

EDWARD KERSEY COOPER: A MINE MANAGER AND MINE
OWNER IN HAURAKI

Philip Hart

Te Aroha Mining District Working Papers

No. 89

2016

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

ISSN: 2463-6266

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Contact: prhart1940@gmail.com



THE UNIVERSITY OF
WAIKATO
Te Whare Wānanga o Waikato

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Abstract: *After having a variety of occupations in several countries, Edward Kersey Cooper arrived in New Zealand in 1880 to manage a manganese mine. From 1881 onwards, he was involved in Hauraki mining, commencing with the Waiorongomai field, where he invested in several claims, mostly unproductive ones, and was a mine manager and company director. Here, as elsewhere, he was not reluctant to criticize others, notably those operating the tramway and county councillors (for their perceived lack of support for the mining industry). He remained an outspoken critic of others during all his years trying to make a success of mining, clearly annoying some of his fellow miners with his outspokenness.*

In 1886 he moved to Waihi, typically exaggerating his role in finding high-grade ore and also typically clashing with other leading miners. From 1887 onwards he was involved with some important mines at Waitekauri, Thames, and, most disastrously of all, Wharekiraupunga. As all these ventures required more capital than local investors could provide, he spent many years travelling to and from England seeking financial support, which was never sufficient; but the fundamental handicap was not having mines with long term and payable prospects. Like so many mine owners, he was over-sanguine, and his finances were shaky, being forced into bankruptcy in 1892. One solution was, as normal, to seek subsidies from local and national governments, with some success. He was a strong and opinionated critic of some government policies, notably the gold duty, which he sought to have abolished. With reason, he was critical of English companies even though he required English capital. Regarded as a friend to his workers, nonetheless he opposed paying them higher wages.

Cooper was also involved in local government, briefly at Te Aroha and for longer at Thames, and when not on the councils was a belligerent critic of many of their policies. A difficult man to deal with, he valiantly struggled for many years to make a success of mining before retiring to England in the early twentieth century.

BEFORE TE AROHA

Little is known about the family background of Edward Kersey Cooper,¹ who preferred to be known as E. or Ed Kersey Cooper.² Even his wife was known as Nellie Kersey Cooper, not Nellie Cooper.³ He was born in 1843 at Euston, in Suffolk, to George Kersey Cooper and Catherine, also a Cooper.⁴ His father was a land agent, farmer, and superintendent of the estate of the Duke of Grafton, employing 80 workers; he could afford about four servants, including a governess.⁵ One brother became an Anglican clergyman, and another succeeded his father as the duke's agent;⁶ the latter's funeral indicated the respect with which he was held by the duke and the wider community.⁷

In 1902, when providing details of his early life for the *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, Cooper wrote that 'after leaving school he assisted his father, till twenty-one years of age, in agricultural work and the estate agency business'. In 1884, when offering his expertise to the New Zealand Frozen Meat and Storage Company, explaining how to make artificial fertilizer, and urging the government to protect agriculture, he described his experiences:

For some years, I was intimately connected with one of the largest artificial manure and acid manufacturers in England, in fact, I did all the selling, which, in a business, is a big part of the work. My time was taken up six months of the year, on the Continent of Europe, and the balance in visiting all the agricultural districts and markets of England.⁸

¹ For photograph, see *British Australasian*, 4 February 1897, p. 240; for sketch, see cartoon, *Observer*, 17 August 1895, p. 7.

² For example, letter from Ed. Kersey Cooper, *Te Aroha News*, 27 September 1884, pp. 2, 7.

³ For example, Te Aroha Warden's Court, Residence Site Licenses, no. 321/01, BBAV 11591/1a, ANZ-A.

⁴ *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 2, p. 475; ancestry.co.uk.

⁵ Ancestry.co.uk.

⁶ *Bury and Norwich Post and Suffolk Standard*, n.d., reprinted in *Thames Star*, 15 September 1894, p. 2, 16 September 1903, p. 2; *Ohinemuri Gazette*, 18 September 1903, p. 2.

⁷ *Bury and Norwich Post and Suffolk Standard*, n.d., reprinted in *Thames Star*, 15 September 1894, p. 2.

⁸ Letter from E.K. Cooper, *New Zealand Herald*, 14 November 1884, p. 3.

Later that month he wrote that he ‘was in England when the first frozen meat came over from America’. Before giving his advice about how to improve New Zealand’s frozen mutton trade, he mentioned that ‘in those days I was attending an agricultural market every day in the week’.⁹ According to the *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, he must have done this at a remarkably young age, for when aged 21 he

entered a stock-broker’s office as an authorised clerk, and was thus enabled to get into the Stock Exchange, and form an idea as to whether he would like to follow such an occupation. Mr Cooper decided against it, on account of the lack of continuity in the work. In 1865 he went to Hamburg, and superintended the shipping of that year’s Saale barley for a large malster and brewer; whilst so occupied he made the acquaintance of the late Mr A[lfred] Nobel, who had then only recently discovered how to explode nitro-glycerine by the use of a strong detonator. For many years thereafter Mr Cooper was engaged with that gentleman in experimenting with nitro-glycerine, and introducing it into the mines of England and Europe. He subsequently visited America, and engaged in various ventures, eventually finding his way to New Zealand in 1880.¹⁰

The first part of this biography was taken almost word-for-word from a January 1897 interview for the *British Australasian and New Zealand Mail*, most of which was reprinted (sometimes inexactly) by the *Ohinemuri Gazette* under the headline ‘A Mining Celebrity’.¹¹ In the interview he commented that there was ‘at times too much idle time’ in the stock exchange. After making the acquaintance of Alfred Nobel when they were both staying in the same hotel, ‘they soon became friends’, and he ‘entered into an arrangement’ with Nobel to introduce nitro-glycerine into England and Wales. After ‘visiting successfully the granite quarries of Leicestershire’, he went to North Wales and ‘most convincingly proved nitro-glycerine to be far more suitable than gun-cotton’, resulting in ‘quarry after quarry’ and mines adopting this new explosive.

⁹ Letter from E.K. Cooper, *New Zealand Herald*, 21 November 1884, p. 6.

¹⁰ *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 2, p. 475.

¹¹ Special Commissioner, ‘Interview with Mr E. Kersey Cooper’, *British Australasian*, 4 February 1897, pp. 240-243; reprinted in *Ohinemuri Gazette*, 15 May 1897, p. 3 [portion of this reprint removed by the scissors of a souvenir hunter].

Having to conduct all the experiments and charge all the holes put down to test the power of the nitro-glycerine, Mr Cooper was hardly ever free from a frightful headache, caused by handling this terrible liquid explosive or by inhaling its fumes. This, with constant letters from Mr Cooper's father begging him to give up his connection with such a dangerous explosive, caused him to ask Mr Nobel to release him. This he did most reluctantly, but not till he had tempted him with the offer of a half-partnership for £5,000. In working with nitro-glycerine, Mr Cooper kept Mr Nobel well posted with his experiences, and never ceased impressing on him to try and find some absorbent to do away with the difficulties he experienced, particularly in cold weather, in getting his charges to the bottom of the holes. Mr Nobel discovered at last Keisel-Guhr, which resulted in dynamite.

Cooper and Nobel 'remained fast friends' until the latter's death (in 1896), and on Cooper's last visit to Paris Nobel 'reminded him of what he once offered him, and what he had missed'.¹²

Soon after ceasing to work for Nobel Cooper answered an advertisement in *The Times* 'and was too much in a hurry to put £8,000 into a partnership in the wine trade. With his fortune sadly crippled' in consequence, he went to Canada in 1871, where he obtained a contract to supply sleepers for the Canada Southern Railway. 'To carry out this contract he had to purchase the oak timber on some 3,000 acres. After making up all the suitable trees into sleepers, he converted the largest trees into "Canadian pipes," West India and oil-barrel staves'. He then sunk two oil wells at Petrolia,

neither of which proved payable. He had from time to time come across an inventor of a rectifier, which was to revolutionize the business, and was induced to meet the cost of introducing this invention to the distillers and rectifiers in the big centres of the United States. What he could do on a small scale with a machine he took about with him in a case proved would not work on a large basis after some big plants got under way. This experience brought Mr Cooper to the length of his tether, and he had to seek employment, which he got as book-keeper in a wholesale wine and spirit merchant's office, and within four months had the management of the business, with his salary doubled. This

¹² Special Commissioner, 'Interview with Mr E. Kersey Cooper', *British Australasian*, 4 February 1897, p. 240 [most of this detail about Nobel was not reprinted in the *Ohinemuri Gazette*, possibly in part because two lines had been printed out of order in the original, confusingly].

enabled him to save money preparatory to another start on his own account. Making the acquaintance of railway men, he got to hear a good deal of the further Western States, and gradually thought out his next venture, which was to acquire the refusal of large blocks of land owned by the Kansas and Missouri Railway, and sell them to young English farmers. He told his scheme to his employer, who laughed at it, and said he had better settle where he was sure of a good living, that he would take him into partnership, &c. Nothing daunted, his mind being made up, Mr Cooper gave the necessary month's notice, which he extended from month to month to four, to oblige his kind employer, and then set out to Kansas. He went to the Neosha Valley to choose his land from, and selected large areas of land close to the Indian Reservation, between Kansas and Texas, with limestone sub-soil, coal out-cropping in many places, and got the refusal of these areas at a dollar and a quarter an acre. He proceeded to England, believing he could induce people to think as he did, but the half-hearted way in which his rosy pictures were met with showed him he had only captured a white elephant. At this time he received a letter from a big mining man and an old friend in California, advising him to try and get hold of the refusal of "Abel's process to make gun cotton for the United States." Knowing Prentice Bros., of Stowmarket, very well, who manufactured the gun cotton under arrangement with Sir F[rederick] Abel, he immediately went down to Stowmarket to find out how the ground laid, and, after a few intervals, succeeded in getting the refusal of the patent for the United States. Taking his parting instructions from Sir Frederick Abel at the Athenaeum Club, he set sail for New York. At this time the great Hell Gate works were getting fast completed preparatory to being blown up, and Mr Cooper determined that that was the place to start into work. He consulted a very good friend, a big mining man and banker, who gave him all the introductions he wanted. He went to Washington with Tom Murphy, of New York, a great friend of General Grant's, who was then at the White House, and the programme was fixed up. Mr Cooper was to attack Hell Gate, and if successful, the proposed company to be brought out to purchase "Abel's patent" was a *fait accompli*.¹³

He later dated his going to the United States on behalf of Abel to 'the beginning of 1875'.¹⁴

¹³ Special Commissioner, 'Interview with Mr E. Kersey Cooper', *British Australasian*, 4 February 1897, pp. 240-242.

