ALICE GREY NICHOLLS, DAUGHTER OF WILLIAM, AND HER HUSBAND, CHARLES JOHN DEARLE

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Te Aroha Mining District Working Papers

No. 43

Revised on October 16, 2017

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ISSN: 2463-6266

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THE UNIVERSITY OF WAIKATO
Te Whare Wānanga o Waikato

ALICE GREY NICHOLLS, DAUGHTER OF WILLIAM, AND HER HUSBAND, CHARLES JOHN DEARLE

Abstract: *Alice Grey Nicholls was the 'half-caste' daughter of a Pakeha Maori, William Nicholls. She would marry a Pakeha and have several children, losing her only son but bringing up a family of daughters, who all received a Pakeha education. Having a moko emphasized her Maori heritage, and she was on good terms with many Maori.*

Charles John Dearle, a Londoner, after some involvement in gold mining spent most of his life working for the government. At the request of Maori landowners, from 1883 until 1895 he allocated goldfields revenue amongst them, a challenging task. He was also involved in land purchases both on behalf of the government and for personal gain.

They farmed her land at Mangaiti, near Te Aroha, Alice continuing to farm it profitably after his early death, assisted for a time by her daughters. She purchased more land, and to enable her to sell some portions of it she had it declared European land, an illustration of her astuteness in business; her family obtained a good financial position from her farming and land dealings. When she died, aged 81, her Pakeha friends fondly remembered her.

MARRIAGE AND FAMILY

Alice Grey Nicholls was the daughter of William Nicholls and Hera Te Whakaawa.[1] She was also known as Hera Te Whakaawa, Hera Nikora, and, after her marriage to Charles John Dearle (otherwise Hare Hone Tiara), Arihi Kerei Tiara.[2] As Hera was the transliteration of Sarah, she was sometimes referred to as Sarah.[3] Unlike some of her siblings, she was married under Pakeha civil and religious law in the Baptist church in Thames, in August 1880, when she was aged 25 and her husband, a clerk,

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[1] See paper on William Nicholls.

[2] Maori Land Court, Hauraki Minute Book no. 19, p. 167; Hamilton Probates, BCDG 4420/3894, ANZ-A; Church of England, Register of Coromandel Baptisms 1874-1904, entry for 30 July 1882, Register 1090, Anglican Archives, Auckland.

[3] For example, C.J. Dearle to R.J. Gill (Under-Secretary, Native Land Purchase Department), 25 February 1882, Maori Affairs Department, MA 1, 13/86, ANZ-W; *Te Aroha News*, 12 December 1974, p. 3, 6 June 1880, p. 10.

was 31.[4] Born in London, Charles John Dearle had arrived in New Zealand in 1867.[5] They were to have five daughters and one son, all of whose births were registered. The first, Mary Alice, was born in Thames in June 1882.[6] In February 1884, Annie was born at Otarehu, near Mangaiti, where her grandfather William Nicholls lived; he registered the birth.[7] Emily was also born at Otarehu, in January 1886, as was Elizabeth Grey, in January 1888.[8] Lilla May, later known as Cassie, was born in June 1891.[9] Their only son, William George, born in 1894, died at his parents' home at Waharau, near Te Aroha, aged 11 months, from influenza that had turned into pneumonia.[10] Before his death, his mother had driven 'to Thames each week to consult a doctor'.[11]

According to a Te Aroha resident's recollection, Alice 'was determined that her family had the best education available at that time. She was emphatic that her children were sent to school to learn the "Queen's" English and Maori was not spoken in their home'.[12] Her daughters all attended school for varied lengths of time and with varied success.[13] Despite this insistence on an English education, when her first child was baptized

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[4] Notices of Intentions to Marry, Births Deaths and Marriages, BDM 20/25, folio 213, ANZ-W; Marriage Certificate of Alice Grey Nicholls, 7 August 1880, 1880/2231, BDM.

[5] Death Certificate of Charles John Dearle, 15 January 1897, 1897/558, BDM.

[6] Birth Certificate of Mary Alice Dearle, 24 June 1882, 1882/17699, BDM.

[7] Birth Certificate of Annie Dearle, 28 February 1884, 1884/9734, BDM; St Mark's Church, Te Aroha, Marriage Register 1895-1905, no. 50, Anglican Diocesan Archives, Hamilton.

[8] Birth Certificates of Emily Dearle, 27 January 1886, 1886/1542; Elizabeth Grey Dearle, 20 January 1888, 1888/1554, BDM.

[9] Birth Certificate of Lilla May Dearle, 1891/9061, BDM; *Te Aroha News*, 13 June 1912, p. 2.

[10] Birth Certificate of William George Dearle, 1894/17249; Death Certificate of William George Dearle, 24 September 1894, 1894/5724, BDM.

[11] 'Ladies of Aroha (contributed)', *Te Aroha News*, 12 December 1974, p. 3.

[12] 'Ladies of Aroha (contributed)', *Te Aroha News*, 12 December 1974, p. 3.

[13] Te Aroha School, Admissions Register no. 2 (1889-1897), nos. 605, 606, 755, 884, 886, 1167; Admissions Register no. 3 (1898-1904), nos. 1238, 1325, Primary School Archives, Te Aroha; Paeroa School, Admissions Register 1895-1899, nos. 8, 39, Primary School Archives, Paeroa.

as an Anglican it was in a Maori ceremony, under her Maori name of Mere Ariki Tiara; later children would be baptized using the English language.[14]

RELIGION

Whilst her husband, elected a vestryman at St Mark's Anglican Church at Te Aroha in 1894,[15] was alive, the family remained members of this faith. Later that year her son was buried in an Anglican ceremony.[16] Her last child was baptized as a Mormon in November 1898, and she was baptized two years later.[17] Mormonism at that time had a considerable following amongst Maori in Hauraki.[18] Her conversion to this new faith soon lapsed, for less than two years later one of her daughters was married in an Anglican ceremony, and she herself had an Anglican funeral.[19]

LINKS WITH MAORI

Alice retained close links with Maori and Maori culture. She was, with her brother James' brother-in-law, Kimokimo Pepene of Waitoki, trustee for their underage nieces and nephews.[20] She was close to her brother, William Grey Nicholls,[21] who was a leading figure in Maori as well as Pakeha affairs. For example, he was the guardian of two of her daughters when they attended the Paeroa school briefly, later was a witness at the wedding of one of her daughters, and was a guarantor for a mortgage over part of her

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[14] Church of England, Register of Coromandel Maori Baptisms 1874-1904, entry for 30 July 1882, Register 1090, Anglican Archives, Auckland; Hamilton East District, Register of Baptisms 1879-1908, nos. 114, 115, Anglican Diocesan Archives, Hamilton.

[15] *Church Gazette*, April 1894, p. 71.

[16] Te Aroha Burial Register 1889-1934, no. 34, Anglican Diocesan Archives, Hamilton.

[17] Church of Latter Day Saints, Record of Children Blest in the Te Aroha Branch of the New Zealand Mission, 11F; Record of Members: Early to 1919: Te Aroha Branch, no. 83, LDS Archives, Hamilton.

[18] See paper on Maori in Te Aroha after 1880.

[19] *Thames Star*, 20 August 1902, p. 2; Death Certificate of Alice Grey Dearle, 21 October 1936, 1936/23572, BDM.

[20] Maori Land Court, Hauraki Minute Book no. 28, p. 14. For their relationship, see Church of Latter Day Saints, Family Block Film 086, LDS Archives, Hamilton; Maori Land Court, Hauraki Minute Books no. 23, p. 15; no. 42, p. 141.

