883, p. 4.

⁴⁶⁴ *Observer*, 6 December 1890, p. 1.

⁴⁶⁵ *Observer*, 25 November 1893, p. 2.

⁴⁶⁶ *Tribune*, 6 December 1890, p. 1.

Porter wanted the Legislative Council to be elected by property holders only and had described manhood suffrage as a 'curse'.⁴⁶⁷ That Porter had such views on the upper house and manhood suffrage cannot be confirmed from any of his speeches. As to his exploiting workers, according to one obituary he was forced at an unspecified date to retire from the firm 'owing to ill-health' and then 'devoted himself to public affairs'.⁴⁶⁸ This dated his retirement from active involvement in the firm to some years before the *Tribune's* criticisms. In January 1891, he was only a sleeping partner.⁴⁶⁹

According to the *Observer*, Porter always had a 'keen interest in the welfare of the working classes'.⁴⁷⁰ On at least two occasions he assisted a union, chairing a meeting in 1892 between the manufacturers and the Tailoresses' Union to resolve disagreements over wages and apprenticeships.⁴⁷¹ The following year, he assisted the cause of Auckland tailoresses when a strike was threatened.⁴⁷² As he opposed the imposition of an export tax on kauri gum,⁴⁷³ in 1893 the *Observer* argued that he should have been one of the Royal Commissioners investigating the needs of the gumfields. Known to the workers 'as a working man who has known what hardship is', at the recent county council conference he and one other 'were the only two delegates present who opposed the export duty on gum in the interests of the gumdiggers'.⁴⁷⁴ It may be assumed, therefore, that the Auckland Trades and Labour Council expressed the genuine feeling of its members when, on hearing of his death, a 'vote of sympathy and condolence to Mrs Adam Porter was unanimously passed'.⁴⁷⁵

DEVELOPING TRANSPORT AND INDUSTRY

In 1873, Porter was added to a committee urging the government to construct a railway line from the Waikato to Thames.⁴⁷⁶ He was still a

⁴⁶⁷ *Tribune*, 6 December 1890, p. 5.

⁴⁶⁸ *New Zealand Herald*, 20 August 1894, p. 5.

⁴⁶⁹ *Observer*, 10 January 1891, p. 15.

⁴⁷⁰ *Observer*, 4 March 1893, p. 1.

⁴⁷¹ *Auckland Weekly News*, 10 September 1892, p. 17.

⁴⁷² *Observer*, 18 November 1893, p. 7.

⁴⁷³ *Observer*, 7 May 1892, p. 4.

⁴⁷⁴ *Observer*, 27 May 1893, p. 2.

⁴⁷⁵ *New Zealand Herald*, 20 August 1894, p. 5.

⁴⁷⁶ *Thames Advertiser*, 25 July 1873, p. 3.

member of the Thames Valley Railway Committee four years later.⁴⁷⁷ The first point of his election platform when standing for the county council in 1878 was the construction of this railway.⁴⁷⁸ When a private firm, the Thames Valley and Rotorua Railway Company, was formed in 1883 to construct a line to Rotorua, Porter held 100 of the 400,000 shares.⁴⁷⁹ One month after its registration, a delay in paying £5 due on these resulted in the threat of legal action.⁴⁸⁰ This company was unprofitable.⁴⁸¹

As with mining, Porter assisted industries in other ways besides investing in them. In 1885, he was a member of the committee organizing the New Zealand Industrial Exhibition.⁴⁸² Seven years later, he chaired a meeting to prepare for the Auckland Exhibition and was appointed to its organizing committee.⁴⁸³ In February 1891, the *Observer* considered that he 'ought to be the choice of the Auckland Chamber of Commerce as their new Chairman',⁴⁸⁴ and within a few days he was indeed elected,⁴⁸⁵ being re-elected every year until his death. In 1892, after a leading merchant Charles Cookman McMillan,⁴⁸⁶ who nominated him, 'was sure that all would agree' that he 'had discharged his duties admirably', the members re-elected him unanimously.⁴⁸⁷ The following year, when his re-election was proposed, Porter 'desired to retire, but the nomination was pressed by the meeting'. Before the vote was taken, Josiah Clifton Firth spoke 'with great admiration' of his 'admirable address', and the member who moved his re-election described it as 'full of information, and abounding in common sense'.⁴⁸⁸ His unanimous re-election in 1894 was the longest time that the chair had been occupied by one man. A leading merchant said that during

⁴⁷⁷ *Thames Advertiser*, 17 July 1877, p. 3.

⁴⁷⁸ *Thames Advertiser*, 1 November 1878, p. 2.

⁴⁷⁹ Company Files, BADZ 5181, box 37 no. 235, ANZ-A.

⁴⁸⁰ Jackson and Russell to Adam Porter, 28 July 1883, Letterbook no. 27, p. 87, Jackson and Russell Papers, MS 360, Library of the Auckland Institute and War Memorial Museum.

⁴⁸¹ Stone, pp. 74, 82-83, 89, 182, 185.

⁴⁸² *Auckland Weekly News*, 10 January 1885, p. 25.

⁴⁸³ *Auckland Weekly News*, 13 August 1892, p. 27.

⁴⁸⁴ *Observer*, 21 February 1891, p. 7.

⁴⁸⁵ *Observer*, 28 February 1891, p. 12.

⁴⁸⁶ See *New Zealand Herald*, 11 February 1928, p. 12.

⁴⁸⁷ *Auckland Weekly News*, 5 March 1892, p. 28.

⁴⁸⁸ *Auckland Weekly News*, 4 March 1893, p. 28.

the three years of Porter's chairmanship 'he had given attention and energy to the duties of his office such as had never been excelled by any'.⁴⁸⁹ Porter used his presidential addresses to draw attention to the developing industries in the region.⁴⁹⁰

AUCKLAND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Because of ill health, Porter had to retire as a partner in his father-in-law's firm in the mid-1880s. 'Having plenty of time at his disposal, he threw himself into public affairs'.⁴⁹¹ In 1886 he received equal highest votes for the Eden Terrace Licensing Committee, his first local government post in Auckland.⁴⁹² When living in Thames in the 1870s, he had been a member of a temperance movement, the Good Templars, and spoke against 'that demon drink, which was the curse of all nations'.⁴⁹³ In 1887 he was described as a 'strict blue ribbonite',⁴⁹⁴ indicating that his views had not changed. Yet when he stood for the Auckland North Licensing Committee in 1890, he did so as a 'moderate candidate', receiving the second highest number of votes, as he did in the election for the City East committee.⁴⁹⁵ According to the *Observer*, he was 'not a "bigotted" teetotaller, indeed those who have had a nip from his private bottle say it is prime stuff'.⁴⁹⁶ This journal also considered that he was the only licensing commissioner who had acted consistently over one hotel license.⁴⁹⁷ In 1891, he was elected licensing commissioner for City North and City South, again standing as a moderate.⁴⁹⁸ He was chairman of his local committee and also 'that of the Auckland city district until the present Licensing Act came into force', an obituary stated.⁴⁹⁹

⁴⁸⁹ *Auckland Weekly News*, 4 March 1894, p. 28.

⁴⁹⁰ For example, *Auckland Weekly News*, 5 March 1892, p. 28, 9 June 1894, p. 28.

⁴⁹¹ *Auckland Star*, 18 August 1894, p. 5.

⁴⁹² *Auckland Weekly News*, 27 February 1896, p. 22; *New Zealand Herald*, 1 March 1886, p. 4.

⁴⁹³ *Thames Advertiser*, 1 January 1875, p. 3, 15 January 1875, p. 3.

⁴⁹⁴ *Thames Advertiser*, 10 October 1887, p. 2.

⁴⁹⁵ *Auckland Weekly News*, 15 February 1890, p. 47, 22 February 1890, p. 9.

⁴⁹⁶ *Observer*, 21 June 1890, p. 6.

⁴⁹⁷ *Observer*, 21 June 1890, p. 6, 28 June 1890, p. 7.

⁴⁹⁸ *Observer*, 16 May 1891, p. 7; see also cartoons in 6 June 1891, p. 13, 13 June 1891, p. 5.