¹⁴ E.K. Cooper to Secretary, Board of Examiners for Mine Managers, 21 January 1901, Mines Department, MD 1, 01/80, ANZ-W.

Month after month Mr Cooper conducted experiments at the Hell Gate works against every kind of explosive that was brought under the notice of General Newton and Captain Hener, and eventually General Newton gave Mr Cooper an order for over 30 tons of gun-cotton to be used in preference to all other explosive to blow up the Hell Gate works; the gun-cotton to be delivered within four months at New York. Mr Cooper took passage for England in the first steamer that left the port, after receiving a written order from General Newton. Arrived in England he went straight to Stowmarket, only to find that the works were running on a large French Government order, but recently taken, and that the time fixed for the contract being completed prevented any possibility of General Newton's order being accepted. This was a great disappointment and loss of time and money to Mr Cooper, who again had to seek employment. This he did by engaging with Prentice Brothers to travel for them on the Continent and in England. Giving his employers every satisfaction, things ran smoothly till he was tempted one day to listen to a fairy story about a New Zealand manganese mine, the picture of which was so carefully drawn, and the gain to him was to be so great, that Mr Cooper was induced to ask his employers to release him on the ground that he had a chance of very much bettering his position by taking the management of these so-called manganese mines.¹⁵

In 1899 Cooper would claim to have 'mined in England, North Wales, Canada and the United States';¹⁶ from 1880 onwards his career was restricted to mining.¹⁷

Mining for manganese had taken place since the end of 1874 at Tikitikioure, a few kilometres southeast of Russell, known for a time by Pakeha as the manganese mountain.¹⁸ 'About 40 miners' worked there from 1877 onwards, and in 1880 John Tucker, an English investor, purchased the property from its English owners and appointed Cooper to open up new workings.¹⁹ At the beginning of November an advertisement announced

¹⁵ Special Commissioner, 'Interview with Mr E. Kersey Cooper', *British Australasian*, 4 February 1897, pp. 240-242.

¹⁶ E.K. Cooper to Minister of Mines, 27 February 1899, Mines Department, MD 1, 01/80, ANZ-W.

¹⁷ E.K. Cooper to Secretary, Board of Examiners for Mine Managers, 21 January 1901, Mines Department, MD 1, 01/80, ANZ-W.

¹⁸ Kay Boese, *Tides of History: Bay of Islands County* (Bay of Islands, 1977). p. 366.

¹⁹ Boese, pp. 366-367.

that 'The Manganese Mines of Bay of Islands and Waiheke, formerly owned and worked by the New Zealand Manganese Mines Limited' had been purchased by Tucker and were 'now under the sole management of Cooper'.²⁰ By December he was employing over 80 men to 'put in some low levels on Tikitikioure, and also cut large lodes in various places on the extensive freehold (Minerohia) estate. He entirely renewed the wire tramway', and by July the following year 'had erected many new cottages and a store'.²¹ In April 1882 he cut another large manganese lode on the Minerohia estate, and was 'in a position to ship, within a short notice, a thousand tons of his quality manganese'; with more workers he 'could quickly double the present large output'.²² A local newspaper reported he had 'opened out some magnificent lodes' and 'thousands of tons of high quality manganese' were ready for shipment.... This speaks well of the management.- Go it, Cooper'.²³ Six years later, a chemist closely involved with mining, James Alexander Pond,²⁴ wrote that a 'large tonnage of excellent ore' was obtained by the two previous managers and Cooper.²⁵

In 1891 Cooper told the Minister of Mines that he managed these mines for two years, 'spending over £20,000' on them.²⁶ Whilst there, he obtained the freehold of 221 acres in the Bay of Islands County, valued at £150 in 1882, possibly on behalf of the company but held in his name.²⁷ In March 1882 also applied for a patent for the manufacture of triple alloys of manganese, titaniferous steel sand, and carbon.²⁸ Later that year he urged the Colonial Secretary to encourage 'the manufacture of spiegeleisen ferro-manganese and manganese bronze ... by offering a substantial bonus for the first 300 tons of any or all such products'. He stressed the disadvantages of mining manganese in New Zealand compared with countries with cheap labour: in his words, 'I can carry a lot of weight, but I am handicapped clean

²⁰ Advertisement, *New Zealand Herald*, 1 November 1880, p. 4.

²¹ Boese, p. 367.

²² Russell Correspondent, *New Zealand Herald*, 22 April 1882, p. 2.

²³ *Northern Luminary* (Kawakawa), 29 April 1882, p. 2.

²⁴ See paper on his life.

²⁵ James Alexander Pond, 'On the Manganese Deposits of the Auckland District', *Transactions and Proceedings of the New Zealand Institute*, vol. 21 (1888), p. 355.

²⁶ E.K. Cooper to Minister of Mines, 8 July 1891, Mines Department, MD 1, 91/566, ANZ-W.

²⁷ *A Return of the Freeholders of New Zealand...* (Wellington, 1994), p. C 64.

²⁸ *New Zealand Gazette*, 30 March 1882, p. 516.

out of it'. His 'friends at Home', meaning England, had promised 'to find the capital for this new enterprise if sufficient inducement is offered by the Government to warrant the large outlay' of capital required.²⁹

Cooper was mine manager at Waiheke (not now traceable, but in the Bay of Islands) from October 1880 to the beginning of 1883.³⁰ In July, when all mining had ceased for lack of capital, a Kawakaka correspondent referred to this venture as having 'at one time looked so promising'.³¹ Cooper's 1897 interview explained the reality he had discovered:

In October, 1880, he arrived in New Zealand, only to find that he had been most outrageously deceived, and by the same letter which announced his arrival asked to be released, but this was denied him by a variety of excuses from mail to mail, until the climax arrived, when the difficulties of working this much over-rated property became too heavy to be borne up by pictures of great profit and unlimited ore bodies.³²

Chasing phantom profits by acquiring white elephants was to continue in New Zealand, in several mining districts.

Cooper left the Bay of Islands briefly in early 1881 to join the Tiki rush near Coromandel, but continued to work in Northland until January 1883.³³ Perhaps when at Tiki he met John Watson Walker, a leading mine manager,³⁴ for the first time; in July 1881 he bought the Fame claim at Waiotahi, Thames, from Walker.³⁵ They had ambitious plans to work these 60 acres, Cooper undertaking 'to forward the proposal to his friends in England', being 'confident they will have no hesitation in taking it up, and that almost immediately after receipt of his advices, they will transmit

²⁹ *New Zealand Herald*, 2 October 1882, p. 6.

³⁰ Police Court, *New Zealand Herald*, 22 September 1883, p. 6.

³¹ Kawakawa Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 7 July 1883, p. 15.

³² Special Commissioner, 'Interview with Mr E. Kersey Cooper', *British Australasian*, 4 February 1897, p. 242.

³³ Special Commissioner, 'Interview with Mr E. Kersey Cooper', *British Australasian*, 4 February 1897, p. 242; E.K. Cooper to George Wilson, 8 January 1883, Te Aroha Warden's Court, Warden's Office General Correspondence 1883, BBAV 11584/1c, ANZ-A.

³⁴ See paper on his life.

³⁵ Thames Warden's Court, Register of Licensed Holdings 1875-1882, folio 154, BACL 14397/10a, ANZ-A.

instructions to him to commence preliminary operations'.³⁶ Despite hopes that an English company would be formed,³⁷ it was not, and it was forfeited at the end of May 1882, at the same time as the Golden Bar, the Fame, and the Fortune, the latter bought from Walker on 10 August 1881.³⁸ On that date he had bought Fame No. 2 and the Fortune Extended, both at Waiotahi, from Walker, 'subject to conditions contained in deed' (not traced); they were abandoned in March 1882.³⁹ Also on 10 August, Cooper bought the Cosmopolitan, the Josephine, the Primrose, and the Pinafore, in the same area: the last two were sold in May 1882.⁴⁰ The following month, he forfeited the Golden Bar (also at Waiotahi) and the Fame and Fortune, and two months later the Cosmopolitan and the Josephine.⁴¹ In October, when he gave his occupation as gentleman and his address as Auckland, he held 238 of the 43,000 scrip shares in the Queen of England Company, which owned a Thames mine.⁴²

Even after settling in Te Aroha, Cooper retained an interest in Thames mining. In October 1883, with three others, one being Walker, he successfully applied for the Darwin Extended, again at Waiotahi.⁴³ It was not a successful claim, and Cooper would not be involved in Thames mining again until 1887.

WAIORONGOMAI

The only mention of Waiorongomai in his 1897 London interview was that 'he stopped nearly two years, living mostly in the ranges'.⁴⁴ In fact, he

³⁶ Thames Correspondent, *New Zealand Herald*, 29 July 1881, p. 3.

³⁷ *Thames Advertiser*, 28 July 1881, p. 3; *Thames Star*, 30 July 1881, p. 2.

³⁸ Thames Warden's Court, Register of Licensed Holdings 1875-1882, folios 154, 156, BACL 14397/10a, ANZ-A; advertisement, *Thames Star*, 3 June 1882, p. 2.

³⁹ Thames Warden's Court, Register of Claims 1880-1882, claims 959, 960, BACL 14397/13a, ANZ-A.

⁴⁰ Thames Warden's Court, Register of Licensed Holdings 1875-1882, folios 127, 135, 140, BACL 14397/10a; Register of Claims 1880-1882, claim 893, BACL 14397/13a, ANZ-A.

⁴¹ *Thames Advertiser*, 3 June 1882, p. 2, 25 August 1882, p. 3.