[21] See paper on his life.

land.[22] And although there was no mention of this during her life or at her death, in 1974 it was recalled that she had a moko; according to this recollection, she 'personified the best of both worlds and cultures'.[23] Her children were well informed about both their heritages: when her daughter Elizabeth Grey, widow of Allan Wallace Wight, died in 1980 it was reported that 'her knowledge of Maori lore was remarkable'.[24]

In 1887, when Alice and her husband became involved in the controversy over the will of Hapi Rewi, which Merea Wikiriwhi sought to have validated,[25] the evidence illustrated their close contract with their Maori neighbours. In August, Dearle gave evidence that their farm was within half a mile of Merea's house and that Merea was 'very friendly with my wife and in the habit of coming to my house'. He had made a fair copy of the will, but could not affirm that Rewi had signed it, as Merea wished him to do. 'I was a kind of Kaiwhakahaere [administrator][26] of Hapi Rewi's and would know his signature'.[27] Alice stated that when Merea had offered 'some consideration' if she would certify that the signature was genuine, she referred her to her husband. 'I never had any quarrel with Merea but when my husband knew about Merea's work with the will he requested me not to have anything to do with her, but we did receive a letter from her asking the reason for our coolness'.[28] In her evidence, Merea referred to her relations with Dearle:

> I have never heard of him doing any thing dishonest, but I have heard that he has against me, no matter whether I owned the land or not he always interfered with me, whether he has any right or not. I have never heard of any other people telling me of Mr Dearle's treating them the same, I only know of my own affairs, my land. When I gave permission for the County Council to form a road over Tikirahi leading to Karangahake, Mr Dearle

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[22] Paeroa School, Admissions Register 1895-1899, nos. 8, 39, Primary School Archives, Paeroa; Marriage Certificate of Mary Alice Dearle and George William Mace, 18 August 1902, 1902/4980, BDM; Aroha Block V Section 5B, Land Block Files, H1080, Maori Land Court, Hamilton.

[23] 'Ladies of Aroha (contributed)', *Te Aroha News*, 12 December 1974, p. 3.

[24] *Te Aroha News*, 6 June 1980, p. 10.

[25] See paper on Merea Wikiriwhi and George Thomas Wilkinson.

[26] P.N. Ryan, *The Reed Dictionary of Modern Maori*, 2 ed. (Wellington, 1997), p. 87.

[27] Maori Land Court, Hauraki Minute Book no. 19, p. 154.

[28] Maori Land Court, Hauraki Minute Book no. 19, pp. 167, 169, 171.

> told the Council that I had no interest in Tikirahi, because the land has been sold to the Govt.... That is Mr Dearle's interference. We were friends at the time I took the document to Mr Dearle's house after it was signed, it was long after the affair I have just mentioned. I was merely paying a visit to Mr Dearle's place when Mrs Dearle asked me for the document, and at her request I left the document with her but I called for it on the following morning. I generally leave my things at their house.[29]

CHARLES JOHN DEARLE'S CAREER

Dearle was a clerk and accountant by profession.[30] After arrival in the colony, he first lived at Napier before moving to Coromandel, where he managed a mining battery.[31] Between August 1875 and January 1878 he sold gold on behalf of a variety of claims and companies at Coromandel,[32] and from 1877 to 1881 owned half the interests in a claim there.[33] He acquired a miner's right on the first day of the Te Aroha rush, and in December, with his brother-in-law James Ponui Nicholls[34] and others, pegged out ground within another claim and started driving a tunnel.[35] He

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[29] Maori Land Court, Hauraki Minute Book no. 19, pp. 198-199 [punctuation added].

[30] Notices of Intentions to Marry, Births Deaths and Marriages, BDM 20/25, folio 213, ANZ-W; Maori Land Court, Hauraki Minute Books, no. 28, p. 64; no. 28A, p. 29.

[31] *Thames Advertiser*, 16 January 1897, p. 2.

[32] Bank of New Zealand, Coromandel Branch, Gold Dealer's Register 1874-1890, entries for 4 August 1875, 12 August 1875, 26 August 1875, 7 September 1875, 8 September 1875, 14 October 1875, 28 October 1875, 1 November 1875, 17 November 1875, 17 December 1875, 4 January 1876, 15 January 1876, 10 May 1876, 24 June 1876, 18 August 1876, 18 September 1876, 23 September 1876, 18 November 1876, 18 December 1876, 26 January 1877, 1 February 1877, 24 February 1877, 5 March 1877, 5 April 1877, 12 April 1877, 31 May 1877, 19 June 1877, 7 July 1877, 12 December 1877, 23 January 1878, 28 January 1878, Bank of New Zealand Archives, Wellington.

[33] Coromandel Warden's Court, Register of Claims 1872-1885, folio 72, ZAAN 14044/1a, ANZ-A.

[34] See paper on William Nicholls.

[35] Te Aroha Warden's Court, Miner's Right no. 619, issued on 25 November 1880, Miner's Right Butt Book 1880, BBAV 11533/1e, ANZ-A; Te Aroha Correspondent, *Thames Advertiser*, 1 December 1880, p. 3.

was not recorded as participating in mining after that date, but reportedly was 'connected with the School of Mines' later established at Thames.[36]

Dearle was in government service as a land purchase agent for most of his life. From 1 December 1877 he was a land purchase clerk on a salary of £200 p.a.[37] When a sitting of the land court in Ohinemuri ended in July 1880, it was noted that Dearle, 'the Treasury Clerk', had 'won golden opinions'.[38] In October 1880, he applied to be clerk to the native agent, George Thomas Wilkinson,[39] but as part of government cost cutting he was made redundant almost immediately.[40] He then moved with his new wife to live on her father's land at Paharakeke, near Te Aroha, and took part in the goldrush.[41] He kept in touch with Wilkinson and on 4 March 1881 the two men rode from Te Aroha as far as Dearle's home.[42] Two days later, when Wilkinson was at Paeroa, Dearle came in to see him with his brother-in-law, James.[43] On 19 March, Wilkinson decided to employ him for two or three weeks, ending up employing him for 'about 7'.[44] In May, after Dearle returned to Paharakeke, Wilkinson called on him when travelling to Te Aroha, and four days later Wilkinson 'had boiled pigeons for tea sent down by Mr Dearle'.[45] In October he took Dearle to help subdivide the Wairakau Reserve, and in December Dearle was employed as deputy returning officer at Paeroa in the Western Maori election.[46]

Because of continuing confusion over allocating goldfields revenue to Maori,[47] from 1883 to 1895 Dearle was appointed 'at the request of the Natives themselves' to make this allocation. They agreed that he could

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[36] *Te Aroha News*, 28 October 1936, p. 4.

[37] *AJHR*, 1878, H-33, p. 7.

[38] *Thames Advertiser*, 30 July 1880, p. 3.

[39] See paper on Merea Wikiriwhi and George Thomas Wilkinson.

[40] C.J. Dearle to Native Office, 15 October 1880, Register of Inwards Correspondence 1880, 80/3619, Maori Affairs Department, MA 2/18, ANZ-W; *Thames Advertiser*, 18 November 1880, p. 2.

[41] *Thames Advertiser*, Te Aroha Correspondent, 1 December 1880, p. 3, 7 March 1881, p. 2.

[42] G.T. Wilkinson, diary, entry for 4 March1881, University of Waikato Library.

[43] G.T. Wilkinson, diary, entry for 6 March 1881, University of Waikato Library.

[44] G.T. Wilkinson, diary, entries for 19 March, 7 May 1881, University of Waikato Library.

[45] G.T. Wilkinson, diary, entries for 12 May, 16 May 1881, University of Waikato Library.

[46] G.T. Wilkinson, diary, entries for 26 October, 8 December 1881, University of Waikato Library.

[47] See paper on Maori and goldfield revenue.