⁴⁹⁹ *New Zealand Herald*, 20 August 1894, p. 5.

When a direct veto of liquor outlets was proposed in 1893, Porter 'had no hesitation in saying that he had done as much for the temperance cause as any other ten stone of humanity in New Zealand. He was not, however, prepared to swallow the direct vote by any minority'. Using his own Eden Terrace district as an illustration of how few voted in licensing elections, he criticized the direct veto, wanting prohibition only when 'a large majority' sought it:

For these opinions a pen had been placed through his name by the Temperance party. He was not prepared to surrender his views. He would not say, like the American politician, "These, gentlemen, are my views; but I can change them to suit." He was not going to change them for any section of the community.⁵⁰⁰

'For years', according to an obituary, and certainly from 1886 to 1889, Porter was chairman of the Eden Terrace Road Board.⁵⁰¹ In this post, he was 'instrumental in effecting many local improvements, notably forming a fire brigade and providing a water supply'.⁵⁰² A more important board was the Auckland Harbour Board, of which he was elected chairman six months before his death.⁵⁰³ The *Observer* anticipated that he would make an 'excellent' chairman, and published flattering portraits of him in that role.⁵⁰⁴ It expected him to 'make things "hum" ',⁵⁰⁵ and reported that he started work 'in a business-like, common-sense way that augers well indeed for the future'.⁵⁰⁶ One appointment he was rumoured to have declined in 1894 was that of Justice of the Peace: the *Observer* portrayed him rejecting it as an insult.⁵⁰⁷ According to this source, he thought there would 'be time enough for that when he pays three-farthings in the pound',⁵⁰⁸ a reference to some prominent Auckland bankrupts.

⁵⁰⁰ *New Zealand Herald*, 15 November 1893, p. 6.

⁵⁰¹ *New Zealand Herald*, 20 August 1894, p. 5; *Auckland Weekly News*, 14 August 1886, p. 19, 13 August 1887, p. 18; *Observer*, 23 November 1889, p. 3.

⁵⁰² *New Zealand Herald*, 20 August 1894, p. 5.

⁵⁰³ *Auckland Weekly News*, 24 February 1894, p. 18.

⁵⁰⁴ *Observer*, 24 February 1894, p. 16; cartoons, *Observer*, 24 February 1894, p. 15, 17 March 1894, p. 1.

⁵⁰⁵ *Observer*, 10 March 1894, p. 6.

⁵⁰⁶ *Observer*, 17 March 1894, p. 2.

⁵⁰⁷ *Observer*, 19 May 1894, p. 20, cartoon, 26 May 1894, p. 1.

⁵⁰⁸ *Observer*, 26 May 1894, p. 3.

NATIONAL POLITICS

An obituary stated that Porter ‘always took a lively and intelligent interest in political matters’.⁵⁰⁹ The first time he was involved in national politics was in May 1873, at a Thames meeting to discuss the murder near Cambridge by Maori of a surveyor, Timothy Sullivan. He seconded the resolution, ‘That this meeting pledges itself to support the authorities in any manner deemed requisite to give lasting protection to the inhabitants of the frontier settlements of the country, and to terminate forever the power and influence of the so-called Maori king’. He considered it ‘marvellous’ that ‘200,000 British colonists should submit to the way the Native Office policy was conducted. It cost £10 a head for every native in the country’. Shortly before the mail ‘was stuck up in Ohinemuri’, and the Native Agent ‘sent up flour and rum, and begged to have the mail returned. He did not think that guarding bridges in the Waikato was all that should be done’, instead calling for the abolition of the Native Office so that Sir Donald McLean, the Native Minister, would no longer ‘have the handling of £30,000 for which he was not called on to account. Some men were of opinion that this was spent in the purchase of stations’, a reference to McLean’s acquisition of large areas of land as his personal property.⁵¹⁰ ‘The meeting ought to take a determined stand and do something more than pass resolutions’.⁵¹¹ His speech was described as ‘caustic’ and ‘telling’.⁵¹² Immediately afterwards, Porter was elected to the committee of the Native Administration Reform League.⁵¹³ Three months later, at a meeting discussing building a railway line to Thames he claimed that many Maori landowners ‘were in favour of the line, but it was probable that McLean would raise the native difficulty to try and upset the work’.⁵¹⁴

Allied to the question of how to deal with what was seen as Maori intransigence was his desire to open their land to settlement by small farmers. In 1875, he wanted agricultural leases in Ohinemuri to be larger

⁵⁰⁹ *Thames Star*, 18 August 1894, p. 2.

⁵¹⁰ See Alan Ward, ‘Donald McLean’, *Dictionary of New Zealand Biography*, vol. 1, 1769-1869 (Wellington, 1990), pp. 256-257.

⁵¹¹ *Thames Advertiser*, 14 May 1873, p. 3.

⁵¹² *Daily Southern Cross*, 15 May 1873, p. 3.

⁵¹³ *Thames Advertiser*, 17 May 1873, p. 3.

⁵¹⁴ *Thames Advertiser*, 5 August 1873, p. 3.

than 50 acres, and attacked attempts by speculators to acquire land there and in the Aroha Block.⁵¹⁵ The following year, he claimed that the depression was 'partly due to the fact that the Government had not opened the land'.⁵¹⁶ At a meeting held 12 months later about Upper Thames land not being open to settlement, he spoke in favour of it being offered under the deferred payment system to Thames residents, and said he had criticized Firth to his face for not fulfilling his promise to provide land.⁵¹⁷

Porter was one of three Ohinemuri residents appointed 'by a very large meeting of settlers, miners, and traders' in 1878 to be a 'vigilance committee' to protect their interests. When they interviewed McLean in March, Porter asked that the district be purchased and opened to settlement under the Homestead Act in sections larger than 50 acres. There was 'no reason why it should not be the same as the area allowed in the South of the colony, say 320 acres'. If the freehold could not be acquired, then the terms should be the same as at Nelson:

I have no hesitation to say that the welfare of the country has been retarded by the state of things which has existed at the Upper Thames. At the same time the settlers have made improvements that might bear a favourable comparison with special settlements which I could name. A great deal of money has been expended on these improvements. The work actually done would compare favourably with the special settlement of Katikati, for instance, or of special settlement elsewhere, where the land has been obtained on much more favourable terms.

Porter was always opposed to special settlements and was critical of one planned for Wairakau, near the future Te Aroha. 'When Sir Donald McLean was up there, myself and others were appointed to interview him. He said he had paid off the Ngatihaua, and the land would soon be thrown open. But I said then that I feared there would be no land for settlement' for Thames people.⁵¹⁸ In 1880, he was on the committee of the Thames Land Association.⁵¹⁹ At a meeting at Owharoa the following year, he and Clem Cornes gave George Vesey Stewart, the leader of the Katikati Special

⁵¹⁵ *Thames Advertiser*, 27 July 1875, p. 3.

⁵¹⁶ *Thames Advertiser*, 22 February 1876, p. 3.

⁵¹⁷ *Thames Advertiser*, 5 February 1877, p. 3.

⁵¹⁸ *Auckland Weekly News*, 16 March 1878, p. 16.

⁵¹⁹ *Thames Star*, 16 January 1880, p. 2.

Settlement, ‘a severe cross-examination’ over his land dealings.⁵²⁰ When chairman of the Auckland Chamber of Commerce he continued to urge the government to open up land for settlement and assist settlers by constructing roads.⁵²¹

In April 1878, one expression of Porter’s views about Maori led to a physical clash, as explained by Sergeant Albert Russell of Mackaytown.⁵²² An article in the *Thames Advertiser* had dealt with Maori stopping road works and destroying a bridge at Rotokohu, near Karangahake, because they claimed they were outside the goldfield boundary. Its Owharoa Correspondent had reported Maori working on the Mackaytown road boasting of doing very little work, and after they were told that Porter was this correspondent he was intercepted between Paeroa and Mackaytown and they knew he had written the article. ‘Whanga with other Maoris followed him up the street in Paeroa’ and tried to push him off his horse so that they could duck him in the river. When ‘Porter took off his Stirrups Iron, Whanga then pulled up a footboard belonging to Mahoney’s front path & attempted to hit Porter but did not succeed’. After the row ‘subsided without any further disturbance’, Porter asked a constable to arrest Whanga, but when asked to lay an information did not do so.⁵²³ This was the only time that Porter was known to have been in physical conflict with Maori (or anyone else), and on other occasions their contacts were cordial. In 1879, he gave a guided tour of Auckland to a party of prominent Maori that included Hoani Nahi,⁵²⁴ a prominent Ngati Maru rangatira who was a member of Grey’s Executive Council,⁵²⁵ and in following years had close and apparently friendly contact with Hone Werahiko, except when Werahiko suspected he was claiming to have discovered gold at Te Aroha.⁵²⁶

Porter’s dislike of land sharks and support for the settlement of small farmers was similar of Sir George Grey, and from 1876 onwards he was

⁵²⁰ *Thames Advertiser*, 31 October 1881, p. 3.