⁴² *New Zealand Gazette*, 19 October 1882, p. 1523.

⁴³ Thames Warden's Court, Register of Applications for Licensed Holdings 1881-1886, folio 104, BACL 14452/1a, ANZ-A; *Thames Star*, 18 October 1883, p. 3.

⁴⁴ Special Commissioner, 'Interview with Mr E. Kersey Cooper', *British Australasian*, 4 February 1897, p. 242.

lived in Te Aroha,⁴⁵ and mined there from late 1881 until late 1884. Possibly he was the Edward Cooper of Auckland who held 50 shares in the Bonanza Company in December 1880,⁴⁶ although he preferred to be known as Kersey, not Edward. He first took out a miner's right in November 1881, and obtained the next ones in February 1883 and February 1884.⁴⁷ His first investment there was in mid-December 1881, when he was an owner, with one share, of the Little and Good, which was little but not good. After selling his interest in March 1882 for £20, he bought it back from the purchaser for the same price in October 1883.⁴⁸ In February 1884, when warned that it could be forfeited for being undermanned, he assured George Wilson, the mining inspector,⁴⁹ that he had spent 'large sums of money' on it.⁵⁰ The following month he unsuccessfully objected to the erection of the Eureka wire tramway across this ground.⁵¹ His interest was transferred to the Eureka Company in April.⁵²

At the beginning of February 1882 he purchased a share in the Arizona for £20, transferring it to the company of that name for 1,000 scrip shares three and a half months later.⁵³ Elected one of the first directors,⁵⁴ by July 1884 he was its managing director, when he asked Wilson to

⁴⁵ For example, *Te Aroha News*, 24 November 1883, p. 3, 24 May 1884, p. 2.

⁴⁶ *New Zealand Gazette*, 20 January 1881, p. 111.

⁴⁷ Te Aroha Warden's Court, Miner's Right no. 1802, Miners' Rights Butt Book 1881-1882, BBAV 11533/1i; Miner's Right no. 1921, Miners' Rights Butt Book 1883, BBAV 11533/1k; Miner's Right no. 2156, Miners' Rights Butt Book 1883-1884, BBAV 11533/1m, ANZ-A.

⁴⁸ Te Aroha Warden's Court, Register of Licensed Holdings 1881-1887, folio 41, BBAV 11500/9a; Transfers and Assignments 1882, no. 118, BBAV 11581/1a; Transfers and Assignments 1883, no. 586, BBAV 11581/4a, ANZ-A.

⁴⁹ See paper on his life.

⁵⁰ E.K. Cooper to George Wilson, 12 February 1884, Te Aroha Warden's Court, Notices of Forfeiture 1884, BBAV 11583/1a, ANZ-A.

⁵¹ Te Aroha Warden's Court, Complaints 1884, 10/1884, BBAV 11572/1a; Register of Applications 1883-1900, 22/1884, BBAV 11505/1a, ANZ-A.

⁵² Te Aroha Warden's Court, Register of Licensed Holdings 1881-1887, folio 41, BBAV 11500/9a, ANZ-A.

⁵³ Te Aroha Warden's Court, Register of Licensed Holdings 1881-1887, folio 6, BBAV 11500/9a; Transfers and Assignments 1882, no. 60, BBAV 11581/1a, ANZ-A; *New Zealand Gazette*, 13 July 1882, p. 961.

⁵⁴ Company Files, BBAE 10286/11a, ANZ-A.

require the company to pay the rent rather than himself, ‘a broken down shareholder’.⁵⁵

In March 1882, he bought a share in the Young Colonial for £20; when transferred to the Colonist Company in July he was allotted 1,000 scrip shares.⁵⁶ On the same day in March 1882 he purchased 11 shares in the Pride of the West, for £20, and for £30 bought another three and a half, in October 1883.⁵⁷ The following month, with two other shareholders, he sued Edward McConville for the dissolution of the partnership, applying to sell his share to defray the debts due to it. McConville, described as ‘a well-known baker on the West Coast, Te Aroha, and other places’,⁵⁸ had returned to Reefton leaving ‘no one to represent his interest’ and was ‘not working or representing his share’. Cooper told the warden, Harry Kenrick,⁵⁹ that, having been summonsed to pay the rent, he had made a call of £2 per half share, but was owed £10 by McConville. Kenrick at first adjourned the case to let the partners settle the dispute, but when they could not he dissolved their partnership, Cooper to liquidate the assets and McConville to pay the costs of the case.⁶⁰ As liquidator, Cooper purchased a thirtieth interest for £4 15s at the end of December,⁶¹ indicating his continued faith in the ground. Threatened in February 1884 with having it, along with the Little and Good, forfeited for under-manning, he wrote to Wilson: ‘I hope before you actually forfeit these holdings you will grant me a hearing when I will show you the large sums of money I have actually expended on the said holdings – I go today to further conduct prospecting operations and will

⁵⁵ E.K. Cooper to George Wilson, 19 July 1884, Te Aroha Warden’s Court, Warden’s Office General Correspondence 1884, BBAV 11584/2b, ANZ-A [this letter mislaid, but photocopy made in 1970s by David Bettison held in the archives of the University of Waikato Library].

⁵⁶ Te Aroha Warden’s Court, Register of Licensed Holdings 1881-1887, folio 2, BBAV 11500/9a; Transfers and Assignments 1882, no. 119, BBAV 11581/1a, ANZ-A; *New Zealand Gazette*, 10 August 1882, p. 1101.

⁵⁷ Te Aroha Warden’s Court, Register of Licensed Holdings 1881-1887, folio 36, BBAV 11500/9a; Transfers and Assignments 1882, no. 117, BBAV 11581/1a; Transfers 1883, nos. 584, 585, BBAV 11581/4a, ANZ-A.

⁵⁸ Mercury Bay Correspondent, *Freeman’s Journal*, 22 August 1884, p. 12.

⁵⁹ See paper on his life.

⁶⁰ Te Aroha Warden’s Court, Plaintiff Book 1880-1898, 44/1883, BBAV 11547/1a, ANZ-A; Warden’s Court, *Te Aroha News*, 24 October 1883, p. 3, 24 November 1883, p. 3.

⁶¹ Te Aroha Warden’s Court, Plaints 1884, 10/1884, BBAV 11572/1a, ANZ-A.

continue to do so until I have your answer to my request'.⁶² In September he was ordered to pay arrears of rent amounting to £15, and in February 1885 the claim was forfeited.⁶³

In July 1882, he purchased a quarter share in the Diamond Gully for £25, transferring it to the company of that name in December and being allotted 250 scrip shares.⁶⁴ He was a director.⁶⁵ In March 1885 he was warned that his shares, then 642, would be forfeited if a call remained unpaid.⁶⁶

In December 1882, he bought a half share in the Vermont for £17.⁶⁷ The following August he chaired the shareholders' meeting that agreed to form a company, and was allotted 500 scrip shares in it.⁶⁸

In January 1883, Cooper wrote from Auckland to Wilson, who had demanded that his interests be worked:

I have asked Johnny Willis to see you and see done what you demand re my interest on your field till I can come down – I have 2 weeks work at the Bay [of Islands] before I can finish up there and then get my mail off and I shall be then free from manganese and London schemers and able to turn my attention to gold and I hope a bright future in which I expect to be one of the moving powers however this we will leave over to talk about when I am down with you before leaving for the old Country where it would seem there is plenty of money seeking employment.⁶⁹

⁶² E.K. Cooper to George Wilson, 12 February 1884, Te Aroha Warden's Court, Notices of Forfeiture 1884, 4/1884, BBAV 11583/1a, ANZ-A.

⁶³ Te Aroha Warden's Court, Plaint Book 1880-1898, 50/1884, BBAV 11547/1a; Letterbook 1883-1900, p. 62, BBAV 11534/1a, ANZ-A.

⁶⁴ Te Aroha Warden's Court, Register of Licensed Holdings 1881-1887, folio 5, BBAV 11500/9a; Transfers and Assignments 1882, no. 504, BBAV 11581/2a, ANZ-A; *New Zealand Gazette*, 14 December 1882, p. 1885.

⁶⁵ *Thames Directory for 1885* (Thames, 1885), p. 127.

⁶⁶ Public Notice, *Te Aroha News*, 14 March 1885, p. 7.

⁶⁷ Te Aroha Warden's Court, Register of Licensed Holdings 1881-1887, folio 97, BBAV 11500/9a; Transfers and Assignments 1882-1883, no. 29, BBAV 11581/3a, ANZ-A;

⁶⁸ *Te Aroha News*, 25 August 1883, p. 3; *New Zealand Gazette*, 6 September 1883, p. 1265.

⁶⁹ E.K. Cooper to George Wilson, 8 January 1883, Te Aroha Warden's Court, Warden's Office General Correspondence 1883, BBAV 11584/1c, ANZ-A.

John Willis, who had mined at Thames shortly after that goldfield opened and then in Ohinemuri,⁷⁰ had participated in the Te Aroha rush and become joint owner of one claim.⁷¹ He remained in the district until at least late 1884.⁷²

In February 1883 Cooper purchased one share in the Welcome for £10, transferring it to the New Welcome Company seven months later.⁷³ At an unrecorded date he also acquired an interest in the Young Caledonian, and when this partnership was dissolved in December 1883 he was appointed liquidator.⁷⁴

In September 1883, an Auckland correspondent reported that Cooper had ‘hit on a plan in connection with self-acting wire trams, by which all claims through which trams pass can make use of it. The wear and tear is next to nothing. The motive power used is the quartz. Cost of plant small, and the carriage a little over the labour of filling boxes’.⁷⁵ Clearly difficulties arose in translating this theory into practice, as it was never tested at Waiorongomai or any other field.