'charge his salary to the mining revenue', resulting in his being 'paid a fairly substantial salary charged as administrative expenses'.[48] As the paper on Maori and goldfields revenue indicates, he had a complicated task trying to be fair. He was clerk of the land court when it met in Thames from July 1884 onwards.[49] An Ohinemuri correspondent referred to him in 1887 as 'an old Government servant, having been in the Native Department for years', and 'well up in the political game of chess'.[50] Two years later he was referred to as 'the well-known native interpreter'.[51] In October 1892, when he was the warden's clerk, he was appointed a land purchase officer.[52] In that year he was referred to as 'the well-known native agent of Te Aroha'.[53] In March 1895, Wilkinson considered that he should no longer be paid £100 because he was taking too much of the small amount of revenue due to Maori.[54] The Minister of Mines subsequently noted that Dearle had been appointed by Maori 'to act as a sort of scrutineer on their behalf' to ensure that revenue was rightly allocated, and had been paid a commission. He was now 'doing Land Purchase and other work' and had 'gradually drifted towards the position of a Government officer – though employed and paid by' Maori, which was unfair on the latter.[55] When he died in January 1897, his occupation was given as native agent.[56] However, three years before his death 'failing health compelled him to relinquish his post and proceed to Te Aroha, where he had a small farm'.[57]

Dearle was involved in many land issues. He was the clerk when the reserves at Te Aroha were 'sorted out amongst hapu' in 1878. When the surveyor arrived, 'I was asked to assist him to get these reserves laid off, as Govt. money was being wasted through opposition – I did not decide the

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[48] 'The Native Purposes Act, 1935', *AJHR*, 1940, G-6A, p. 3.

[49] Maori Land Court, Hauraki Minute Book no. 16, entries from 1 July 1884.

[50] Ohinemuri Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 24 November 1887, p. 2.

[51] *Thames Star*, 9 August 1889, p. 2.

[52] *New Zealand Gazette*, 27 October 1892, p. 1426.

[53] *Ohinemuri Gazette*, 2 January 1892, p. 4.

[54] G.T. Wilkinson to Under-Secretary, Mines Department, 30 March 1895, Mines Department, MD 1, 95/549, ANZ-W.

[55] Minister of Mines to Native Minister, 9 May 1895; Under-Secretary, Justice Department, to Minister of Justice, 13 June 1895, Mines Department, MD 1, 95/549, ANZ-W.

[56] Death Certificate of Charles John Dearle, 15 January 1897, 1897/558, BDM.

[57] *Thames Advertiser*, 16 January 1897, p. 2.

shares, the Commissioner did this – I took the notes as Clerk'.[58] In this capacity he did all he could to allocate land to its rightful owners.[59] In October 1880 he witnessed the agreement between the Crown and the Mokena family permitting mining on their land.[60] In 1886 he accompanied a rangatira to determine in which county a gold discovery near Whangamata was located.[61] Three years later he was the channel for Maori owners offering to sell 3,484 acres of Tairua goldfield to the Crown, but it was soon discovered that they had already sold it.[62]

In 1890, Dearle reported that he could obtain the unsold interests in Hikutaia No. 4 for 10s per acre, as against the 7s 6d paid to other owners, and recommended grouping families together.[63] Asked for his opinion, Wilkinson reported that both he and the warden, who had been contacted by Dearle, believed he was attempting to get more money for Rihitoto Mataia, his brother-in-law William Grey Nicholls' wife, 'and also a commission for himself'.[64] The warden, who knew Dearle 'well, told me that he looked upon his action as an attempt to get more money' for Rihitoto along with a commission, which 'would be unfair to the other owners, and prejudicial to future purchases'.[65] Accordingly, Dearle was told that as Wilkinson would complete the purchase his offer was 'therefore declined with thanks'.[66] Rihitoto and her husband later told Wilkinson that Dearle's attempts to get an increased price was 'entirely Mr Dearle's own idea and suggestion, and that he had told them that he could get for Te Rihitoto more

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[58] Maori Land Court, Hauraki Minute Book no. 28A, pp. 29, 32.

[59] C.J. Dearle to R.J. Gill, 27 May 1882, Maori Affairs Department, MA 1, 13/86, ANZ-W.

[60] Agreement of 26 October 1880, Mines Department, MD 1, 6/14, Part 1, ANZ-W.

[61] *Thames Advertiser*, 26 February 1886, p. 2.

[62] *Thames Star*, 9 August 1889, p. 2, 3 October 1889, p. 2.

[63] C.J. Dearle to Under-Secretary, Native Department, 10 June 1890, Maori Affairs Department, MA-MLP 1, 1890/311, ANZ-W.

[64] Under-Secretary, Native Department, to G.T. Wilkinson, 14 June 1890 (telegram); G.T. Wilkinson to Under-Secretary, Native Department, 16 June 1890 (telegram), Maori Affairs Department, MA-MLP 1, 1890/311, ANZ-W.

[65] G.T. Wilkinson to Under-Secretary, Native Department, n.d. [June 1890], Maori Affairs Department, MA-MLP 1, 1890/311, ANZ-W.

[66] Under-Secretary, Native Department, to Native Minister, 25 June 1890, Maori Affairs Department, MA-MLP 1, 1890/311, ANZ-W.

for her shares than was paid to the others for theirs, she therefore decided to let him try and do so. Hence his letter'.[67]

ACQUIRING LAND FOR FARMING

Dearle and his wife acquired and developed land at Mangaiti, and she became known as one of the pioneers of the Te Aroha district.[68] Dearle acquired interests in the Patuwhao Block,[69] of 1,304 acres, to the north of Mangaiti, at least as early as September 1883.[70] From late 1884 to January 1886 he attempted to sell his interest to private investors. In 1884, James Russell, an Auckland lawyer, told Dearle that enquiry into his offer to subdivide his interest had shown that the 180 acres he was asking for was 'too much for the interest you represent' and, therefore, his offer was declined. Russell was willing 'to allow 100 acres in the place you indicate on the map – sooner than go to the Court for a subdivision'.[71] In reply to Dearle's counter-offer, Russell was willing to give him 150 acres 'in lieu of your interest in the whole block – you to have the 150 acres surveyed at your own cost. This is practically an acceptance of your first proposal', and he wanted the survey done 'as soon as possible'.[72] As Dearle delayed either responding or arranging the survey,[73] in January 1886 Russell wrote once more: 'We are surprised in not receiving any reply from you respecting the deed we sent you to be signed by you – you are causing us much trouble – please sign as directed & return to us in order that we may get your

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[67] G.T. Wilkinson to Under-Secretary, Native Department, 1 October 1890, Maori Affairs Department, MA-MLP 1, 1892/8, ANZ-W.

[68] *Ohinemuri Gazette*, 20 August 1902, p. 2.

[69] For map of Patuwhao Block, see Block V111 Waitoa, Map Library, University of Waikato Library.

[70] Maori Affairs Department, Hamilton, BACS A806, box 2, no. 85, ANZ-A.

[71] James Russell to C.J. Dearle, 24 December 1884, Letterbook no. 29, p. 567, Jackson and Russell Papers, MS 360, Library of the Auckland Institute and War Memorial Museum.

[72] James Russell to C.J. Dearle, 13 January 1885, Letterbook no. 29, p. 614, Jackson and Russell Papers, MS 360, Library of the Auckland Institute and War Memorial Museum.

[73] James Russell to C.J. Dearle, 11 May 1885, 18 August 1885, Letterbook no. 30, pp. 125, 586, Jackson and Russell Papers, MS 360, Library of the Auckland Institute and War Memorial Museum.

certificate from the Register Office'.[74] Their proposed deal must have broken down, for this was the last communication from Russell.