⁵²¹ For example, *New Zealand Herald*, 29 March 1894, p. 6.

⁵²² See Applications for Land Grants 1889-1892, no. 663, Lands and Survey Department, LS 66/7, ANZ-W; *Auckland Weekly News*, 14 February 1907, p. 23.

⁵²³ Sgt. Albert Russell to Sub-Inspector Bullen, 28 April 1878, Mackaytown Armed Constabulary Letterbook and General Order Book 1875-1878, BAVA 4895/1a, ANZ-A.

⁵²⁴ See Malcolm Fraser, *New Zealand Parliamentary Record* (Wellington, 1913), p. 102.

⁵²⁵ *Thames Advertiser*, 4 June 1879, p. 3.

⁵²⁶ See paper on Hone Werahiko.

mentioned as supporting Grey and his policies.⁵²⁷ In September 1879, he was elected to the committee of the Liberal Association, but two months later was in conflict with the Ohinemuri Liberal Association, which asked him to resign from the county council.⁵²⁸ When 'Daldy' McWilliams was shot near Paeroa by a faction of Ngati Hako in that year,⁵²⁹ he condemned the response of Grey's government as 'disgraceful. Since that affair other natives had become emboldened by the success of the Ngatihakos, and obstructed settlement in various ways, and it was high time that they were taught that they could not break the law with impunity'. Porter also wanted McWilliams compensated.⁵³⁰

In 1884, Porter was a member of the Auckland Parliamentary Union,⁵³¹ which held mock parliamentary debates. Six years later, he considered standing for the real parliament. In April 1890, the *Observer* noted that George Vesey Stewart was 'smelling around after Te Aroha seat, but if Mr Adam Porter should oppose him, Stewart will be defeated easily'.⁵³² It considered Porter to be 'the coming man' in that electorate.⁵³³ Other newspapers also expected him to stand.⁵³⁴ When visiting the Tui mines in May, Porter confirmed he would.⁵³⁵ Five months later he had to announce that, 'owing to the state of his health, it was doubtful if he could, if elected for the Te Aroha electorate, devote as much of his time and attention as he would like for the benefit of the district'. Accordingly, he withdrew to enable another mining candidate to be found, to his supporters' regret, because they had expected him to win.⁵³⁶

The following month, despite no reported improvement in his health, he announced that he had agreed to stand for Auckland City, becoming the last candidate to enter the contest for an electorate returning three

⁵²⁷ *Thames Advertiser*, 3 January 1876, p. 3, 19 May 1876, p. 3, 11 August 1879, p. 3.

⁵²⁸ *Thames Advertiser*, 23 September 1879, p. 3, 10 November 1879, p. 3.

⁵²⁹ See paper on the Daldy McWilliams 'outrage'.

⁵³⁰ County Council, *Thames Advertiser*, 5 December 1879, p. 3.

⁵³¹ *Auckland Weekly News*, 20 September 1884, p. 19.

⁵³² *Observer*, 12 April 1890, p. 6.

⁵³³ *Observer*, 19 April 1890, p. 6.

⁵³⁴ *Auckland Star*, 10 April 1890, p. 4.

⁵³⁵ *Te Aroha News*, 10 May 1890, p. 2.

⁵³⁶ *Auckland Weekly News*, 18 October 1890, p. 14.

members.⁵³⁷ The *Observer* supported him as one of the three out of the seven standing 'who would best and most honestly serve the electors':

PORTER (Adam of that ilk) is running in double harness with his brither Scot, Dr. Wallis. Porter has a firm grasp of the politics of the day, and is in favour of such drastic retrenchment as will enable us to abolish the Property Tax without imposing any new tax in its stead.... Though not yet educated up to the Land Tax and State Bank, Porter has that judicial mind which will make him accept these as soon as he sees their justice and practicability. This is shown by his utterances on the question of taxing the foreign bond-holders - utterances which I would call statesmanlike if I didn't want to offend him by seeming to indulge in flattery. Straight, practical, shrewd, self-taught ... Porter would make an excellent representative. As a lobbyist, he would be simply invaluable to an Auckland party. He does not keep his bank account (which is substantial) at the B.N.Z.; he follows John Bryce as a leader; he would give practical support to schemes for encouraging local industries, and I believe would oppose log-rolling and extravagance. He ought to receive the hearty support of all classes.⁵³⁸

A kindly cartoon portrayed him as one of the 'best candidates'.⁵³⁹ Porter and Wallis published a joint advertisement:

IMPORTANT!
YOUR VOTE AND INTEREST
Are respectfully solicited for
DR WALLIS
AND
MR ADAM PORTER,
THE
GENUINE LIBERAL CANDIDATES,
Who will honestly act according to their convictions regardless of
selfish personal considerations.
These Candidates, fettered by no questionable pledges, will try to
secure equal laws for rich and poor alike, and will do their public
duties without fear or favour, affection or ill-will.
Vote for these Candidates and Freedom of Speech, Freedom of
Contract, Retrenchment, Economy, and Progress.⁵⁴⁰

⁵³⁷ *Thames Star*, 27 November 1890, p. 2; *Observer*, 6 December 1890, p. 9.

⁵³⁸ *Observer*, 6 December 1890, p. 1.

⁵³⁹ Cartoon, *Observer*, 6 December 1890, p. 13.

⁵⁴⁰ *Observer*, 6 December 1890, p. 14.

Arthur Desmond,⁵⁴¹ a self-appointed leader of the workers, described Porter as ‘the third Employers’ Association candidate’. Being ‘a capital button-holing electioneering canvasser’, he was ‘up and down Queen-street all day shaking hands with everyone who has a vote. Personally he does not seem to be a bad fellow, but he is one of the Ewington, McMillan gang of petty capitalists’.⁵⁴² Frederick George Ewington was secretary of the Auckland Employer’s Association,⁵⁴³ and Charles Cookman McMillan, a political conservative, was a successful speculator in Hauraki mines.⁵⁴⁴ Desmond also accused Porter of being run by the Globo Assets Company,⁵⁴⁵ a reference to the financial difficulties of the Bank of New Zealand.⁵⁴⁶

An *Observer* cartoon of the campaign as a horse race had Porter riding ‘on Adamant, by Goldfield - Local Industry’,⁵⁴⁷ and it wrote that he had ‘advanced steadily’ in the betting and would be the favourite before the poll closed.⁵⁴⁸ However, his chances may have been stymied by what the Press Association described as ‘one of the most sensational meetings’ of the campaign.⁵⁴⁹ Porter spoke after Wallis received a hard time for his views and how he expressed them, being drowned out during his long eulogy of the Queen. Porter said ‘he had come there to briefly give his own views, and not those of any other man outside the colony or in it’. He professed himself disappointed by Wallis’ speech, and said that the only view they had in common was retrenchment:

He pointed out that a mere change in the incidence of taxation was not a saving, and he contended that neither the Government,

⁵⁴¹ Desmond’s statement reported in *New Zealand Herald*, 2 December 1890, p. 6.

⁵⁴² *Tribune*, 6 December 1890, p. 5.

⁵⁴³ See *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 2, p. 304; Paul Husbands, ‘Frederick George Ewington’, *Dictionary of New Zealand Biography: vol. 2: 1870-1900* (Wellington, 1993), pp. 136-137.

⁵⁴⁴ See *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 2, p. 435.