In August 1884, when standing for the Te Aroha Riding of the county council, he claimed that ‘through mismanagement in various ways, our mines and district generally had got into discredit, and it would be necessary for them all to pull together to set things right again’. The council ‘would have to let the tramway by contract, subject to occasional inspection’, with ‘a practical hardworking man’ as its manager. He considered ‘it a great injustice that miners should have to pay £1 a year’ for a miner’s right ‘for the privilege of working for 8s a day’. He would ‘give all possible encouragement to the introduction of new capital, and oppose obstruction in

⁷⁰ Thames Warden’s Court, Register of Miners’ Rights 1867-1868, no. 1944, BACL 14358/1a; Claims Register 1868, folio 181, BACL 14397/1a; Claims Register 1868-1869, no. 1435, BACL 14397/3a; Index of Ohinemuri Miners’ Rights 1876-1892, no. 158 of 1877, BACL 14441/2a, ANZ-A.

⁷¹ Te Aroha Warden’s Court, Miner’s Right no. 518, issued 26 November 1880, Miners’ Rights Butt Book 1880, BBAV 11533/1d; Register of Te Aroha Claims 1880-1888, folio 162, BBAV 11567/1a, ANZ-A.

⁷² *Te Aroha News*, 18 October 1884, p. 7.

⁷³ Te Aroha Warden’s Court, Register of Licensed Holdings 1881-1887, folio 103, BBAV 11500/9a; Transfers and Assignments 1883, no. 129, BBAV 11581/3a, ANZ-A; *New Zealand Gazette*, 27 September 1883, p. 1369.

⁷⁴ Warden’s Court, *Te Aroha News*, 8 December 1883, p. 2.

⁷⁵ Auckland Correspondent, *Te Aroha News*, 8 September 1883, p. 2.

any and every form'. As the field required 'more batteries and cheaper crushing charges', viewed the opposition to Peter Ferguson's planned battery⁷⁶ and to constructing a road to it 'as very mean'.⁷⁷ At a meeting held at Te Aroha shortly afterwards, in giving elaborate details of how to run the tramway he revealed he no longer wished to lease it. 'I would first of all take those two engines' (there was in fact only one locomotive)⁷⁸

and every other thing that was not wanted and sell them, and with the money purchase two wire-ropes 1 1/2 inch in circumference for both the Butler's and May Queen Spurs. He here referred to his experience, gained among the quarries and mines in Wales, and went on to say that the present ropes were far too cumbersome, and occasioned far too much wear and tear. The windlasses too ought to be moved nearer to the top of the spurs. With these and other necessary alterations they would be able to send down double the quantity of quartz, with even less wear and tear than at present. The manager of the tramway should be a working manager. He would ask the manager appointed to see if he could not send down enough stuff in three days in the week. Would also go to the mine managers and tell them we are trying all we can to reduce the cost of transit over the tramway, and expect you will assist and help us all you can, and we want you to employ the tramway men the three days a week the tramway is not working.

He 'referred at some length' to the upper track and how 'it was cut up every winter, the difficulty of packing over it, etc', and 'would offer every facility for the carriage of goods by the tramway. The freight so earned would be a certain gain' to the council, which at present was

considerably out of pocket through having to repair the horse track. The Battery Company would be asked to co-operate and held likewise, by reducing the present charges for crushing, and if they would do this the mines, now unable to work and pay expenses, would be in a position to work regularly and pay monthly dividends as well, and mines now struggling along with three or four men would be vigorously worked, and that at a profit. He would advocate doing everything possible to help and encourage persons willing to invest in the field and erect more

⁷⁶ See paper on Peter Ferguson and his New Era.

⁷⁷ *Te Aroha News*, 23 August 1884, p. 2.

⁷⁸ See paper on the Piako County tramway at Waiorongomai.

batteries instead of trying to thwart them and keep them out of the field.

He admitted that ‘the financial difficulty was a very serious one, still it could be got over. The men who got into it were the best to get out of it’, and as Josiah Clifton Firth⁷⁹ had ‘the ear of all the financial institutions’ he ought to be ‘best able to propound a scheme’. As well, ‘if the matter were placed before Government in the proper light’ and ministers understood ‘the large interest involved here, the number of men that could be employed on the hill, etc, etc, they would come forward and help us’. Instead of letting the tramway, he wanted the present tramway manager to be a working manager; because of ‘the present small amount of stuff’ being carried, ‘he did not think anyone would be found to take it’ on terms the council would require.⁸⁰

The following month, Cooper supported the petition that the tramway not be leased on the terms proposed by the council.⁸¹ He believed the petition ‘should receive a widespread support’, for both government and warden had hoped for ‘the cheapest carriage possible’. Under the present management it was not possible to discover what the charges should be.

It must be admitted by any disinterested party that the tramway is most imperfectly constructed, particularly as regards the incline grades. The position of the windlasses is proof sufficient that the man who had them erected did not know what he was about, but wanted to be reminded that the wires were intended solely to lower and bring up the trucks, and not to cut through rollers and a distance into the sleepers and the earth betwixt them. The ropes used on the Butler’s Spur and May Queen Spur are altogether out of proportion to their requirements.

From the start there had ‘been a want of system’ in operating the line, proving that ‘traffic management’ was not the manager’s ‘forte’ (the manager was Henry Hopper Adams).⁸²

At the commencement the trucks were some times chalk marked, showing at which claim they were filled, and more recently a

⁷⁹ See paper on the Battery Company.

⁸⁰ *Te Aroha News*, 30 August 1884, p. 2.

⁸¹ For the petition, see *Te Aroha News*, 27 September 1884, p. 2.

⁸² See paper on his life.

little tin label, attached to a piece of wire, is hung on to the truck, to indicate into which hopper at the battery it is to be delivered. Now, as it is considered advisable by the powers that be that the battery manager should be likewise the tramway manager, the books of the tramway are kept by the battery clerk. And, to strain a further point in diverging from all acknowledged business principles, it is so arranged the tramway hands go to the hoppers of the mines crushing at their will, and at the end of the month the mine managers are informed at the battery what quantity of quartz have been taken from their hoppers; and with this they are charged as the quantity crushed. This process might be looked upon with some favour in the days when the lion lays down with the lamb, but I would suggest, until such a consummation takes place, that ordinary business principles be adhered to.

In analyzing the tramway accounts he found the large sums described as sundries 'ambiguous, and a most unsatisfactory charge'. There was a profit in the last three months of almost £100,

but I contend a very different showing should be made. I would first cut out manager and secretary charges altogether, and I will show you how; in the place of the tin label and wire I would institute a tell-tale system. On each truck I would have placed a little metal frame into which would be put a tin plate with the name of the mine from which the truck was filled; when the truck arrives at the battery the receiver sees by the plate to which hopper the quartz are consigned, empties it, takes a note in his book kept for the purpose of checking the man at the despatch end (who also enters every truck despatched), and then remove the plate and drop it into a box which the Battery Company keeps the key of, and who should empty it every night, charge the mines with the quantity of quartz received for crushing, indicated by the plates, and when the mine managers call in the morning to inspect their crushings, they would receive the plates booked against them. At the end of the month after the despatch and receiving man on tramway have checked their books, an account is made out by the working foreman of the tramway to each of the gold mining companies. The managers having received daily the plates from the battery, are at once in a position to check the accounts, which done, the accounts should be sent to the Piako County Council's clerk to collect.

After these detailed recommendations, he stated that 'at least £20 per month' could be saved on labour, 'whilst an increase in the quantity of quartz sent over the line would not proportionately increase the expenditure'. It was not possible to judge how sundries could be cut down

unless the details were known. The council clerk had informed him ‘that no inventory had yet been made of the tramway’s rolling stock and other plant. This must surely be as necessary as it is for a storekeeper to take periodically his stock. A careful inventory should be made by the council’s engineer of their property, and he should be held responsible for it’. He hoped Kenrick would ‘not consent to let an outside party get what the field should have in its present non-paying and languid condition’, and concluded by attacking Adams: ‘All blunders, both in construction and management of the tramway by Mr Adams, have been excused away in all sorts of forms, but it does not do away with their existence. We want good management, and the right man in the right place’.⁸³ Shortly afterwards, he presented this petition to Kenrick.⁸⁴

After leaving Te Aroha, Cooper retained some interest in the district. In November 1886, he inspected the newly discovered Tui mines.⁸⁵ In 1897, three months before going to England to raise capital, he inspected the Waiorongomai mines.⁸⁶ When visiting in 1899 and 1900 he acquired land and planned to build a house, but as he returned to England to raise more capital it was not built, and the sections he and his wife owned were forfeited.⁸⁷ In 1900 he forwarded a petition from residents seeking an improved title to their sections to the Minister of Mines. As Te Aroha was no longer a mining town but ‘a health and residential resort’, he wanted visitors to be favourably impressed by ‘good buildings and well kept gardens and a frequent use of the paint pot’, all of which required a better title. No residents could borrow money on their houses. He insisted the issue was urgent, as for some forfeiting land of which rent had been paid ‘would mean

⁸³ Letter from E.K. Cooper, *Te Aroha News*, 27 September 1884, pp. 2, 7.

⁸⁴ *Te Aroha News*, 4 October 1884, p. 2.

⁸⁵ *Te Aroha News*, 6 November 1886, p. 2.

⁸⁶ *Thames Advertiser*, 26 March 1897, p. 3, 1 May 1897, p. 3, 23 July 1897, p. 2.