In October 1886 Dearle informed the under-secretary of the Native Department that the Patuwhao, Omotai, and Karaka Blocks, totalling 1,500 acres, had been offered to him for sale. These blocks adjoined each other on the banks of the Waihou River, the Waitoki Block being on the northern boundary of the Karaka Block, on the south of which were the Karaka, Patuwhao, and Omotai Block, in that order.[75] He described it as good agricultural land with good access, and the asking price, 30s per acre, made a total of £3,000. 'I myself would be glad to take up a hundred acres or so of the land under deferred payment system at from two to three pounds per acre at once'. He knew it contained good feed because he and others had 'used the land for some years as a Cattle and horse run'. He could arrange for another 2,000 acres adjoining to be sold also. As he was 'living close to the land', he could show it to a government agent; if the government was not interested, he would sell it to the public.[76] The Minister accepted his under-secretary's recommendation that the offer be declined, for these blocks 'were purchased from the Natives by Mr Dearle himself and a Mr Spencer at from 7/11 to 14/- per acre'.[77] In December 1892, Dearle acquired more land at Te Aroha, purchasing Block V Section 17 and leasing Block 1X Section 23.[78]

In May 1881, his father-in-law applied for an agricultural lease, and later asked that it be issued in Dearle's name. In August 1884 Dearle requested that the title be issued to him as he was 'desirous of erecting a house on the land and also putting a portion down into grass'.[79] Just over a year after their marriage, Dearle went to Te Aroha to see a surveyor 'relative to the survey of his wife's reserves'.[80] She had claimed that the

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[74] James Russell to C.J. Dearle, 12 January 1886, Letterbook no. 31, p. 277, Library of the Auckland Institute and War Memorial Museum.

[75] See Block V111 Waitoa, Map Library, University of Waikato.

[76] C.J. Dearle to Under-Secretary, Native Department, 20 October 1886, Maori Affairs Department, MA-MLP 1, 86/427, ANZ-W.

[77] Under-Secretary, Native Department, to Native Minister, 27 October 1886, with note of Minister's decision, Maori Affairs Department, MA-MLP 1, 86/427, ANZ-W.

[78] *New Zealand Gazette*, 30 March 1893, p. 420.

[79] C.J. Dearle to Warden, 24 August 1884, Thames Warden's Court, Inward Letters and Memoranda and Telegrams 1879-1892, BACL 13388/1a, ANZ-A.

[80] G.T. Wilkinson, diary, entry for 23 August 1881, Waikato University Library.

land purchase department has promised her 50 acres at Te Aroha in lieu of the 30 acres she owned in the Tauwhare Block, near Hamilton.[81] In 1882, Dearle informed the Land Purchase Department that he had married Hera Nikora, whose family was cultivating land at Paharakeke. They had sought 50 acres at Omahu, Te Aroha, which had not been granted despite the promise of John Sheehan, the former Native Minister, although they continued to occupy and cultivate it.[82] A second letter explained that his father-in-law and a brother-in-law (James) were farming the land, upon which he had built a four-roomed house for himself and had planted trees and made other improvements. He requested confirmation of the grant so that he could erect fences and further improve the property.[83] A third letter, accompanied by a map of the block, explained that his wife had first received a reserve of 10 acres on the bank of the river. Because of the promise of 50 acres, and to end a dispute with rival claimants, she had agreed to move one and a half miles away to a new property, where £200 had been spent on improvements.[84] Told that the department could do nothing and that their only recourse was to petition parliament,[85] Alice duly did so, in 1884. She complained that in May 1879 'the Native Minister promised petitioner a grant of 50 acres of land upon her foregoing her claim to the Te Aroha Block; but the Government now decline to issue the grant'. The Native Affairs Committee called on the government to fulfil this promise.[86] Before they reached their decision, 50 of the 97 acres not awarded in 1878 were cut off for her as Block V Section 4.[87]

In December 1886, Dearle asked for the removal of Sections 3 and 4 of Block V (10 and 50 acres respectively) from Te Aroha goldfield. These

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[81] G.T. Wilkinson to R.J. Gill, 12 April 1879 (telegram), Maori Affairs Department, MA 1, 13/86, ANZ-W.

[82] C.J. Dearle to R.J. Gill, 25 February 1882, Maori Affairs Department, MA 1, 13/86, ANZ-W.

[83] C.J. Dearle to R.J. Gill, n.d. [March 1882?], Maori Affairs Department, MA 1, 13/86, ANZ-W.

[84] C.J. Dearle to R.J. Gill, 27 May 1882, with accompanying map, Maori Affairs Department, MA 1, 13/86, ANZ-W.

[85] R.J. Gill to C.J. Dearle, 23 July 1883, Maori Affairs Department, MA 1, 13/86, ANZ-W.

[86] 'Native Affairs Committee (Reports of)', *AJHR*, 1884, I-2, p. 4.

[87] S. Percy Smith to Under-Secretary, Native Department, 11 September 1884, Maori Affairs Department, MA 1, 13/86, ANZ-W; Maori Land Court, Hauraki Minute Book no. 28A, p. 33.

sections were 'the property of his wife, we have dwelling houses and other buildings erected thereon, and are having the whole of the land brought under cultivation and fenced'. There was no mining within five or six miles.[88] After the mining inspector confirmed that buildings had been erected, 'a considerable portion' was 'fenced in and in crop', and that gold was unlikely to be found nearby, they were removed from the field.[89] Subsequently more improvements were made, in 1894 Maraea Mere Peka[90] being sued to enforce payment of her contribution to a boundary fence.[91]

Dearle was referred to as a farmer living at Paharakeke in 1893, and the following year he sent a sample of 'splendid potatoes' to a Thames newspaper: one weighed one and three quarter pounds.[92]

INVOLVEMENT IN THE COMMUNITY

In 1885, Dearle was returning officer for the Waitoa Riding of the Ohinemuri County Council.[93] The following year he assisted to determine the geographical and financial divisions between the Thames and Ohinemuri counties.[94] The latter asked him to work out what it should have received from the sale of kauri trees: 'all councillors agreed that no one more conversant with the affairs of the county could be found'.[95] In November 1887 he was nominated for the Paeroa Riding of the Ohinemuri County by his brother-in-law, William Grey Nicholls, and was elected with the second highest vote, 37 (the highest polling candidate obtained 43).[96] At his first meeting, when the finance committee recommended that, owing to financial constraints, expenses for councillors travelling more than three miles to meetings should be reduced to 10s 6d, Dearle announced that he would make 'no charge whatever'.[97] At the subsequent meeting he was

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[88] C.J. Dearle to Warden, 23 December 1886, Mines Department, MD 1, 87/274, ANZ-W.

[89] George Wilson to Warden, 9 February 1887, and note, Mines Department, MD 1, 87/274, ANZ-W.

[90] See papers on Reha Aperahama and Keepa Te Wharau.

[91] Te Aroha Magistrate's Court, Plaint Book 1893-1918, 58/1894, BCDG 11224/1b, ANZ-A.

[92] *Cleave's Auckland Directory, 1893*, p. 273; *Thames Advertiser*, 20 March 1894, p. 2.

[93] *Te Aroha News*, 19 September 1885, p. 2.

[94] *Thames Advertiser*, 26 February 1886, p. 2, 4 March 1886, p. 3.

[95] *Te Aroha News*, 20 February 1886, p. 2.

[96] *Te Aroha News*, 12 November 1887, p. 2, 19 November 1887, pp. 2, 3.