⁵⁴⁵ *Observer*, 6 December 1890, p. 7.

⁵⁴⁶ For example, *Auckland Weekly News*, 2 November 1889, p. 11; *New Zealand Herald*, 4 November 1889, p. 9; *AJHR*, 1890, I-7; *Observer*, 5 July 1890, p. 7, 9 August 1890, p. 3, 15 November 1890, pp. 3, 14, 28 February 1891, p. 10, 13 June 1891, p. 6.

⁵⁴⁷ Cartoon, *Observer*, 6 December 1890, p. 5.

⁵⁴⁸ *Observer*, 6 December 1890, p. 7.

⁵⁴⁹ *Thames Star*, 3 December 1890, p. 2.

the heads of departments, or even members of Parliament were the proper persons to bring up a report on retrenchment, as they all had friends, but the heads of departments should be given three months' sick leave to enjoy themselves, and then send their best men to take charge of those departments and bring up a report, and from that let retrenchment be carried out. He should also advocate that all Bills which had passed a second reading should be the first business of the ensuing session. He was in favour of a land tax on the unimproved value, and had carried it into effect in Westland long before it was thought of by some of those who now advocated it, as long ago, in fact, as 1866, and he held the same views now. But it would be no use putting on a land tax without an income tax. On the Chinese question, he said no one hated the Chinese more than he did, and he would legislate them out of New Zealand if he could. (Cheers.) He believed people were more robbed by the Customs duties than by the property tax, and he illustrated his views on this point. He was also in favour of taxing absentees who drew their revenue from the colony. He also referred to the jobbery of the district railways, and said that all but one small one - the Kaihu Valley Railway - was taken over, but one man was honest enough to oppose it, (name) that was Edwin Mitchelson,⁵⁵⁰ and had another man been in power it would have been taken over as well as the others. (Cheers and uproar.) He also alluded to the danger from the indebtedness of Harbour Boards and the attempts made to induce Government to take them over and said that any man voting in favour of Government taking over the harbour endowments of New Plymouth, Timaru, Oamaru, &c, should be banished out of the colony. He would insist that the estimates should be placed on the table with the Governor's speech before the Government had time to square the numbers, and this would save thousands of pounds in time, talk, and light. In conclusion, he referred to a paragraph in the Tribune, in which an attempt was made to slander him, and he was glad to see Mr Desmond present to hear what he said. He was as great an admirer of Sir George Grey as anyone, but he would remind them that the mantle of Sir George Grey had not fallen on Arthur Desmond, and the fact of tacking on three men to Sir George Grey was what laid Sir George up. (Cheers and uproar.) He had been put down as a nominee of the Bank of New Zealand. He said that statement was a lie. (Cheers.) He cared as little for the Bank of New Zealand as for any man here. He never owed them a shilling. (A Voice:

⁵⁵⁰ For his political and business career, see 'The Hon. E. Mitchelson's Story', in Edith May Story, 'Our Fathers Have Told Us' (typescript, Alexander Turnbull Library, c. 1920), pp. 129-134; Janice C. Mogford, 'Edwin Mitchelson', *Dictionary of New Zealand Biography: vol. 2: 1870-1900* (Wellington, 1993), p. 331.

“Ewington.”) He did not care a dump for Ewington. He owed Ewington nothing, and Ewington owned him nothing. He was only responsible for his own views, and if anyone told Mr Desmond that he (Mr Porter) was nominated by the Bank of New Zealand it was a lie, and the man who said so was a liar. Mr Porter took his chair amidst loud cheers and calls for Desmond.

When fielding questions, Porter declared that ‘he would not favour borrowing for any purpose whatever’. Desmond then mounted the platform, announcing that ‘he knew for a fact that money of the Globo Assets Company was being used in running candidates, and that some of it was in the hands of the Employers’ Association for that purpose’. Challenged, Desmond stated ‘he had not the proofs with him, but he was prepared to prove it. He wrote what was written in the Tribune, and he had nothing to withdraw’. He moved that the meeting had no confidence in Porter and the two other candidates he claimed were backed by the Employers’ Association, and read its alleged secret circular backing them. Porter challenged Desmond to produce proof at his next meeting, ‘and if he proved what he said let them scratch his (Mr Porter’s) name out, but if not they should blackball Mr Desmond out of the country. (Cheers and uproar.)’.⁵⁵¹

The Press Association reported that after Porter ‘received a fairly patient hearing’, Desmond, ‘one of the leaders in the labor party’, read a letter ‘alleged to have been written’ by Mitchelson to Ewington which did not refer to Porter but to wealthy men like McMillan who should be encouraged to stand to ensure the defeat of labour candidates. ‘These words caused a tremendous scene, and after much uproarious conduct the meeting broke up in great confusion’. Mitchelson promptly swore an affidavit that the letter was a forgery, and the affair ‘caused great excitement’.⁵⁵² Desmond did not provide the requested proof, and the managing director of the Bank of New Zealand Estates Company, otherwise the Globo Assets Company, declared that Porter was right and Desmond was a liar, for it had not provided financial support for these candidates.⁵⁵³

The *New Zealand Herald* ‘decidedly’ supported Porter as its second preference:

⁵⁵¹ *New Zealand Herald*, 2 December 1890, p. 6.

⁵⁵² *Thames Star*, 3 December 1890, p. 2; see also *New Zealand Herald*, 4 December 1890, p. 6, 5 December 1890, p. 5; *Observer*, 6 December 1890, p. 14; *Thames Star*, 16 December 1890, p. 2.

⁵⁵³ Letter from F. Nelson George, *New Zealand Herald*, 4 December 1890, p. 6.

He is emphatically one of ourselves. With every one of the interests of this community he is identified. For many years he was at the Thames, and he yet retains interests in that locality. For a considerable time past he has been a resident of Auckland; he has taken an active part in many public movements, and has been a member of several of our local bodies. Mr Porter was by no means anxious to go to Parliament. He would gladly have given way to any man considered better qualified. But he consented at last reluctantly, and simply because it seemed that the field was to be left vacant, to be occupied by the nominees of Mr Desmond. During his canvass he has made rapid progress in popular favour, and has shown himself to be made of good stuff. His speeches have been well delivered, sound in thought and information, and he has displayed much readiness and cleverness in dealing with hostile questions and demonstrations. Mr Porter is so thoroughly acquainted with the goldfields that he will be most useful in every matter connected with them, and we anticipate that his election will be of great advantage in that department. He would therefore get our second vote.⁵⁵⁴

On election day, ‘many were confident’ that Porter, ‘who had appeared late in the field, would be amongst those elected’. He received 1,134 votes, 76 less than the last successful candidate.⁵⁵⁵ One explanation of the result was that, despite putting up ‘a good fight’, he had ‘entered the field too late’.⁵⁵⁶ According to the *Observer*, ‘general regret’ was expressed at his defeat, and its Christmas Number hoped that he would join parliament within six months.⁵⁵⁷

Two months later, there was a rumour that he would stand for the Te Aroha seat should it be declared vacant.⁵⁵⁸ Later that same month, he was considered likely to stand for the vacant Auckland seat of Newton, but then stood aside to allow Sir George Grey to become its representative in an uncontested by-election.⁵⁵⁹ He was ‘sure of a seat somewhere soon’, in the opinion of the *Observer*.⁵⁶⁰ In April, when asked to stand in the Te Aroha

⁵⁵⁴ Editorial, *New Zealand Herald*, 5 December 1890, p. 4.

⁵⁵⁵ *New Zealand Herald*, 6 December 1890, p. 5.

⁵⁵⁶ *New Zealand Herald*, 20 August 1894, p. 5.

⁵⁵⁷ *Observer*, 13 December 1890, p. 3, Christmas Number 1890, p. 4.

⁵⁵⁸ *Thames Advertiser*, 4 February 1891, p. 2.

⁵⁵⁹ *Observer*, 28 February 1891, p. 7, 7 March 1891, p. 7; *Thames Advertiser*, 27 February 1891, p. 2.