⁸⁷ Te Aroha Warden’s Court, Rent Register 1893-1910, folios 170, 171, BBAV 11570/7a, ANZ-A; *Te Aroha News*, 13 January 1900, p. 2, 27 February 1900, p. 2; Te Aroha Borough Council, Minutes of Meetings 1898-1911, Meeting of 4 October 1899, p. 46; Rate Book 1900-1901 [no pagination], Sections 3-5, 15 Block 27, Matamata-Piako District Council Archives, Te Aroha; Te Aroha Magistrate’s Court, *Auckland Weekly News*, 8 October 1903, p. 40; Minutes of Land Tenures Commission, 1914, p. 110, Lands and Survey Department, LS 77/2, ANZ-W.

absolute ruin'.⁸⁸ Before returning England for the last time in 1906, he revisited Te Aroha.⁸⁹

In October 1883, when announcing he had become a sharebroker and general commission agent, the *Te Aroha News* described him as 'well and favourably known in the district'.⁹⁰ Later that month, in concluding his account of the mines, a South Island journalist acknowledged 'the great assistance afforded me' by Cooper, 'land agent and sharebroker'.⁹¹ With the other land agents and sharebrokers he was a member of the Te Aroha Brokers' Association.⁹² He advertised throughout New Zealand that he was a mining agent and land broker:

Quotations, with state of market, wired on application.
Clients weekly advised by letter about the different claims they
are interested in.
All wires and letters will receive prompt and careful attention.⁹³

When mining faded, he abandoned this profession; he had printed so many 'Mining Agent, Te Aroha' letterheads that he was still using them in 1889, long after leaving the district.⁹⁴

One transaction led to a court case in 1889, when Peter Ferguson sued for £20, which he had loaned Cooper in October 1884. Ferguson had asked Cooper, then briefly a member of the county council, to obtain a grant to repair the lower road at Waiorongomai. According to Ferguson, Cooper 'said he would do so, at the same time mentioning that he was somewhat short of funds at the time. Ferguson replied that he (Cooper) had plenty of shares', and accepted, as security for the advance of £20, 200 shares in the Inverness. A blank transfer was made, meaning that if the money was not repaid at the end of a month, the transfer was made absolute. Cooper 'showed that, at about the time of the transaction, the price of the shares

⁸⁸ E.K. Cooper to Minister of Mines, 10 April 1900, Mines Department, MD 1, 04/900, ANZ-W.

⁸⁹ *Te Aroha News*, 27 April 1907, p. 2.

⁹⁰ *Te Aroha News*, 13 October 1883, p. 2.

⁹¹ Own Correspondent, 'From Christchurch to Te Aroha', *Lyttleton Times*, 24 October 1883, p. 5.

⁹² *Waikato Times*, 6 November 1883, p. 2.

⁹³ Advertisement, *Press* (Christchurch), 3 January 1884, p. 1.

⁹⁴ E.K. Cooper to Collector of Customs, Auckland, 17 August 1889, Customs Department, BBAO 5544/195, no. 821, ANZ-A.

showed in the brokers' share list ample security had been given, and also that the shares had been accepted by the plaintiff, although he had not completed the transfer'. Cooper, 'who conducted his own case with characteristic good humour and ability, amidst some applause, gained a non-suit'.⁹⁵

WAIHI

Cooper moved to Waihi in early 1886. According to his 1897 interview, 'at that time there were only two or three huts on the plains', a quite incorrect memory. 'Here he built himself a hut close to the Ohinemuri River, and lived with a little terrier. From this humble dwelling he worked and prospected'. At that time the company working the Martha reef with an 'ordinary battery' had such low returns that these 'hardly made the two ends meet'.

"And where did you come in, Mr Cooper?"

"Well, not exactly where I ought to have come in, considering I found the gold in the Union Reef, which caused the Waihi Gold Mine to be successfully floated. I was working under the directions of J.W. Walker on this ground till we were all knocked off, owing to the poor prospects, when I started on my own account to prospect at a point I had a strange fancy for, and singularly enough I had not been at work half a day before I came across the cap of the reef carrying very rich ore, and lots of loose gold in it. That find is responsible for what Waihi is to-day. It was close to the Union boundary, and I immediately pegged 60 acres on the line of the reef, peg and peg with the Union, but in the end I lost the ground. I also pegged the Nelson and Winner ground, and did a lot of prospecting on these areas, as also the Ohinemuri River, which were subsequently acquired by the Waihi Gold Mine."

"Did you sell these properties to the Waihi Gold Mine, Mr Cooper."

"Yes. I was working without capital, and, consequently, at the mercy of the company, who got them at their own price."⁹⁶

⁹⁵ Te Aroha Magistrate's Court, Civil Record Book 1884-1889, 66/1889, BCDG 11551/ib, ANZ-A; Warden's Court, *Waikato Times*, 10 August 1889, p. 2.

⁹⁶ Special Correspondent, 'Interview with Mr E. Kersey Cooper', *British Australasian and New Zealand Mail*, 4 February 1897, p. 242.

Concerning his claim to have found the ore that was ‘responsible for what Waihi’ became, it should be noted that modesty was not a requirement for a miner, especially not for one seeking English capital.

At the beginning of 1886, Cooper was supervising work in the United.⁹⁷ He was recorded as having been prospecting on this ground, owned by Walker, ‘for some time’, and as having found a good reef.⁹⁸ Shown ‘exactly the same class of stuff’ when visiting Paeroa, he commented, ‘Oh, I have any quantity of that at Waihi’, returned there and with experts examined the ore; ‘the stuff in the words of the miner “gives the best show on the plains” ’.⁹⁹ He continued to prospect this area.¹⁰⁰ In March the Sheet Anchor was forfeited for non-working; in admitting the non-working, Walker explained that ‘things had looked so bad until lately that he did not take the trouble to register his title’.¹⁰¹ In March 1886, Cooper applied for the Nelson, which he was granted early in May.¹⁰² Within less than a month he had sold an eighth of his interest, another sixth two months later, and the remainder in December 1887.¹⁰³

Also in March 1886, Cooper applied for the Winner, which was granted one month later.¹⁰⁴ A correspondent reported that it belonged ‘chiefly’ to Cooper, who ‘discovered the Union reef some time back. Several lodes exist in the claim, and surface prospects promise well. A prospecting low level is being driven’.¹⁰⁵ He cut a reef later that month, and work resumed in July

⁹⁷ *Thames Advertiser*, 3 February 1886, p. 3; *Te Aroha News*, 27 February 1886, p. 2.

⁹⁸ *Thames Advertiser*, 24 February 1886, p. 3.

⁹⁹ Ohinemuri Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 2 March 1886, p. 3.

¹⁰⁰ *Thames Advertiser*, 27 March 1886, p. 2.

¹⁰¹ Warden’s Court, *Thames Advertiser*, 5 March 1886, p. 2.

¹⁰² Thames Warden’s Court, Register of Applications for Licensed Holdings 1881-1886, folios 139, 140, BACL 14452/1a; Register of Licensed Holdings 1885-1886, folio 54, BACL 14397/16a, ANZ-A; *Thames Advertiser*, 6 April 1886, p. 3; *Te Aroha News*, 17 April 1886, p. 2.

¹⁰³ Thames Warden’s Court, Register of Licensed Holdings 1885-1886, folio 54, BACL 14397/16a, ANZ-A.

¹⁰⁴ Thames Warden’s Court, Register of Applications for Licensed Holdings 1881-1886, folio 139, BACL 14452/1a; Register of Licensed Holdings 1885-1886, folio 51, BACL 14397/16a, ANZ-A; advertisement, *Thames Advertiser*, 6 April 1886, p. 3.

¹⁰⁵ Ohinemuri Correspondent, *Bay of Plenty Times*, 29 April 1886, p. 2.

under his supervision.¹⁰⁶ Late in July he was ‘making fair headway with his prospecting tunnel, driving for a reef which he discovered outcropping some four months ago, and which has returned fair prospects both by assay and mortar’; about 320 feet remained to be driven.¹⁰⁷ When it was in about 60 feet in early August, although ‘a number of small leaders’ had been cut without discovering anything ‘of much value’ Cooper remained ‘very hopeful’.¹⁰⁸ One week later, a reef was struck which appeared ‘favourable for the presence of gold’.¹⁰⁹ By early November it had reached ‘a better class of country’.¹¹⁰ Driving continued through the Christmas holidays, the ground continuing to be ‘highly favourable’, but the reef had not been cut.¹¹¹ A two-foot reef was struck in mid-January ‘showing very good prospects’, but as this was not the reef being driven for the drive would be continued.¹¹² One month later it had still not been hit despite the drive exceeding 400 feet in length.¹¹³

In September, an advertisement was published:

£5 Reward

Whereas rumour says that some person or persons have accused me of salting, or instructing to be salted, or causing to be salted a prospect taken from the Winner Licensed Holding at Waihi, I will give the above reward to any one who will give such evidence as will lead to the conviction of the lying scoundrel or scoundrels.

E.K. Cooper.¹¹⁴

No more was heard of this allegation. Having sold some of his shares during 1886, three months later he sold the remainder of his interest.¹¹⁵ He must have reacquired some interest later, for in the following February a

¹⁰⁶ *Waikato Times*, 27 April 1886, p. 2, 10 July 1886, p. 2; *Thames Advertiser*, 26 July 1886, p. 2.

¹⁰⁷ Waihi Correspondent, *Thames Star*, 28 July 1886, p. 2.

¹⁰⁸ Ohinemuri Correspondent, *Bay of Plenty Times*, 12 August 1886, p. 2.

¹⁰⁹ *Bay of Plenty Times*, 19 August 1886, p. 2.

¹¹⁰ Waihi Correspondent, *Thames Star*, 8 November 1886, p. 3.

¹¹¹ Ohinemuri Correspondent, *Te Aroha News*, 8 January 1887, p. 2.

¹¹² Waihi Correspondent, *Thames Star*, 15 January 1887, p. 3.

¹¹³ Waihi Correspondent, *Thames Star*, 15 February 1887, p. 2.

¹¹⁴ Advertisement, *Hauraki Tribune*, 23 September 1887, p. 2.

¹¹⁵ Thames Warden’s Court, Register of Licensed Holdings 1885-1886, folio 51, BACL 14397/16a, ANZ-A.

water race was being surveyed for him; it was understood he was ‘about to pay a visit to England for the purpose of enlisting British dollars in the matter of developing his mines in this district’.¹¹⁶ He was granted the water race two months later.¹¹⁷ It is clear from a letter written in mid-March to Walker from James Russell, an Auckland lawyer who invested heavily in mining,¹¹⁸ that relations between Cooper and Walker had ceased to be friendly:

E.K. Cooper writes me that he has pegged out a fresh water right and that the case comes up for hearing on 24th inst.

I hope this will not interfere with our water race and commend the subject to your careful consideration.

I enclose an extract from the NZ Herald respecting the Union¹¹⁹ – the style is remarkably like our little friend Kersey’s, though I fear the amount of scriptural lore contained in it would not lead me to believe it was his production.