[97] Ohinemuri County Council, *Te Aroha News*, 10 December 1887, p. 2.

elected as the county's representative to the Thames Hospital and Charitable Aid Board and the Thames and Coromandel United Charitable Aid Board, and re-elected to the former later that year.[98] His work on the council has not been traced, but as an example of his dealing with the needs of his electors, in December 1889 he drew its 'attention to the state of the Wharau, on the Te Aroha road'.[99]

DEARLE'S EARLY DEATH

Dearle was admitted to Thames Hospital on 22 December 1891 suffering from pneumonia.[100] By the New Year, he was 'gradually recovering from his recent severe illness', and was discharged on 11 January.[101] The Minister of Mines visited him in early 1895, finding him 'far gone in consumption' and on his deathbed. He 'cannot last more than a few weeks'.[102] In fact he lasted until January 1897, dying at home, aged 47, from phthisis pulmonalis, a lung disease.[103] An obituary noted that 'failing health' had forced him to retire from his official positions to live on his small farm three years before his death, which was caused by 'general break-up of the system'.[104] All his property, valued at over £100, was left to his wife.[105]

ALICE'S LAST CHILD

On his death, Dearle left five daughters, aged between 14 and 5.[106] Almost 40 years later, his widow's obituary stated that she had raised six

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98 Ohinemuri County Council, *Te Aroha News*, 14 January 1888, p. 2; Ohinemuri County Council, *Thames Advertiser*, 29 November 1888, p. 2.

99 Ohinemuri County Council, *Te Aroha News*, 11 December 1889, p. 2.

100 Thames Hospital Board, Register of Patients 1884-1902, folio 41, YCAH 14075/1a, ANZ-A.

101 *Ohinemuri Gazette*, 2 January 1892, p. 4; Thames Hospital Board, Register of Patients 1884-1902, folio 41, YCAH 14075/1a, ANZ-A.

102 Minister of Mines to Native Minister, 9 May 1895, Mines Department, MD 1, 95/549, ANZ-W.

103 Death Certificate of Charles John Dearle, 15 January 1897, 1897/558, BDM.

104 *Thames Advertiser*, 16 January 1897, p. 2.

105 Probate of C.J. Dearle, Probates, BBAE 1569/2641, ANZ-A.

106 Death Certificate of Charles John Dearle, 15 January 1897, 1897/558, BDM.

daughters.[107] The birth of this extra child, Hinemoa Maud, otherwise Maud Hinemoa Cecilia, was not registered. Being born in May 1898, she cannot have been his posthumous child, although she had his surname and was recorded as being his daughter when she married.[108] In December, when she was 'blest' at Puriri by the Te Aroha Branch of the Church of Latter Day Saints, her father was recorded as Peter Brady.[109] The only man with this name living in Hauraki at that time was Peter Gillies Brady, a married Thames draper.[110] Although everyone must have known of this embarrassingly late birth, no hint was published in the press or in the recorded memories of people living there at that time.

FARMING

To bring up her young family, Alice farmed her land, helped by her daughters.[111] In addition to her Mangaiti farm, she leased other land. In 1896 she leased just over 99 acres at £7 14s a year for 21 years; it was valued at £495 and included a house worth £85.[112] She had 30 shares in the Te Aroha District Co-operative Dairy Company in 1903,[113] to which she sold her milk. In August 1912, all her farm property and dairy cattle on her Mangaiti farm were sold, good prices being received for her cows.[114] She

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[107] *Te Aroha News*, 28 October 1936, p. 4.

[108] Te Aroha School, Admissions Register no. 4 (1904-1918), no. 1836, Primary School Archives, Te Aroha; Marriage Certificate of Maud Hinemoa Cecilia Dearle, 3 May 1917, St David's Presbyterian Church, Marriage Register 1916-1921, no. 54, St David's Church, Te Aroha; for her husband, Robert Miller Taylor, see Army Department, AABK 18805, W5553, box 102, no. 112620, ANZ-W.

[109] Church of Latter Day Saints, Record of Children Blest in the Te Aroha Branch of the New Zealand Mission, 11F, LDS Archives, Hamilton.

[110] *Thames Electoral Rolls, 1897*, p. 6, *1899*, p. 6.

[111] This assistance was noted in the obituary of her daughter Elizabeth Grey: *Te Aroha News*, 6 June 1980, p. 10.

[112] Ohinemuri County Council, Waitoa Riding, 1 April 1908, folio 4, Valuation Department, BBBC 14670, A150/647, ANZ-W.

[113] Company Files, BADZ 5181, box 176 no. 1085, ANZ-A.

[114] *Te Aroha News*, 17 August 1912, p. 2; *Te Aroha Mail*, 20 August 1912, p. 2.

continued to farm on other land, in 1920 still milking for the dairy company, which later erected its milk treatment plant on her farm.[115]

INVESTING IN MINING

As another way of raising money, in 1921, when living at Ruakaka on the edge of Te Aroha, Alice applied for the Gold or Golden Queen Special Quartz Claim, of 60 acres, but her application was struck out three months later.[116] This was one of the claims that her extended family sought around 'Dearle's Creek, in the Mangaiti foothills',[117] an area devoid of gold. This was her sole involvement in mining.

ACQUIRING MORE LAND

Alice continued to acquire more land. In 1908 she leased just over 69 acres in the western part of Aroha Block V Section 5B, valued at £474, from Maraea Mere Peka.[118] In October 1910, she acquired 80 acres of this block for £517.[119] Two months later, when there were rival contestants for Aroha Block V Section 5A No. 3, her one-time brother-in-law John William Richard Guilding[120] reported that Meraea Mere Peka had the best land in the block. 'She has since sold 50 odd acres to Mrs Dearle at about £5 per ac.'.[121] Another owner assured the court that Alice had not paid him to raise an objection to Guilding obtaining the land.[122]

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[115] Bank of New Zealand, Te Aroha Branch, Balance Book as at 31 March 1920, Report on Advances, Bank of New Zealand Archives, Wellington; *Te Aroha News*, 6 June 1980, p. 10.

[116] Te Aroha Warden's Court, Mining Applications 1921, 39/1921, BCDG 11289/1a; Register of Applications 1913-1921, hearing of 29 September 1921, BBAV 11505/6a; Register of Applications 1921-1934, hearing of 23 November 1921, BBAV 11505/6b, ANZ-A.

[117] *Te Aroha News*, 26 September 1921, p. 2.

[118] Ohinemuri County Council, Waitoa Riding, 1 April 1908, folio 47, Valuation Department, BBBC 14670, A150/647, ANZ-A.

[119] Aroha Block V Section 5B, Maori Affairs Department, Hamilton, BACS A102/3042, ANZ-A.

[120] See paper on his life.

[121] Maori Land Court, Hauraki Minute Book no. 60, p. 89.

[122] Maori Land Court, Hauraki Minute Book no. 60, pp. 90-91.

In May 1913, for £350 she bought Aroha Block 1X Part Section 29 West, over 29 acres with an unimproved value of £276.[123] That October, she sought to have Aroha Block V Section 5B, which she had bought from Maraea Mere Peka, declared European land.[124] As justification, her solicitor explained to the chief judge of the Native Appellate Court that she was a half-caste and the sister of William Grey Nicholls, and that since her husband's death she had 'carried on business here on her own account as a Dairy Farmer. She speaks English perfectly'. Her reason for changing the status of the land was that she wanted to sell it and other land, a total of just over 170 acres, for £25, providing her with £4,270 15s 7d. 'I can vouch for her being a good indeed astute business woman'.[125] Two days later he added that she had 'any amount land otherwise 100 acres [at] Mangaiti where residing 250 acres [at] Tapui also mortgage £500 over 150 acres Mangaiti and is buying now 80 acres from other natives [at] Mangaiti'.[126] On this basis, the court determined that her portion was European land.[127]

By June 1917 Alice had bought the interests of all but one owner in the Western part (almost 40 acres) of Aroha Block 1X Section 24.[128] In 1918 she sought to acquire Aroha Block V Section 6, of 20 acres, for £30. It was valued at £50, and when she bought the interests in January 1920 she had to pay £4 an acre.[129] Under section 17 of the Native Land Amendment Act, 1912, in September 1920 she was 'declared to be a European',[130] enabling

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[123] Aroha Block 1X Part Section 29 West, Maori Affairs Department, Hamilton, BACS A102/6977, ANZ-A.