⁵⁶⁰ *Observer*, 7 March 1891, p. 7.

by-election, he asked for time to consider.⁵⁶¹ Later that month, his friends reportedly claimed that he had been 'befriended' by the Liberal Government.⁵⁶² Then a rumour was published that he had 'telegraphed to the Government expressing himself willing to run as a Government supporter. The Government did not seem to be satisfied as to the zeal of the candidate, for it is said - reply came back, "This is not *porter*, but only 'half and half!'"⁵⁶³ This reference to alcoholic drinks and to his tepid Liberalism was matched by his tepid interest in the by-election, which he did not contest.

The *Observer*, still wanting him in parliament, referred to him in February 1892 as the 'coming man' in politics, a comment prompted by his attending a meeting supporting the Stratford route for the main trunk railway.⁵⁶⁴ At the end of the year, he was stated to be interested in getting into parliament.⁵⁶⁵ The caption of a cartoon published in March 1893 stated that it showed 'the popular Mr Adam Porter holding a private and confidential confab with the Hon W__ R__ at the South British corner. The puzzle is: What does it mean? Has it any political significance? We think not, because Porter's chief is, politically, dead'.⁵⁶⁶ (William Rolleston was a leading conservative whose career was indeed dead.)⁵⁶⁷ Two months later, it told 'Elector' that Porter deserved 'all the good things you say of him' because he had been involved in 'a good many' issues 'in the interest of the people'.⁵⁶⁸

In June, Porter was reported as being likely to stand for Auckland City in the coming election.⁵⁶⁹ A flattering *Observer* sketch of him published in the following month announced that he would definitely do so,⁵⁷⁰ and the next issue claimed that parliamentarians 'would have liked to see Porter

⁵⁶¹ *Thames Advertiser*, 14 April 1891, p. 2; *Auckland Weekly News*, 18 April 1891, p. 18.

⁵⁶² Hamilton Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 25 April 1891, p. 10.

⁵⁶³ 'Mercurio', 'Local Gossip', *Auckland Weekly News*, 25 April 1891, p. 7.

⁵⁶⁴ *Observer*, 13 February 1892, p. 6.

⁵⁶⁵ *Observer*, 24 December 1892, p. 5.

⁵⁶⁶ Cartoon, *Observer*, 4 March 1893, p. 7.

⁵⁶⁷ See W.J. Gardner, 'William Rolleston', *Dictionary of New Zealand Biography*, vol. 1, 1769-1869 (Wellington, 1990), pp. 372-374.

⁵⁶⁸ 'Replies to Correspondents', *Observer*, 20 May 1893, p. 20.

⁵⁶⁹ *Observer*, 17 June 1893, p. 8.

⁵⁷⁰ *Observer*, 15 July 1893, p. 16.

(Adam, good man) sent down to represent Auckland'.⁵⁷¹ It anticipated in September that the end of the parliamentary session would be a signal for him to declare his candidacy. 'Bravo Adam (Stout) Porter!',⁵⁷² a reference not to his physique, for he weighed only ten stone,⁵⁷³ but to his support for the policies of Sir Robert Stout. At the end of the month, it announced that Porter would definitely stand for Auckland City 'on a strictly independent "ticket" '. Porter was 'a hard-headed man' who was 'intimately associated with the commercial and industrial interests of Auckland' and would 'have strong support from both Liberals and Conservatives, without regard to party'.⁵⁷⁴

His brief election advertisement simply announced he was standing;⁵⁷⁵ the *Observer* wrote that although he was 'understood to be favourable to the Government policy, [he] does not commit himself'.⁵⁷⁶ Porter was not selected as a Liberal candidate because he 'refused absolutely to answer the [Liberal] Association's question, and there is an end of it. Mr Porter is nothing if not independent, and he says he will not be led by the nose by this or any other Association'.⁵⁷⁷ He stood as an independent Liberal, with the *Observer's* support.⁵⁷⁸

According to the *New Zealand Herald*, Porter's address to a November meeting 'received an attentive and sympathetic attendance'. He began by referring to his speech three years previously:

He then advocated a land tax upon the unimproved values. He was then told that he was ahead of the times, and that he had a great deal to learn before he undertook to advocate such a policy. However, that was now the law of the land and the policy of the day, and he believed there was not one person in the hall that did not approve of such legislation. (Applause.) He also advocated three years ago the extension of the franchise to women. He had always advocated this, and he was now exceedingly glad to congratulate the ladies upon their enfranchisement.

⁵⁷¹ *Observer*, 22 July 1893, p. 6.

⁵⁷² *Observer*, 23 September 1893, p. 3.

⁵⁷³ Stated in his speech in *New Zealand Herald*, 15 November 1893, p. 6.

⁵⁷⁴ *Observer*, 30 September 1893, p. 3.

⁵⁷⁵ Advertisement, *Observer*, 21 October 1893, p. 16.

⁵⁷⁶ *Observer*, 14 October 1893, p. 3.

⁵⁷⁷ *Observer*, 4 November 1893, p. 3.

⁵⁷⁸ For example, cartoons, *Observer*, 4 November 1893, p. 13, 11 November 1893, p. 12.

(It should be noted that his wife did not sign the 1893 petition seeking women's suffrage.)⁵⁷⁹

He then advocated a tax upon absentees, and that was now the law of the country. He considered it was a just law. (Applause.) He had always opposed the taxing of the bondholders. He had opposed this single-handed. Everyone in the audience that he had addressed was against him then, and yet no one had since moved in the direction of putting on this tax. No one was suggesting it now.

Party government in New Zealand was 'a farce and a failure', and he wanted the interests of the colony put before the interests of politicians. During the last session of parliament some measures were put through 'by brute strength and physical force', with debate going on night and day with all but 21 of the members asleep. 'The sooner an executive was elected which would be responsible to the country, and not to any party in the House, for their actions, the better it would be for the country'. Auckland had received insufficient of the government funds set aside to acquire Maori land or to build roads, bridges, and similar works. 'As far as he was concerned, there would be no more borrowing' and he would not increase indebtedness 'by one penny'. He criticized Joseph Ward's increasing the country's liabilities and decreasing its sinking fund, and wanted some of the debt paid immediately and not left for future generations to repay.

Porter denied that John Ballance had had the right to nominate Stout as his successor as Premier, thereby implicitly supporting Seddon's leadership, although stating that nobody in the Liberal Party was 'fit to be his successor'. The government had spent far too little on acquiring Maori land. Mentioning good land north of Auckland that remained in Maori ownership and on which not one shilling of rates had been paid, he commented that 'of course the native did not use the roads. He flew - they all know that. (Laughter)'. After getting more laughs by stating that no Maori or European was 'willing to be taxed if he could get out of it', he referred to the Chamber of Commerce, which some looked upon 'as a Conservative body. How any sane man could fancy that the Chamber of Commerce, with Adam Porter as chairman, could be a Conservative body was a mystery to himself'. Its members were of all political colours, but united to further the interests of Auckland and New Zealand. His 1890

⁵⁷⁹ See index to this petition, Archives New Zealand, Wellington.

resolution in the Chamber of Commerce about how to open up Maori land had been largely adopted by the government, which 'had jumped his claim in this respect'. This land should be either leased or sold, the money being paid to the owners once identified:

They spoke of the great landed estates by which so much land was being locked up - and a great pity it was for the colony - and yet these 40,000 natives because they happened to have been a little longer in the colony than the Europeans had, and were a little darker in colour, had no right to lock up all this land. It was the duty of every man and woman in the colony to say that the natives should be on this footing no longer, and that they should no longer be fed upon pap and lollies. (Laughter and applause.) If they would not settle the lands themselves the Europeans must do it for them. They had absolutely less than one per cent of their lands under cultivation. Their lands were growing rabbits and other things of a like undesirable nature, and anyone who had natives for neighbours would know what a nuisance they were.

Referring to the main trunk railway, he preferred the route via Stratford. 'He flattered himself that he knew something about mining, as much as anyone in Auckland. (A voice: You know a deal too much.) "If you knew a little more it would do you no harm," retorted Mr Porter'. He outlined the economic value of mining and 'was sure' that it 'had not had a fair share of the expenditure'. Every parliamentarian should 'see that the mining industry was properly looked after. ("What about the leases?") "Well, what about them? Have you got one?" retorted Mr Porter. (Applause.)'. He complained about the jumping of claims when hard-working miners 'wanted a spell', and when a man interjected that leases were held for speculative purposes, he responded that 'no man would hold a mine for speculative purposes. It was exactly the same as a man holding a piece of land for speculative purposes. There was no difference'.