I hope we are safe against any chance of forfeiture, jumping, etc. I also commend this to your very careful consideration.¹²⁰

The article referred to, by an unnamed Waihi correspondent, did seem to have Cooper’s stylistic fingerprints on it and did raise the possibility of others’ ground being forfeited. After declaring there was ‘very little mining news here worth mentioning’ and summarizing the small amount of work done in the Martha and Silvertown mines, he dealt with the Winner:

Mr Kersey Cooper is still driving ahead for the lode. The tunnel is in 450 feet. The Mining Inspector might be less usefully employed than affording this district a little of his attention. Far be it from me to desire anyone’s property forfeited, but, on the other hand, shepherding valuable mines will never send the place ahead.

The Rosemont is manned. Yes, one solitary man is holding seventy men’s ground. And yet there is a large quantity of more than payable quartz on the upper levels. There were two men up

¹¹⁶ Waihi Correspondent, *Thames Advertiser*, 23 February 1887, p. 2.

¹¹⁷ *Thames Advertiser*, 29 April 1887, p. 2.

¹¹⁸ For example, *Auckland Weekly News*, 2 January 1897, p. 20.

¹¹⁹ For Walker’s involvement in the Union mine, see *Thames Advertiser*, 1 December 1886, p. 2, 18 December 1886, p. 2, 9 February 1887, p. 2, 25 February 1887, p. 3; *Auckland Weekly News*, 19 February 1887, p. 18.

¹²⁰ James Russell to J.W. Walker, 14 March 1887, Letterbook no. 33, p. 648, Jackson and Russell Papers, MS 360, Library of the Auckland Institute and War Memorial Museum.

till Christmas; since then, “the last rose of summer.” How does that chime in with the new Act?

Another patient for Dr McLaren [James Monteith McLaren, the mining inspector]¹²¹ – the Union. Here there are two men, who resemble Israel at the time of the Judges – each doeth what seemeth best in his own eyes. Report says they have not received any money, nor seen their boss for at least two months, and don’t know what to go on with. However, they should be happy, for are not Unions quoted at half-a-crown?¹²²

At the end of May, it was announced that Cooper had been ‘authorized by the well-known firm of Johnson Mattheys & Co., London, to arrange for the establishment of an ore purchase agency’ at Waihi; it hoped to pay 80 per cent of the assay value, which compared with the 30 per cent obtained from the ordinary battery process.¹²³ This firm, assayers to the Bank of England, wanted him to buy up to 1,000 tons per week of ore not amenable to the usual treatment; it had recently obtained £43 per ton from a parcel of Waihi ore.¹²⁴ Cooper sought suitable ore in several Karangahake mines before going to Auckland to negotiate with the company, in December sending it ore from Waitekauri.¹²⁵

WAITEKAURI, 1887 ONWARDS

In 1897 a London journalist asked Cooper what he had done after selling his Waihi claim:

“I went over to Waitekauri, and pegged out the New Zealand Jubilee Gold Mine,¹²⁶ and held on to it until I sold it to a syndicate. About the time I pegged the Jubilee, I pegged out the Fame and Fortune Mine at the Thames. Both leases were granted me on November 10, 1887. After which I left at once for England to try and get adequate capital to work these properties, but was

¹²¹ See paper on Harry Kenrick.

¹²² ‘Waihi [From a Correspondent]’, *New Zealand Herald*, 14 March 1887, p. 5.

¹²³ *Thames Advertiser*, 31 May 1887, p. 2.

¹²⁴ Ohinemuri Correspondent, *Bay of Plenty Times*, 1 June 1887, p. 2; *Te Aroha News*, 4 June 1887, p. 3.

¹²⁵ *Te Aroha News*, 11 June 1887, p. 3; *Hauraki Tribune*, 16 December 1887, p. 2.

¹²⁶ For an assessment of its geology and workings, see James MacIntosh Bell and Colin Fraser, *The Geology of the Waihi-Tairua Subdivision, Hauraki Division*, Geological Survey Bulletin no. 15 (New Series) (Wellington, 1912), p. 115.

unsuccessful in obtaining a sufficient amount of money to ensure success.”

“What did you do then?”

“I had to put up with what I could get, and do the most I could with it. Since that time these properties have been worked from hand to mouth, so to speak.”¹²⁷

Cooper first applied for the Jubilee Special Claim in late May 1887;¹²⁸ its southwestern boundary adjoined the Waitekauri Company’s ground.¹²⁹ The claim, mainly ‘in a large gully literally one mass of broken and decomposed ore which is quite unique in Ohinemuri’, would provide years of work.¹³⁰ He had been alerted to the value of this ore by two miners, James McGuire and Alfred Andrew Lockwood,¹³¹ both later associated with Joseph Campbell at Te Aroha.¹³² He later wrote that he took up the ground ‘on account of the rich boulders I found on the surface and creeks of the property, as well as from the battery returns I had carefully examined of ore treated from the old Waitekauri Mine, which is situated in the south-east corner’.¹³³ In late July he sent the press a copy of a letter from John Brown of Epsom, a former battery owner at Tararu, Thames,¹³⁴ now an owner of the Waitekauri No. 2 Company, to the warden protesting that granting this special claim without imposing conditions about working it would do ‘great harm to the district’, being one of only three properties that had provided work for miners and the battery. ‘It would be a great wrong to have such a wide stretch of country locked up for purely speculative purposes, as I believe it is not contemplated to spend a shilling on the ground by the present applicants, but to endeavor to float it on the London market, which may take years, and most likely cannot possibly be done at all’. Brown

¹²⁷ Special Commissioner, ‘Interview with Mr E. Kersey Cooper’, *British Australasian*, 4 February 1897, p. 242.

¹²⁸ Thames Warden’s Court, Register of Applications for Licensed Holdings and Special Claims 1887-1896, folio 3, BACL 14376/1a, ANZ-A.

¹²⁹ E.F. Adams, Plan of Jubilee Special Claim, October 1894, Mines Department, MD 1, 04/251, ANZ-W.

¹³⁰ Ohinemuri Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 12 May 1888, p. 2.

¹³¹ *Auckland Weekly News*, 24 December 1887, p. 10.

¹³² See paper on Joseph Campbell for details of their mining careers.

¹³³ Letter from E.K. Cooper, 11 January 1900, *Mining Journal* (London), n.d., reprinted in *Ohinemuri Gazette*, 2 May 1900, p. 2.

¹³⁴ See *Thames Advertiser*, 20 June 1881, p. 3.

believed the ground 'was applied for with the view of forcing the proprietors of the Waitekauri mine and battery to amalgamate with the applicants, as Mr Cooper made proposals to that effect to me'. His partners had spent years trying to develop the district, 'with very poor success, while it is doubtful if Mr Cooper ever spent a pound' He wanted 20 acres adjoining the Waitekauri mine 'reserved for *bona fide* mining' by others.¹³⁵

Cooper headed his response with a verse:

Come here, come here, my good goose quill,
Slave of my thoughts, subservient to my will,
Fools are my theme, let Satire be my song.

His letter continued equally subtly:

This objection I claimed should be made public, and on such grounds I sought for a copy. Proceedings in the Warden's Court are not intended to be held *in camera*, it would have looked far better of Mr Brown to have appeared in person. Did ever anyone read such frivolous bosh; had I been told it was dated from the Infant School at Epsom I should have pitied the infant who wrote it. Here is a man playing at nothing more or less than a game of "dog in the manger." Since 1878 the Waitekauri mine has been in the hands of a few tributers, oftentimes laying idle. The plant over which Mr Brown presides has been allowed to go to decay, the tramway is in ruins, the water races broken down, with one botched up so as to be able to lead sufficient water to the battery to keep 10 or 12 head of stampers going. Inside the once 41 stamper battery one finds a great deal of the plant removed from the position it once occupied to renew what breaks down or is worn out; thus no longer can it be called a 41 stamper battery or a 30 either, and evidence on every side speaks plainly enough that the owners have long ago given up any notion of expending money, or even keeping the plant in proper working order, and now this man sends up a plaintive whine, and begs that a man who can command English capital and who is representing it in this case, be not allowed to have a lease of a piece of vacant ground which has been vacant and unworked for years, because it joins a piece of ground he occupies, but does not even work, and which is not and has not been properly manned for years, despite its being connected with the battery. He then introduces cant in its most objectionable form, because he does not adhere to the truth, but actually makes a statement that I made a proposal to him; I have never done so by word or by writing, and then goes on

¹³⁵ John Brown to Warden, 20 July 1887, printed in *Thames Advertiser*, 23 July 1887, p. 2.

to say, "I believe it is not contemplated to spend a shilling on the ground by the present applicants. I have reason to believe that the ground was applied for with a view of forcing," &c. I have more right to believe the writer has lost his reason. "They have for years tried to develop the upper country." The poor tributers know all about this. As to the other childish nonsense re taking 20 acres away from the ground I have applied for I won't allude to, only raise my eyes in astonishment and exclaim, what is the world coming to? and when will cool effrontery find its bounds? What is the state of Waitekauri to-day? Most of the men to be found there have families and have got little homes around them, and for work they have to go away all the week to Karangahake, Waihi, and on the roads. To-day New Zealand is suffering from acute depression, and there is only one antidote for it, develop our mineral resources. The more I know of our upper country the more I become convinced of its wealth and I have taken every means consistent to call my friends' (in England) attention to it, and am still in constant communication with capitalists in London and elsewhere, endeavouring to solicit their support. Mind, I show them both sides of the picture, the advantages and drawbacks, and as they are business men they will be able to come to a just conclusion. I don't handle men who float companies like a Shylock who discounts a bill at 60 or 70 per cent. That form of company will never pull New Zealand out of the mire or reflect credit on the promoters. When I acquire the lease I seek I will have an opportunity of giving Mr Brown an idea of what I consider bona fide mining, and as there is a suspicion in his letter of his trying to pose as a philanthropist I will cause his heart to be gladdened by knowing the poor people now out of work at Waitekauri have constant work together with many more.¹³⁶

In obtaining the Jubilee, as a Thames newspaper noted Cooper had 'euchred the Tararu tailings grinder',¹³⁷ meaning Brown. The area was 100 acres, on which he assured the warden he would spend £25,000 over 21 years.¹³⁸

In late August, in a 'spirited auction' he bought the forfeited Alexandra for £35.¹³⁹ At that time he was planning to send a 'large parcel of picked ore' to England.¹⁴⁰ In mid-October he had a 'large staff' selecting stone from 'the large mass of broken ore' on the surface. Once the tracks were repaired he

¹³⁶ Letter from E.K. Cooper, *Thames Advertiser*, 23 July 1887, p. 2.