[124] Peter Gilchrist to Registrar, Native Land Court Office, Auckland, 13 October 1913, 31 October 1913, Block Files, Te Aroha No. 1 file, H792, Maori Land Court, Hamilton.

[125] Peter Gilchrist to Chief Judge, Native Appellate Court, Rotorua, 7 January 1914, Te Aroha Block V Section 5, Maori Affairs Department, Hamilton, BCAC A622, H976, ANZ-A.

[126] Peter Gilchrist to Chief Judge, Native Appellate Court, Rotorua, 9 January 1914 (telegram), Te Aroha Block V Section 5, Maori Affairs Department, Hamilton, BCAC A622, H976, ANZ-A.

[127] Aroha Block V Section 5B, Block Files, H976, Maori Land Court, Hamilton.

[128] Aroha Block 1X Section 24, Block Files, H1064, Maori Land Court, Hamilton.

[129] Aroha Block V Section 6, Maori Affairs Department, Hamilton, BACS A102/10754, ANZ-A.

[130] Aroha Block V Section 2, Block Files, H1075, Maori Land Court, Hamilton; *New Zealand Gazette*, 16 September 1920, p. 2646.

her to acquire land more easily. The following March, a majority of owners agreed to sell her Aroha Block 5 Section 18, just over 191 acres, for £200.[131]

In December 1927, she applied to acquire a two-acre section at Tui Pa from two Ngati Rahiri for £80. She had paid £40 in August 'for burial and tangi expenses on Maraea Merepeka deceased and on account purchase price'. The price was accepted and the land acquired.[132] In February, when buying this and two other sections there, her solicitor complained, 'Of course the natives do not worry much about the survey. It is left for us to see that same is obtained, and to pay for same. We then deduct the cost from the purchase moneys paid into the Maori Land Board'.[133] The court confirmed her purchase of these sections, which totalled over four acres, one of which she bought for £30.[134] In April, her solicitor suggested that the sellers should bear the costs of showing a title. 'It was the Natives who wanted the sale and Mrs Dearle merely purchased to oblige them as the agreement shows'.[135]

Further complications ensued, as her solicitor explained. Title for Section 31 'until recently showed no restriction, and the Natives partitioned same among themselves by order of the Native Land Court, and in several instances sold and transferred pieces of the land' with the permission of the authorities. When some owners wished to sell part of it to Alice, she 'was not anxious to buy, but the Natives pressed her to buy, and eventually their interests were partitioned off as Section 31 C 1, 2 and 3'. When the transfers as confirmed by the Maori Land Board were presented to the district land registrar for registration, this was refused because he had discovered that the land was inalienable, as requested by those living at Tui Pa in 1916, 'there being at that time many Natives at the Pah'. The purpose

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131 Aroha Block V Section 18, Maori Affairs Department, Hamilton, BACS A203/10789, ANZ-A.

132 Aroha Block 1X Section 31 C3, Maori Affairs Department, Hamilton, BACS A203/13653, ANZ-A.

133 Gilchrist and Son to Chief Surveyor, 16 February 1928, Aroha Block 1X Section 31, 20/589, Land Information New Zealand, Hamilton.

134 Aroha Block 1X Sections 31 C1, C2, C3, Block Files, H984, Maori Land Court, Hamilton; Aroha Block 1X Section 31 C1, Maori Affairs Department, Hamilton, BACS A203/13651, ANZ-A.

135 Gilchrist and Sons to Registrar, Waikato-Maniopoto District Maori Land Board, 18 April 1928, Aroha Block 1X Section 31 C3, Maori Affairs Department, Hamilton, BACS A203/13653, ANZ-A.

of this restriction had ended, for the number living there 'has dwindled considerably. There may be two or three of the Natives at the Pah. We do not think many more than that. And the Natives have, by the many sales that have been confirmed by the Maori Land Board, clearly demonstrated that they now desire to alienate'. He suggested that the restriction be removed, if necessary by special legislation.[136]

For someone who claimed to have been reluctant to acquire these sections, Alice actively ensured she received them, sending a petition to parliament in August repeating these arguments. She also stated that she had paid £140 for the three sections, and claimed it was 'impossible for me to recover the purchase money paid to the Natives, stamp duty, legal and other costs and money spent on improvements'.[137] The under-secretary noted the administrative confusion caused by not having recorded the restrictions against alienation on the title and that it had been confirmed that no Maori now lived on the land,[138] the Native Affairs Committee urged 'favourable consideration' of her petition, and Section 25 of the Native Land Amendment and Native Land Claims Adjustment Act of 1928 allowed the alienation.[139]

FINANCES

Through her land dealings and the hard work of herself and her daughters on their farms, Alice was in a strong financial position. In 1897 her land provided an extra bonus, for as lessee of Aroha Block 1X Sections 22 and 25 she received half the compensation for land being taken for the railway line to Paeroa, totalling £5 18s 6d.[140] Two years later, with her brother William as guarantor, she mortgaged Sections 15-17 of Block V and

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[136] Gilchrist and Son to Under-Secretary, Native Affairs Department, 17 July 1928, Maori Land Blocks, Maori Affairs Department, MA 1, 28/456, ANZ-W.

[137] Petition of Alice Grey Dearle, n.d. [August 1928], Maori Land Blocks, Maori Affairs Department, MA 1, 28/456, ANZ-W.

[138] Under-Secretary, Native Affairs Department, to Chairman, Native Affairs Committee, House of Representatives, 23 August 1928, Maori Land Blocks, Maori Affairs Department, MA 1, 28/456, ANZ-W.

[139] Aroha Block 1X Section 31C (Tui Pa), Maori Land Blocks, Maori Affairs Department, MA 1, 28/456, ANZ-W.

[140] Aroha Block 1X Section 22, Block Files, H1103; Aroha Block 1X Section 23 (Omahu Reserve), Block Files, H1307, Maori Land Court, Hamilton.

Section 19 of Block 1X to the Government Advances to Settlers' Office for £250.[141] When her daughter Mary Alice married in 1902 at her mother's home, she 'wore a handsome fawn travelling costume trimmed with crème silk', and the bridesmaids, two of her sisters, 'wore prune colored velvet dresses with cream trim facings'. After the wedding ceremony 'the company sat down to a recherche breakfast'.[142] The following year, when she opened an account with the Paeroa branch of the Bank of New Zealand, the manager noted, 'Of some property. A fair a/c'.[143]

In 1908 she owned 85 acres, valued at £1,004, a total including a house worth £170 and three sheds with a total value of £105, all in good condition; 10 acres in Aroha Block V, valued at £40; and 50 acres in the same block valued at £248, including a house worth £25 and a hut worth £5.[144] She also leased three sections totalling over 317 acres, valued at £1,736, including a house on one property worth £167.[145] In 1919 she gave a £1,450 mortgage to a son-in-law,[146] and the following year had an overdraft of £817, required because she had built a house. She had freehold land valued at £1,440, and some property was being sold.[147] When she died her estate was worth £7,011, to be shared equally amongst her daughters.[148]

ALICE'S DEATH AND REPUTATION

After several years of ill health, Alice died in October 1936, aged 81.[149] Her obituary described her as 'one of Te Aroha's best known and oldest pioneers', and summarized her life. By then there were 27 grandchildren

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[141] Aroha Block V Section 16, Block Files, H1080, Maori Land Court, Hamilton.

[142] Te Aroha Correspondent, *Thames Star*, 20 August 1902, p. 2.

[143] Bank of New Zealand, Ohinemuri Branch, Balance Book as at 31 March 1903, Accounts Opened, Bank of New Zealand Archives, Wellington.

[144] Ohinemuri County Council, Waitoa Riding, 1 April 1908, folios 4, 11, Valuation Department, BBBC 14670, A150/647, ANZ-A.