When attacking any form of government borrowing, an interjector asked, 'What about the ladies?'; he responded 'I will come to the ladies presently ... they are above you now, where they ought to have been long ago', which provoked 'renewed laughter'. (He did not 'come to the ladies' later.) Whilst praising Ward as 'the best man in the present Ministry, and the best financier in the House', an implied slight to his old friend Seddon, he criticized Ward's loan conversions, which would, in private business, mean bankruptcy. Too high a price had been paid for the Cheviot Estate, which he had inspected, and preferred land purchases being made in the

North Island. After claiming to have 'lived in every provincial district in the colony', he stated that, as there was much good land available for settlement 'there should be no necessity to buy anybody's estate till that was settled, and everyone who wanted a farm should be able to get it'. While praising the land tax as 'a wonderful improvement on the property tax', he wanted all exemptions removed to ensure that it was 'fair and just' and that everyone was 'taxed in proportion to his ability to pay'. Those who benefited from a railway being constructed through their land should help meet its cost, and areas without a railway should not. 'Some people said that the railways should be worked like the post office. He would not like to face the electors at the end of twelve months after such, and present the finance. In his opinion all the rotten eggs in Auckland would not be sufficient that night', for the railways were worked 'on far more economical lines'.

Denying that the education system was a godless one, he regretted that the Catholic bishops 'had thought fit to unfurl the flag and proclaim a holy war' against it. Ministers of all denominations should use schools to teach their faith, and when a member of a Thames school committee he had 'tried to get the ministers interested in this question'. Parents and clergymen should do their duty and 'religious instruction should continue from early childhood until the man or woman went into the grave'. But there should be no subsidies 'to any religious denomination in any shape or form. (Applause.) It would be almost the same thing as endowing a State Church'. He wanted more scholarships to enable more children to attend university.

After speaking for over an hour and a half, Porter said he would end by considering 'what king should reign over them. The question that was continually before the country was this: Was it Rolleston, or Seddon, or Stout? He would say Seddon, and say no more'. In answering questions he revealed that he was opposed to the totalisator and 'would do his best to prevent gambling being carried on in tobacco shops and in the street'. He would use the tariff to protect the livelihoods of clothing workers and ironworkers. 'As to an elective Governor, so long as the colony remained attached to the British Empire he would like the Governor nominated from Home. It was a very slight link. If they had an elected Governor he would sooner cut the painter and have a president'.⁵⁸⁰

⁵⁸⁰ *New Zealand Herald*, 15 November 1893, p. 6.

The editorial in the *New Zealand Herald* on 16 November examined Porter's 'very good' speech, which showed 'a great many things which ought to be done, and a great many others which ought to be avoided'. But he had undermined it by declaring himself a supporter of Seddon. Whilst recognizing that he would claim to be 'independent in his support of the Government, and if they attempted to do what he thought to be wrong he would vote against them', it was suspicious of such claims because others had said the same before turning into party hacks. Porter thought party government had been a failure, and yet he supported 'a Ministry that has worked the party engine to an extent never known before'. Despite opposing government policy on borrowing and its insufficient spending on acquiring Maori land, he supported it. While his speech, 'as a whole', was 'admirable', by promising to support Seddon he would 'not be able to carry out any part of it. Why does he not say that when next Parliament meets he will, if elected, endeavour to have a Ministry formed which will carry out his programme as nearly as possible'.⁵⁸¹

The subsequent editorial commenting on the 'outsiders' noted that Porter, after declared himself to be a follower of Seddon, had 'delivered the most crushing speech that has yet been given in the city against the most prominent features of the Ministerial procedure and policy'. As he differed so 'completely', his 'proper and consistent course' was to seek 'a Government more in conformity with his views'.⁵⁸² In the same issue it was announced that Porter had 'thrown up the sponge. He has retired from the contest. We are not surprised', for his address had

killed him as dead as a door nail. It was in truth a curious hotchpotch. He began by cursing the Government and ended by praying for them. He denounced their policy, he condemned their administration, he ridiculed their new-fangled financial notions, and, marvellous to relate, wound up by declaring that they were men after his own heart, and with ludicrous self-abasement, prostrating himself at the feet of the Premier, and in the sight of all men humbly and meekly kissed the toe of his political Pope, Richard Seddon.... We are sorry for Mr Porter. He has many estimable qualities. And he did his best to be nice all round, to make himself acceptable to everybody, to follow up a smack with a kiss in quite a playful and coquettish humour. The Nice Person, as Sydney Smith somewhere says, is an enviable individual. We all like him. When anyone is wanted for a party he is the first

⁵⁸¹ Editorial, *New Zealand Herald*, 16 November 1893, p. 4.

⁵⁸² Editorial, *New Zealand Herald*, 17 November 1893, p. 4.

thought of. And if we had a child to be christened or a daughter to be married, we would, for a certainty, invite Mr Adam Porter. But the Nice Person is out of place in politics....

Mr Porter did not wish to jostle anybody. He was studiously anxious to please all sides. He strove to appear humble, deferential, candid. He would have liked to walk arm in arm between both parties. He had a low bow all round - here a bow, there a bow, everywhere a bow. But it is not by bows, however gracious, when lavished in this indiscriminate fashion, that the Liberal Parliamentary candidate of today can hope to wriggle himself into the House. He must have only one idol to bow before.

Who was Seddon, and Porter, 'in his anxiety not to go too far, did not go far enough' but instead 'delayed or shuffled or hesitated or all three' until the Liberal Party selected other candidates. Knowing that he could not be elected, despite any shouts of 'Long Live Seddon' he might make, he had wisely retired.⁵⁸³

The *Observer* was 'sincerely sorry' that Porter had withdrawn, for 'he would have made a splendid member'. He had 'the interests of the community closely at heart' and 'no one' understood its wants better. He had 'a rugged and original style of oratory' that was 'infinitely more effective than the high-flown rhetoric of all the Greys' and similar performers. Being 'truly democratic' and 'too independent for the times', he refused to be anyone's puppet. After experiencing 'personal and persistent misrepresentation' in the *New Zealand Herald*, and expecting to receive the same from the *Star*, he had decided that political life was not for him.⁵⁸⁴

POOR HEALTH LEADS TO AN EARLY DEATH

Porter's state of health may have encouraged him to abandon the campaign, as when considering standing for Te Aroha three years previously.⁵⁸⁵ He would die on 18 August the following year, aged 49, after an attack of acute bronchitis lasting 14 days.⁵⁸⁶ The extent of his suffering was revealed in the *New Zealand Herald*:

⁵⁸³ *New Zealand Herald*, 17 November 1893, p. 5.

⁵⁸⁴ *Observer*, 25 November 1893, p. 2.

⁵⁸⁵ *Auckland Weekly News*, 18 October 1890, p. 14; *Observer*, 18 October 1890, p. 6.

⁵⁸⁶ Death Certificate of Adam Alexander Porter, 18 August 1894, 1894/540, BDM.

Very few, save his more immediate friends, were aware that he was seriously ill, as he was undesirous of any publicity. For many years he has been a martyr to bronchial asthma.... Of late his complaint appeared to be effecting inroads on his constitution, and making him gradually weaker. He had a presentiment months ago that he would never see the year out, and expressed his feelings to some of his friends. About three weeks ago he was seized with an attack of bronchitis, but such was his force of character that he would not submit to be laid aside from active public duty. On Friday week he thought he was better, and went down to a meeting in the New Zealand Insurance Buildings. In returning home, though muffled up, he incautiously elected to sit outside the 'bus, and appears to have taken a relapse next day, as he went to bed never more to rise from it. His complaint grew worse, and for 60 hours he knew no rest, owing to incessant coughing. He appeared to rally a little on Friday evening, but a change for the worse set in with the turn of the night. During his last hours he appeared to suffer but little, and about 8.20 o'clock on Saturday morning he quietly passed away, in the presence of his wife and daughter and the nurse.⁵⁸⁷

The *Auckland Star* noted that during his last fortnight he 'rapidly became worse':

As he had suffered so long, his many friends did not, of course, anticipate that his end was near. About 20 minutes past eight o'clock this morning Mr Porter was in his bed-room, and only his young daughter was present, the mother and nurse having gone out just a moment before. Suddenly the child rushed out screaming, and upon going into the bed-room it was found that death had claimed one more. Apparently Mr Porter choked during one of his paroxysms of coughing.⁵⁸⁸

Less than seven years later, his widow died aged only 42, after suffering for five years from chronic ulceration of the stomach, leaving daughters aged 19 and 12.⁵⁸⁹ As Porter had not made a will, the value of his estate is unknown, but his widow left an estate comprising property in

⁵⁸⁷ *New Zealand Herald*, 20 August 1894, p. 5.