¹³⁷ *Thames Advertiser*, 2 September 1887, p. 2.

¹³⁸ Warden's Court, *Thames Advertiser*, 11 November 1887, p. 2.

¹³⁹ *Te Aroha News*, 27 August 1887, p. 3.

¹⁴⁰ Ohinemuri Correspondent, *Bay of Plenty Times*, 31 August 1887, p. 2.

intended to send 20 tons to England, and would probably accompany this parcel to raise capital, being 'connected with' Johnson, Matthey and Co, 'the ore dealers of Hatton Gardens', London, and 'other influential firms'.¹⁴¹ By mid-November he had a 'considerable tonnage of ore ready for transport'.¹⁴² In practice, only ten tons of 'picked' stone were selected from thousands of tons of loose quartz; in England he would oversee tests, intending 'to offer the claim to an English company'.¹⁴³

These ten tons were sold for over £500.¹⁴⁴ After the testing was completed, his 'friends agreed to furnish the £1,000 for the battery, together with £300 for incidental expenses, and that with the £900 they had previously furnished for preliminary expenses totalled up to £2,200', in return for which they were given 'half the mine'.¹⁴⁵ The press reported that his 'friends at Home had everything prepared for the floating of the mine long before his appearance in London, Messrs Prentice & Co, the well-known gun cotton manufacturers, of London, being the prime movers'.¹⁴⁶ He had been closely associated with this firm before coming to New Zealand.¹⁴⁷ According to a Paeroa newspaper, Cooper, 'one of the most enterprising representatives of English capital we have yet had in this district', represented Johnson, Matthey & Co of London, ore dealers, to whom he had sent the ten tons.¹⁴⁸ Cooper divided his interest into 40 shares, selling 18 to unrecorded members of his syndicate in August and two more just over a week later.¹⁴⁹ The 'company', as the press described the syndicate, had a nominal capital of £100,000.¹⁵⁰ In September Cooper told the *Te Aroha*

¹⁴¹ Ohinemuri Correspondent, *Thames Star*, 19 October 1887, p. 2.

¹⁴² *Thames Advertiser*, 14 November 1887, p. 3.

¹⁴³ *Thames Star*, 29 November 1887, p. 3; *Thames Advertiser*, 3 December 1887, p. 2; George Wilson to Under-Secretary, Mines Department, 4 April 1888, *AJHR*, 1888, C-6, p. 14.

¹⁴⁴ *Auckland Star*, 8 May 1888, p. 8.

¹⁴⁵ *Thames Advertiser*, 12 October 1892, p. 2.

¹⁴⁶ *Thames Advertiser*, 9 May 1888, p. 2; *Te Aroha News*, 12 May 1888, p. 2; Ohinemuri Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 12 May 1888, p. 2.

¹⁴⁷ Special Commissioner, 'Interview with Mr E. Kersey Cooper', *British Australasian*, 4 February 1897, p. 240.

¹⁴⁸ *Hauraki Tribune*, 16 December 1887, p. 2.

¹⁴⁹ Paeroa Warden's Court, Register of Licensed Holdings 1887-1896, folio 223, ZAAP 13293/1a, ANZ-A.

¹⁵⁰ *Waikato Times*, 10 May 1888, p. 2.

News that reports of his floating ‘one or more’ companies in England were ‘utter bosh; I made no such attempt. Floating a mining company in London, and how it is done, did not sufficiently please me to induce me to let my leases go that way’, though he would keep ‘that card up my sleeve’.¹⁵¹ In 1900, he explained that erecting a battery ‘in a most inaccessible place, with no roads into it, which I had to construct’ meant he ‘was compelled to sell for want of funds to a small syndicate for less than half the money I had expended. The syndicate sold to a company of £100,000 nominally, and only provided £10,000 of working capital’.¹⁵²

In May, Edward Mann Corbett, a leading mine manager and a prominent Waitekauri settler, representing this district on the Ohinemuri County Council,¹⁵³ was appointed manager pro tem and instructed to commence re-erecting the battery.¹⁵⁴ Cooper would supervise the mine on a temporary basis, but later explained that ‘through illness I was not able to attend properly to the mine’.¹⁵⁵ In September he purchased the abandoned Te Aroha battery and early the following month started removing it.¹⁵⁶ He intended to spend £2,000 re-erecting it ‘in the gully below the “big blow” in the old Waitekauri claim’ and adding McKay’s pans¹⁵⁷ and settlers and other requirements.¹⁵⁸ All this took a long time, for he found that it would be ‘a few months’ before Corbett was able to commence work and that the road to Waitekauri required repairing.¹⁵⁹ There were other unforeseen delays after it arrived in Paeroa in mid-December;¹⁶⁰ for example, in January 1889 the contractor carting it from the Paeroa wharf threw up the

¹⁵¹ *Te Aroha News*, 29 September 1888, p. 2.

¹⁵² Letter from E.K. Cooper, 11 January 1900, *Mining Journal*, n.d., reprinted in *Ohinemuri Gazette*, 2 May 1900, p. 2.

¹⁵³ See *Ohinemuri Gazette*, 22 January 1898, p. 3; *Thames Advertiser*, 22 January 1898, p. 2; *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 2, p. 501.

¹⁵⁴ *Thames Advertiser*, 9 May 1888, p. 2; *Te Aroha News*, 19 December 1888, p. 2.

¹⁵⁵ *Thames Advertiser*, 9 May 1888, p. 2, 12 October 1892, p. 2.

¹⁵⁶ *Waikato Times*, 29 September 1888, p. 2, 9 October 1888, p. 2.

¹⁵⁷ See paper on Peter Ferguson and his New Era.

¹⁵⁸ *Waikato Times*, 23 August 1888, p. 2; *Te Aroha News*, 29 September 1888, p. 2.

¹⁵⁹ *Thames Star*, 5 September 1888, p. 2; *Thames Advertiser*, 12 October 1892, p. 2.

¹⁶⁰ *Thames Star*, 15 December 1888, p. 2.

work after taking only a couple of loads.¹⁶¹ It took seven days to cart each load to the site.¹⁶²

Samples tested by the Thames School of Mines in November 1888 showed very low values.¹⁶³ The following February ‘very encouraging results’ were reported, 20 loads producing 45oz 13dwt retorted gold, ‘which is highly remunerative’.¹⁶⁴ In April, Wilson reported work being confined to the surface of his 103 acres. The battery, still being erected, would use steam power to work a ‘big blow of quartz’ and other ore, and as ‘several rich boulders’ had been crushed from the valley, there was ‘every prospect’ of ‘payable returns’. Twenty men were employed under Corbett’s management.¹⁶⁵ A ‘considerable amount of preparatory work’ was done by mid-year, and the company planned ‘to treat all the large heaps of quartz and mullock in the gully where the battery is erected, and also to work large blocks of quartz, known to be low grade, near the surface’.¹⁶⁶ Although Corbett was ‘extremely ill’ in mid-1889, by September he had completed erecting the battery, at a cost of £3,000, ‘far greater than was expected’, but ‘good value’.¹⁶⁷ Corbett had estimated the cost of erecting the battery and ‘a considerable amount of other machinery necessary to the plant’ would be £1,000, but, combined with the water race, it was ‘considerably over £3,000’.¹⁶⁸ The Bank of New South Wales had made a temporary advance of £358 6s 3d to complete the purchase of the machinery, its head office being assured that Cooper ‘had English capital at his back – We are secured by equitable assignment of the mining plant which is valued at £2800’.¹⁶⁹ His backers were ‘reputedly wealthy men’.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶¹ *Te Aroha News*, 16 January 1889, p. 2.

¹⁶² Recollections of W.C. Kennedy, *Te Aroha News*, 13 April 1951, p. 7.

¹⁶³ Thames School of Mines, Assay Book 1887-1889, entry for 2 November 1888, School of Mines Archives, Thames.

¹⁶⁴ *Auckland Star*, 23 February 1889, p. 5.

¹⁶⁵ George Wilson to Under-Secretary, Mines Department, 25 April 1889, *AJHR*, 1889, C-2, p. 103.

¹⁶⁶ H.A. Gordon to Minister of Mines, 27 June 1889, *AJHR*, 1889, C-2, p. 43.

¹⁶⁷ *Thames Star*, 13 August 1889, p. 2, 27 September 1889, p. 3.

¹⁶⁸ *Thames Advertiser*, 12 October 1892, p. 2.

¹⁶⁹ Bank of New South Wales, Inspector’s Half-Yearly Report, 2 September 1889, Thames, p. 149, Acc. no. 102, box 2, Westpac Archives, Wellington.

¹⁷⁰ Bank of New South Wales, Inspector’s Half-Yearly Report, 7 September 1891, Thames, p. 95, Acc. no. 102, box 2, Westpac Archives, Wellington.

On the day the battery opened, Cooper took over its management. Although it was ‘a very neat’ plant, one correspondent doubted whether it would pay, ‘as steam has to be used, and the ore, of which there are thousands of tons, however, and easily got, is not of a high grade’.¹⁷¹ At the banquet held to celebrate the opening of ‘the Jubilee Mill’, Cooper was praised for his ‘indomitable pluck’ in helping the industry throughout the peninsula.¹⁷² Surface ore was still being collected, and ‘those connected with the claim’ were ‘sanguine of making a good thing out of it’.¹⁷³

A recollection that ‘the mine to Kersey Cooper’s sorrow never produced gold enough to pay for the transport’ of the Te Aroha battery¹⁷⁴ was correct. ‘The first run of the battery showed that the work’ of crushing the large blow and the boulders ‘was hopelessly unpayable, and for a short time all work was suspended’.¹⁷⁵ Cooper found the result of treating ore from a part of the mine known as the ‘swamp’ was so ‘disastrous’ that crushing had to stop, but to avoid forfeiture he kept some men at work.¹⁷⁶ In May 1890 he was granted four months’ protection, and three months later returned with nine men to resume work.¹⁷⁷ Shortly afterwards he was granted further protection.¹⁷⁸ Some good ore was extracted from one rise and a winze.¹⁷⁹ Late in October, after his men went on strike because of being paid 7s 6d per day instead of the 8s rate required by the Miners’ Association, he let the work on contract.¹⁸⁰ In December, he had ‘a large staff’ prospecting the mine, and was, as usual, ‘sanguine of ultimate success’.¹⁸¹

¹⁷¹ Ohinemuri Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 26 September 1889, p. 2.