[145] Ohinemuri County Council, Waitoa Riding, 1 April 1908, folios 4, 5, 47, Valuation Department, BBBC 14670, A150/647, ANZ-A.

[146] Bank of New Zealand, Te Aroha Branch, Manager's Diary 1905-1919, entry for 11 August 1919, Bank of New Zealand Archives, Wellington.

[147] Bank of New Zealand, Te Aroha Branch, Balance Book as at 31 March 1920, Report on Advances, Bank of New Zealand Archives, Wellington.

[148] Probate of Alice Grey Dearle, Hamilton Probates, BCDG 4420/3894, ANZ-A.

[149] Death Certificate of Alice Grey Dearle, 21 October 1936, 1936/23572, BDM.

and 22 great-grandchildren.[150] One granddaughter still retained fond memories of her in 2017: 'I am very fortunate that I can well remember my grand mother, who was the only one of the daughters to wear the MOKO which was applied when she was very young. I was eight years old when she passed away, but have very clear memories of time spent with her at her home outside of Te Aroha, and close to Mangaiti'.[151]

> I have happy memories of she and I sitting on the edge of a fresh water stream which ran through her farm, fishing for eels.
> When we went indoors for breakfast, she would fillet the eel, and we would have a delicious meal.
> She was a wonderful gardener, and up until she passed away, was up early every morning to go and milk her cow so that she would have fresh milk.[152]

In 1936, Alice was recalled as 'a gracious woman and to be invited to her home was considered a special privilege. She carried herself like a princess, had a beautiful speaking voice and was always suitably and smartly dressed'. From her 'many true and valuable traditions were learnt by the young visitors to her home; where musical evenings around the piano were as popular as her six lovely daughters'.[153]

CONCLUSION

Alice Grey Dearle was proud of her Maori background, and her husband did his best to allocate goldfields revenue to Maori landowners fairly. As well, like so many agents involved in Maori land sales, he sought to profit from his involvement. Alice also bought and sold Maori land, and as an astute businesswoman seized the opportunity to convert some into European land to facilitate selling it. Widowed relatively young, she was a successful farmer and astute in her land dealings, meaning her financial position was sound and she could leave her daughters a valuable estate. She was one of the many 'half-castes' who straddled both Maori and Pakeha society, and was respected by both.

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[150] *Te Aroha News*, 28 October 1936, p. 4.

[151] Estelle Bourne-Jenkins to Philip Hart, 7 June 2017, email.

[152] Estelle Bourne-Jenkins to Philip Hart, 8 June 2017, email.

[153] 'Ladies of Aroha (Contributed)', *Te Aroha News*, 12 December 1974, p. 3.

Appendix

Figure 1: Charles John Dearle, Anita Manning Collection; used with permission.

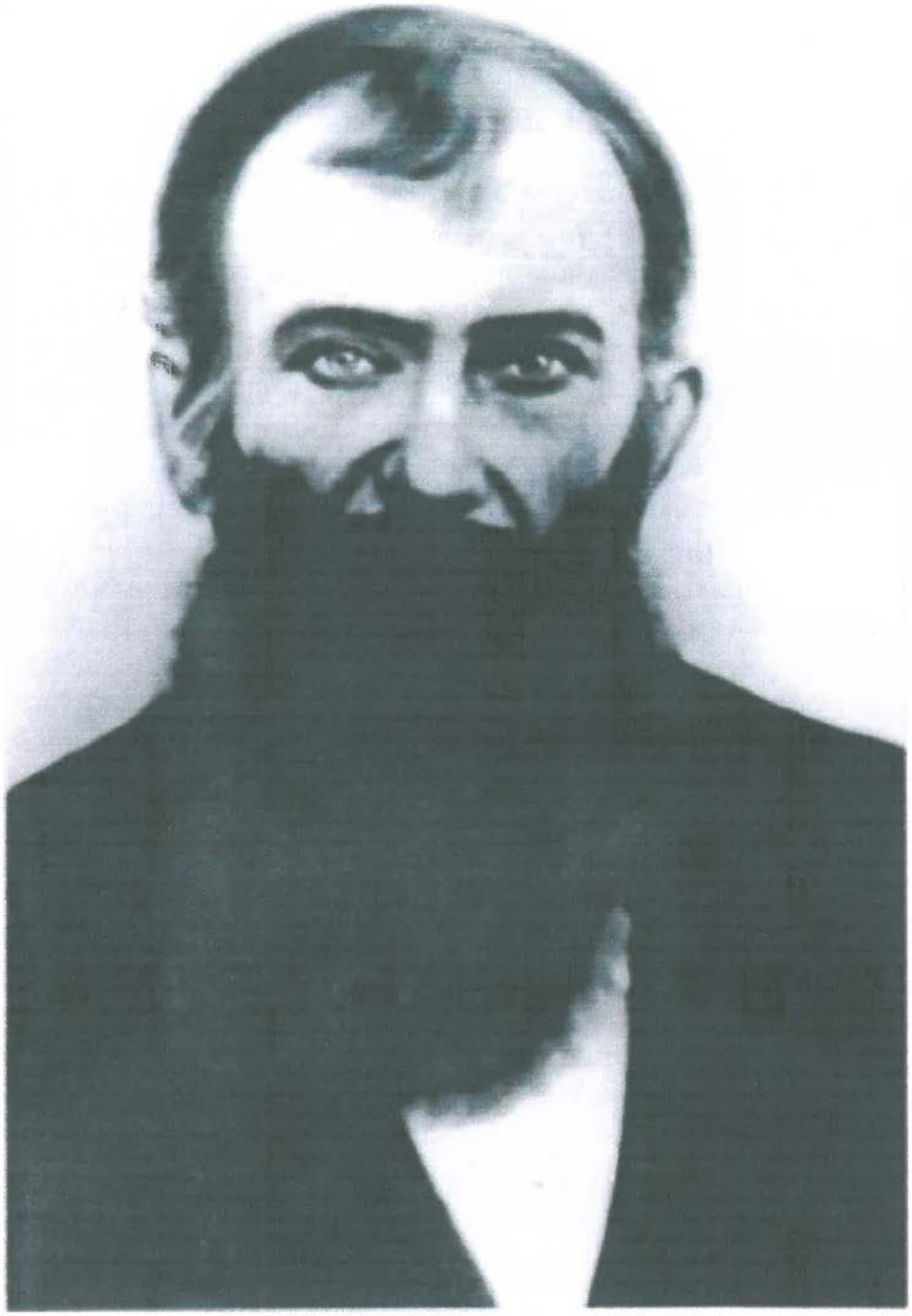
Figure 2: Alice Grey Dearle, with moko, Estelle Bourne-Jenkins Collection; used with permission.

Figure 3: Alice Grey Dearle, in old age, Anita Manning Collection; used with permission.

Figure 4: The Dearle family, c. 1894: the children are Mary Alice, born 1882; Annie (far left), born 1884; Emily (far right), born 1886; Elizabeth Grey (with her father), born 1888; Lilla May (blonde girl second from right), born 1891; William George (the baby), born 1894; Anita Manning Collection; used with permission.

Figure 5: Plan of Patuwhao Block, n.d. [1882?], attached to C.J. Dearle to Patrick Sheridan (Land Purchase Department), 27 March 1882, Maori Affairs Department, MA 1, 13/86, ANZ-W [Archives New Zealand The Department of Internal Affairs Te Tari Taiwhenua]; used with permission.

Figure 6: Plan of Patuwhao Block, 1883 [purchased by C.J. Dearle on 21 September 1883], Maori Affairs Department, Hamilton, BACS A806, box 2, no. 5, ANZ-A [Archives New Zealand/Te Rua Mahara o te Kawanatanga, Auckland Regional Office]; used with permission.