⁵⁸⁸ *Auckland Star*, 18 August 1894, p. 5.

⁵⁸⁹ Death Certificate of Elizabeth Maria Porter, 24 April 1901, 1901/2219, BDM.

Auckland plus shares in gold and coal mining companies, presumably acquired by her husband, valued at £8,336 18s 10d.⁵⁹⁰

PORTER'S PERSONALITY

It is usually difficult to discover more than a skeletal outline of the life of those involved in Hauraki mining, but Porter was sufficiently prominent and popular that comments about his personality were recorded from the 1870s onwards. The *Observer* obituary described him as 'essentially a "self-made" man' who 'assumed no "frills" on account thereof' and was not ashamed of his humble beginnings. 'Modest in demeanor, unassuming in manner, genial and warm-hearted, he had a word for everyone. He never forgot an old friend. He secretly delighted in doing a good turn to those down in the world', and was honest and straight in all his dealings.⁵⁹¹ It could be argued that this journal was especially well disposed towards him because he was one of its 'staunchest' friends,⁵⁹² but the *New Zealand Herald* conveyed the same message:

His death will be a loss to the community, as Auckland has all too few public men of his stamp - men who are straight, practical, endowed with strong common sense, and force of character. He was essentially a man of the people, and was ever the same in prosperity or in adversity, genial and accessible - plain Adam Porter.... There are many in Auckland, in distress, who will regret his death, who were the recipients of his bounty, and none who approached him with a well-founded appeal were sent away empty-handed.⁵⁹³

The *Auckland Star* agreed that 'the general consensus of opinion' was that his death was 'a loss to the community at large, as he held many public positions and discharged his duties in a manner that makes it difficult to find a good successor'. His 'oldest acquaintances' stated that he had 'not changed in manner for all the years they have known him. Ever genial and

⁵⁹⁰ Probate of Elizabeth Maria Porter, Probates, BBAE 1569/1167; Testamentary Register 1900-1902, folio 80, BBCB 4208/14, ANZ-A; for his land holdings, see Auckland Land Registry, Register No. 6, folio 526, Land Information New Zealand, Auckland.

⁵⁹¹ *Observer*, 25 August 1894, p. 10.

⁵⁹² *Observer*, 5 January 1895, p. 2.

⁵⁹³ *New Zealand Herald*, 20 August 1894, p. 5.

good-humoured, he was always ready to assist persons in distress'.⁵⁹⁴ The Press Association described him as being 'most popular', 'universally esteemed', and 'of a very genial disposition'.⁵⁹⁵

Whilst obituaries almost invariably speak well of the departed, many similar comments were recorded during his lifetime. The *Observer* constantly praised him. In 1890, it described him as 'about as level-headed as they make them',⁵⁹⁶ and three years later called him 'a shrewd, practical, and hard-headed man of the world and of business' who 'by his honesty, straightforwardness, and singleness of purpose has become deservedly popular'.⁵⁹⁷ The following year, it called him a 'matter-of-fact, hard-headed man',⁵⁹⁸ who was 'not the man to waste time in talky-talky'.⁵⁹⁹ The *Ohinemuri Gazette* obituary noted that, despite being afflicted for so long with asthma, 'he was yet bright, cheery and genial.... He was a unique and original character all through'.⁶⁰⁰ His friends described him as 'irrepressible'.⁶⁰¹ This could have negative as well as positive connotations, implying an abrasive side to his character, and conflicts in local government and mining have been noted. In 1873 he praised his own strength of character when, as a scrutineer during the Provincial Council election, he had some voters arrested for personation, meaning obtaining extra votes by posing as someone else. 'When he went into the booth on the occasion of the Superintendency election, he did so determined to do his duty without flinching. He had been told that he would have to leave the Thames for what he had done, but he did not believe anything of the sort'.⁶⁰² In 1881 he reportedly used 'strong language' when quarrelling with William Wilkinson of the *Thames Advertiser*, with threats of libel actions.⁶⁰³ A humorous article about leading goldfield personalities ten years hence, published in that year in the *Thames Star* and written just before it was known he was about to be married, described dining with Porter and his wife in Waihi:

⁵⁹⁴ *Auckland Star*, 18 August 1894, p. 5.

⁵⁹⁵ *Thames Star*, 18 August 1894, p. 2.

⁵⁹⁶ *Observer*, 19 April 1890, p. 6.

⁵⁹⁷ *Observer*, 4 March 1893, p. 1.

⁵⁹⁸ *Observer*, 17 March 1894, p. 2.

⁵⁹⁹ *Observer*, 17 March 1894, p. 5.

⁶⁰⁰ *Ohinemuri Gazette*, n.d., cited in *Observer*, 8 September 1894, p. 3.

⁶⁰¹ *Observer*, 1 October 1881, p. 36.

⁶⁰² *Thames Advertiser*, 22 November 1873, p. 3.

⁶⁰³ 'Thames Tittle Tattle', *Observer*, 23 July 1881, p. 507, 30 July 1881, p. 523.

Adam has greatly changed since we knew him, prosperity has improved him, he has lost that egotism which formerly was his characteristic. I was greatly pleased to hear him sedately explain the political position of New Zealand at the present time. His views although thoroughly liberal are tempered with wisdom. I asked him how it was he had never entered the political arena, and he wisely answered that he did not think his education fitted him to do so, at the same time he believed he could greatly benefit his fellow colonists otherwise. I quite agreed with him, and under the excitement caused by his very good whisky, rudely said, "Bully for you, old boy." Adam did not seem vexed at my seeming rudeness, but with his well-known shrug of the shoulders passed [it] off.⁶⁰⁴

Which was not a good prophecy of his future involvement in politics, but the remark about his egotism should be noted. The reference to his 'very good whisky' may refer to his support for temperance but not for abstinence, for the *Observer* comment already noted about the contents of his flask may not have just been its little jest. His liking for food could be considered in an unfriendly light, as in April 1881 when a columnist asked why he had not been on the trial voyage of the steamer 'Patiki'. 'Whenever there is a good feed on, Adam is all there, and it is surprising that he allowed such an excellent "gorge" to escape him'.⁶⁰⁵ 'Miranda', writing of a trip up the Waihou River a year later, recorded that when a picnic was held at Te Puke, at the junction of the Ohinemuri and Waihou Rivers, 'who should appear on the scene but the indefatigable Adam Porter. Shades of Flying Dutchman and Wandering Jew, have you seen him? Go to Te Aroha, he's there; Te Puke, he's there; Thames to Auckland, he's there; if you went to Hades you would find him there too'.⁶⁰⁶ This confirmed reports of his rushing hither and thither on public or private business, and mentioned again the previous month by the purveyor of 'Thames Tittle Tattle':

My friend Adam Porter well deserves to be called ubiquitous. He is here one day and seventy or eighty miles away the next, and does more riding on horseback in a week than almost anyone in the district. Last week he rode to Rotorua and back, through the

⁶⁰⁴ 'Robert Smythe', 'A Peep into the Future', *Thames Star*, 17 September 1881, p. 2.

⁶⁰⁵ 'Thames Tittle Tattle', *Observer*, 16 April 1881, p. 330.

⁶⁰⁶ 'Miranda', 'The First Trip of the S.S. "Miranda"', *Thames Advertiser*, 20 April 1882, p.

rain and mud, in an incredible short time, in addition to other journeys.⁶⁰⁷

‘Miranda’ concluded that, although not a member of the excursion party, ‘Adam, with his characteristic modesty, followed us on board, and took his seat for the Thames without either “with your leave,” or “by your leave.” O tempora! O mores!’⁶⁰⁸

Such ‘characteristic modesty’ offended some, but may have become more genuinely modest in later years, although the following tale could be interpreted as being ‘belligerently modest’ instead of how the *Observer*, which published it almost seven years after his death, meant it to be understood. When president of the Auckland Chamber of Commerce, with its leading members he interviewed the Governor, Lord Onslow, about his impending visit to Thames. All wore frock coats with the exception of Porter, who shocked them by wearing his usual suit of ‘pepper-and-salt grey’. Told to borrow some black clothing, he refused, and when they met Onslow said, ‘Well, your Excellency, here we are. They’ve just been saying that as I wasn’t in evening dress you wouldn’t see me. Now, if it’s dress suit you want to see I can send it down, but if its Adam Porter, here I am’. The Governor did receive him, and Porter was Onslow’s ‘special pilot’ and informant on mining.⁶⁰⁹

‘Thames Tittle Tattle’ revealed that he was ‘a whale at dancing, judging from his antics at the Quadrille Assembly last week’;⁶¹⁰ this comment was a complement to his skill.⁶¹¹ He had an ‘irresistibly dry way’ of speaking,⁶¹² and several examples of his wit were recorded. During the trial at Thames of Procoffy for the Te Aroha murder,⁶¹³ Porter sat at the reporters’ table. When Superintendent Thompson displayed the rings found in the burnt whare, Porter ‘motioned the Superintendent requesting him to let him see the rings, whereupon the Superintendent waxed wroth, and

⁶⁰⁷ ‘Thames Tittle Tattle’, *Observer*, 25 March 1882, p. 20.

⁶⁰⁸ ‘Miranda’, ‘The First Trip of the S.S. “Miranda”’, *Thames Advertiser*, 20 April 1882, p. 3.

⁶⁰⁹ *Observer*, 1 June 1901, p. 6.

⁶¹⁰ ‘Thames Tittle Tattle’, *Observer*, 14 July 1883, p. 14.

⁶¹¹ See Green, p. 1272; *The New Partridge Dictionary of Slang and Unconventional English*, ed. Tom Dalzell and Terry Victor (Abingdon, 2006), vol. 2, p. 2084.

⁶¹² *Observer*, 17 March 1894, p. 3.

⁶¹³ See paper on the Te Aroha murder of 1881.

said: “No, you might as well sit by Mr Brassey,” Procoffy’s counsel, “all the time.” “Well”, said the irrepressible Adam, “it would not take much to upset your apple cart as yet”’.⁶¹⁴ In 1891, at a creditors’ meeting in the bankrupt estate of Edwin Harrow, a notably eccentric temperance hotelier,⁶¹⁵ the moneylender John Abbott commented that as Harrow had no wife he had been unable to put his property in her name, as was common. This prompted Porter to comment that ‘it appeared to him that Mr Harrow’s troubles had arisen because he had neglected to take to himself a wife. He would therefore move, “That the meeting agrees to give Mr Harrow a clean receipt when he produced a certificate to show that he had been married”’. After a long debate about the appropriate nationality for this wife, Porter seconded the motion, ‘That when Mr Harrow took a wife - black, white, or piebald - he be released from his present liabilities’.⁶¹⁶ The following year, referring to William McCullough of the *Thames Star* becoming a Legislative Councillor, Porter said that ‘journalists never go to Heaven. They go to the Upper House’.⁶¹⁷ Another year later, when a member of the Auckland Relief Committee for Queensland flood victims whose deliberations were held up by Abbott squabbling about the exact amount raised, he intervened that ‘The thing is as plain as the nose on your face. You, as treasurer, have given receipts for £1519; if there is any deficiency you have simply to pay the difference into the bank. (Laughter.)’.⁶¹⁸ One obituary noted that not even the ‘ravages’ of his final illness affected ‘his genial good-natured manner, and almost the last remark he made on the Exchange was: “Well, I’ll go home. Some of you fellows will have to bury me one of these days”’.⁶¹⁹

The most notable example of his malicious wit was recorded in the reminiscences of a Thames surveyor. In the 1870s, Porter and William Rowe,⁶²⁰ a Member of Parliament for Thames, had travelled from Wellington to Thames, the latter in the company of a woman:

⁶¹⁴ *Thames Star*, 2 March 1881, p. 2.

⁶¹⁵ Whose behaviour amused the *Observer* over many years: see, for example, *Observer*, 15 June 1889, p. 11, 22 June 1889, p. 12, 7 September 1889, p. 17, 6 June 1900, p. 5, 30 July 1904, p. 4, 24 June 1905, p. 4, 6 March 1909, p. 16.

⁶¹⁶ *New Zealand Herald*, 29 August 1891, p. 3.

⁶¹⁷ *Observer*, 22 October 1892, p. 4.

⁶¹⁸ *New Zealand Herald*, 28 February 1893, p. 5.

⁶¹⁹ *Auckland Star*, 18 August 1894, p. 5.

⁶²⁰ See *Thames Star*, 16 February 1881, p. 2, 3 July 1886, p. 2.

Adam gave out at the Thames that he had seen Billy Rowe travelling with his “cousin.” Billy Rowe MHR indignant at this sends a lawyer’s letter demanding an apology from Adam Porter which apology was to be published in the paper. Adam agreed to apologize which he did by stating that he was sorry having stated that he had seen Mr Rowe travelling with his cousin as he finds she was a notorious prostitute named ___. This apology was never published in the papers, but Adam insisted that as he had to apologize it should be stuck up on the noticeboard at the “Corner”⁶²¹ - that was the last of the apology.⁶²²

CONCLUSION

Adam Porter was a ‘self-made man’ in the best sense of that phrase. From an impoverished childhood he worked hard at several occupations, attaining a comfortable standard of living, but through hardships as a labourer on the West Coast shortening his life. He played an active part in community life, moving from the provincial level to the metropolitan and, potentially, the national. Although not every comment about him was positive, in general his genial personality made him respected and admired. A memorable man, he packed an enormous lot into a relatively short life, and because of his involvement in so many issues much more can be discovered about his personality than about many others involved in mining.

Appendix

Figure 1: ‘Mr Adam Porter, who intends to contest the Auckland City seat against Messrs Rees and Cadman’, *Observer*, 15 July 1893, p. 16.

Figure 2: ‘Blo’ [William Blomfield], ‘Political Medley by the Candidates for Auckland City’, *Observer*, 4 November 1893, p. 13.

Figure 3: Francis West, ‘Great Men – Past and Present.

Mr J.C. F[irth]: And so the Thames is very dull. Is the gold worked out?

⁶²¹ ‘Scrip Corner’ at Thames, where share trading took place.

⁶²² Peter E. Cheal, untitled reminiscences of the Thames goldfield, n.d., no pagination, Cheal Papers, folder 1, 85/106, MS 1319, Library of the Auckland Institute and War Memorial Museum.

Mr A. P[orter]: The Thames is as good as ever it was. All we want to do is to get at the low levels'. (*Observer*, 30 June 1894, p. 9.)



Figure 1: 'Mr Adam Porter, who intends to contest the Auckland City seat against Messrs Rees and Cadman', *Observer*, 15 July 1893, p. 16.



POLITICAL MEDLEY BY THE CANDIDATES FOR AUCKLAND CITY.

Figure 2: 'Blo' [William Blomfield], 'Political Medley by the Candidates for Auckland City', *Observer*, 4 November 1893, p. 13.



Great Men Past and Present.

MR J. C. F——: And so the Thames is very dull. Is the gold worked out?
 MR A. P——: The Thames is as good as ever it was. All we want to do is to get at the low levels.

Figure 3: Francis West, 'Great Men – Past and Present.'

Mr J.C. F[irth]: And so the Thames is very dull. Is the gold worked out?

Mr A. P[orter]: The Thames is as good as ever it was. All we want to do is to get at the low levels'.
 (*Observer*, 30 June 1894, p. 9.)