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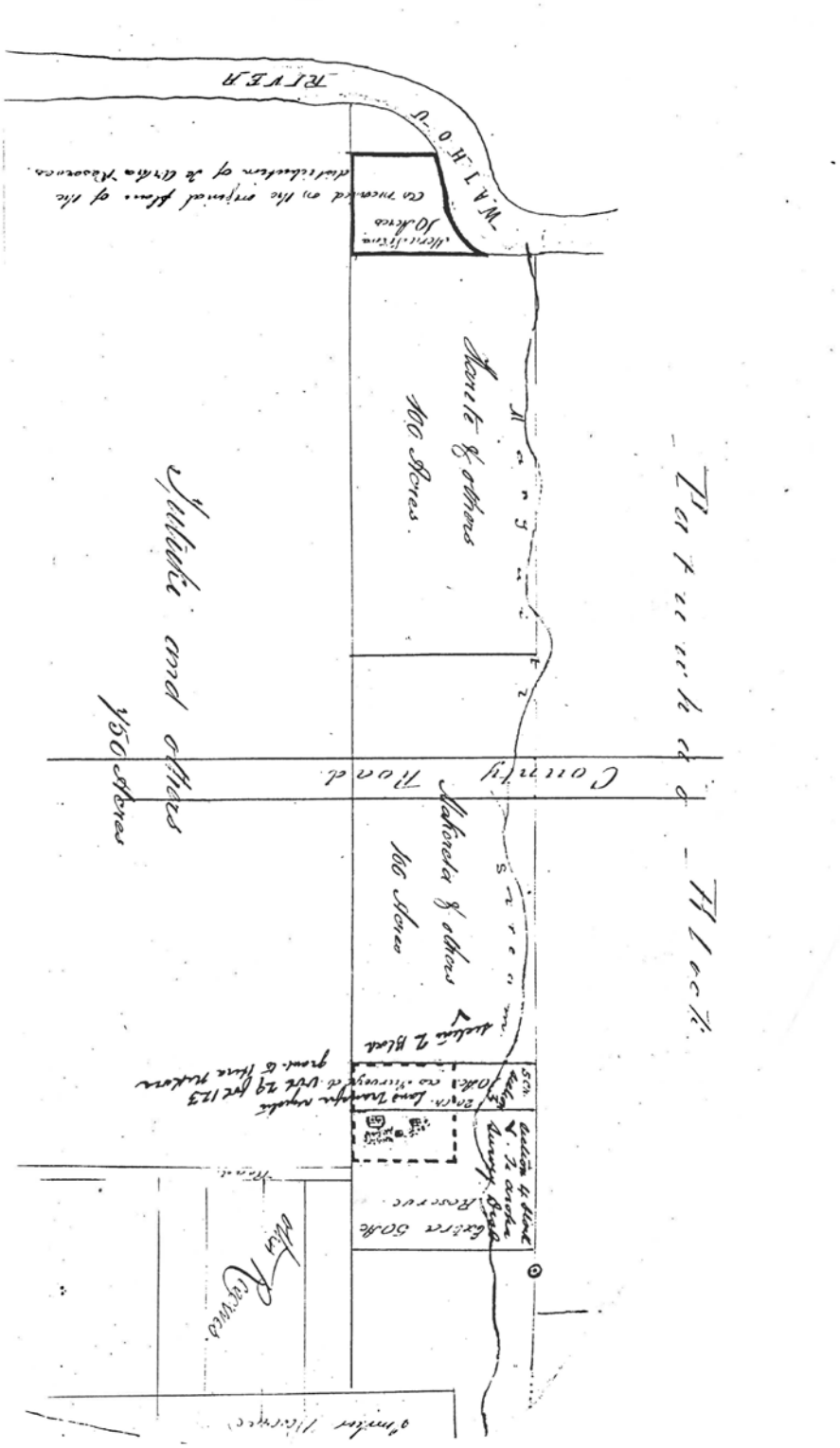

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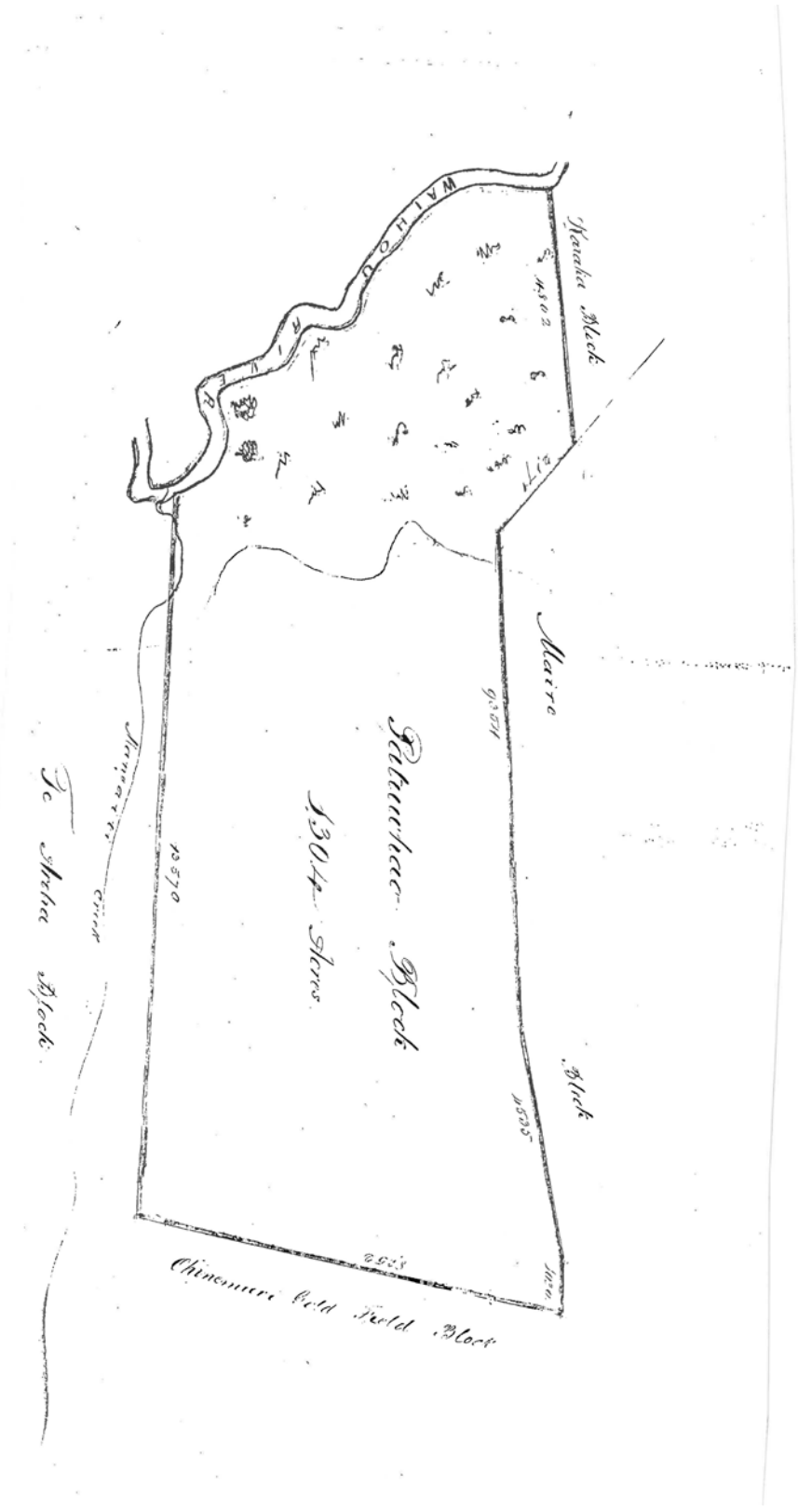

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