¹⁷² *Te Aroha News*, 11 September 1889, p. 2.

¹⁷³ *Thames Star*, 27 September 1889, p. 3.

¹⁷⁴ Recollection of W.C. Kennedy, *Te Aroha News*, 13 April 1951, p. 7.

¹⁷⁵ J.F. Downey, *Gold-Mines of the Hauraki Peninsula, New Zealand* (Wellington, 1935), p. 215.

¹⁷⁶ *Ohinemuri Gazette*, 15 October 1892, p. 8.

¹⁷⁷ Warden’s Court, *Thames Advertiser*, 8 May 1890, p. 2; *Thames Star*, 28 August 1890, p. 2.

¹⁷⁸ Warden’s Court, *Thames Star*, 4 September 1890, p. 2.

¹⁷⁹ *Ohinemuri Gazette*, 15 October 1892, p. 8.

¹⁸⁰ *Waikato Times*, 25 October 1890, p. 2.

¹⁸¹ *Thames Star*, 31 December 1890, p. 2.

By early 1891, he appointed Henry Baker¹⁸² as his mine manager.¹⁸³ Cooper described Baker as ‘one of the best timber men in New Zealand, a competent surveyor – keeps his books carefully and I can trust him’. Although he did not have a certificate his employment as manager was permitted because there were fewer than 12 miners.¹⁸⁴ At the end of April the *Thames Advertiser* lauded Cooper as an ‘example of energy and pluck’ to whom ‘difficulty and obstruction were only made to be overcome’. All ‘who have become acquainted with him, are free to acknowledge his very unusual earnestness and enterprise’, and it hoped his ‘pluck and perseverance’ would be rewarded. Although the mine had excellent prospects, it was difficult to reach the battery in the ‘steep declivity, in a dark ravine’.¹⁸⁵ During the year to May, the Horn level, an old tunnel, was cleared out and repaired, and 100 feet driven on the dip of the Waitekauri reef. ‘A little gold’ was found, ‘but not in payable quantities’, despite the quartz having ‘a favourable appearance’.¹⁸⁶ During August he increased his small number of workers and concluded the ‘long and trying stretch of dead work’ in the mine; a ‘big quantity of ore’ had been stacked.¹⁸⁷ ‘Some very pretty stone’ was discovered and the *Thames Star* believed the promoters of the district, amongst whom Cooper ‘stands foremost, have every prospect of reaping a well-earned reward’.¹⁸⁸

Also in August, Cooper re-purchased all the shares he had sold in 1888, mortgaging the mine to the Bank of New South Wales at the beginning of October.¹⁸⁹ It recorded that Cooper had ‘spent large sums’ developing his properties at Waitekauri and Thames, using up all his overdraft of £3,643 11s 11d along with much more capital. He was trying to sell the Jubilee for £12,000, but it expected him to get £2,000 or £4,000

¹⁸² See *Thames Star*, 31 January 1889, p. 2, Warden’s Court, 3 November 1892, p. 2, Warden’s Court, 2 August 1894, p. 3.

¹⁸³ *Thames Advertiser*, 13 April 1891, p. 2.

¹⁸⁴ E.K. Cooper to R.J. Seddon, 8 July 1891, Mines Department, MD 1, 91/566, ANZ-W.

¹⁸⁵ *Thames Advertiser*, 29 April 1891, p. 2.

¹⁸⁶ George Wilson to Under-Secretary, Mines Department, 4 May 1891, *AJHR*, 1891, C-4, p. 156.

¹⁸⁷ Waitekauri Correspondent, *Auckland Star*, 27 August 1891, p. 2.

¹⁸⁸ *Thames Star*, 27 August 1891, p. 2.

¹⁸⁹ Paeroa Warden’s Court, Register of Licensed Holdings 1887-1896, folio 223, ZAAP 13293/1a, ANZ-A.

less.¹⁹⁰ Six months later, Cooper told his bank manager that he had been offered £40 for a one-twentieth interest, indicating that his new valuation of £7,000 for the property was not unreasonable.¹⁹¹

Early in September 1891 hopes for an immediate crushing were 'doomed to disappointment', all hands were dismissed, and Cooper planned to return to England to raise more capital.¹⁹² Two months later the mine was protected and worked by two men.¹⁹³ In December he was having reportedly 'promising' ore tested at Paeroa, and planned to send 30 tons to England.¹⁹⁴ Two months later, some of his stone was described as 'magnificent'; he was breaking down 50 tons to send to Johnson and Mattheys in London.¹⁹⁵ In March he decided to ship no more ore, instead treating it himself.¹⁹⁶ The following month he took three tons for testing at the Thames School of Mines.¹⁹⁷

During the 12 months to May 1892 his men prospected, going to 'considerable expense [in] opening up a block on Butler's Reef and other work', and he obtained 'a very satisfactory price' from ten tons of 'good stone' sent to England.¹⁹⁸ These ten tons were valued at about £150. Under Baker's supervision, 12 men concentrated on opening up an intermediate level 400 feet above the Horn level, extracting a 'considerable amount of quartz'. A tramway 58 chains in length was being constructed to the battery, which still contained only ten stamps, one settler, one agitator, and five berdans but was being overhauled and would 'soon be again ready. A large paddock of quartz' was ready for crushing once the tramway was completed.¹⁹⁹

¹⁹⁰ Bank of New South Wales, Inspector's Half-Yearly Report, 7 September 1891, Thames, p. 196, Acc. no. 102, box 2, Westpac Archives, Wellington.

¹⁹¹ Bank of New South Wales, Inspector's Half-Yearly Report, 7 March 1892, Thames, p. 198, Acc. no. 102, box 3, Westpac Archives, Wellington.

¹⁹² *Auckland Star*, 4 September 1891, p. 4.

¹⁹³ *Auckland Star*, 3 November 1891, p. 2.

¹⁹⁴ *Thames Advertiser*, 21 December 1891, p. 2, 28 December 1891, p. 2.

¹⁹⁵ *Thames Star*, 16 February 1892, p. 4.

¹⁹⁶ Paeroa Correspondent, *Thames Star*, 26 March 1892, p. 4.

¹⁹⁷ Thames Correspondent, *Auckland Star*, 12 April 1892, p. 5.

¹⁹⁸ *Thames Advertiser*, 12 October 1892, p. 2.

¹⁹⁹ George Wilson to Under-Secretary, Mines Department, 14 May 1892, *AJHR*, 1892, C-3A, p. 14.

In May, Baker resigned and was replaced by Cooper, who intended 'devoting his entire time to the up-country districts'.²⁰⁰ Six miners were opening up a promising reef, and the tramway was still being constructed along 'a serpentine route along the sides of steep hills and across numerous gullies'. Although he had expected a British process would save a higher percentage of gold, he had decided to treat it himself in the battery, designed 'on the most approved modern type'.²⁰¹ In mid-August, a journalist reported on his visit:

I recently visited the Jubilee mine and battery, and have pleasure in testifying to the very efficient condition in which I found them. The mine has now been connected with the battery by a very substantial tramway, well built of kauri rails and hard-wood sleepers, all compactly put together and well ballasted, and is, throughout its whole length – a distance of some seventy-five chains – a most creditable piece of workmanship. The battery comprises ten head of stampers, two Mackay pans, settler, agitator, berdans, shaking-tables, etc, and is driven by a fine steam engine of 25 h.p. The courteous and genial proprietor, Mr E. Kersey Cooper, very kindly showed me through the mill and explained the work at present in hand. Mr Cooper is now running three shifts at the battery on quartz from the celebrated reef known as Butler's, and he says this quartz is highly payable. Apart from the actual battery work, he is also doing a considerable amount of prospecting. His men in the mine are rising in the big Waitekauri reef from the low level to meet the break on the top of which they are getting the gold in Butler's reef. Mr Cooper has also in hand the work of clearing the timber in the swamp, where such rich stone has been got, and where he intends to open a big face and connect it with the battery by a wire tramway. By these means he will in the summer months be able to win a large quantity of good crushing dirt at very small cost. Taken altogether it may be said that the impression formed from a visit to the Jubilee mine and mill is that the property is in a most efficient and workable form, and should have a rosy future before it.²⁰²

The following month, his bank described him as 'a decent hard working man' who, through trouble with the weather amongst other difficulties, was

²⁰⁰ *Thames Advertiser*, 11 May 1892, p. 2, 15 June 1892, p. 2.

²⁰¹ Ohinemuri Correspondent, *Auckland Star*, 13 May 1892, p. 4.

²⁰² Ohinemuri Correspondent, *Auckland Star*, 18 August 1892, p. 2.

not making as much money as expected.²⁰³ A week later, a mining columnist noted: ‘No news from Kersey as to how his marvellous rock is “shaping” ’.²⁰⁴ By then he had connected the Blow portion of the mine to the battery by a wire tramway capable of conveying 35 tons daily. The ore was of high quality, and he wanted to increase the capacity of the battery, which was ‘working in first-rate order’.²⁰⁵

After the tramway ‘was constructed at considerable cost’, the first crushing from the new level above the Horn adit ‘only yielded 102oz bullion’.²⁰⁶ When Cooper went bankrupt in October 1892, he blamed this mine for this outcome, having obtained only 2dwt to the ton from 400 tons instead of the anticipated ounce; as Butler’s reef was getting ‘small and poor’, he abandoned it as ‘a great loss’.²⁰⁷ Afterwards he was unable to do any more mining as his men refused to work until their wages were paid, ‘a thing which he was unable to do’.²⁰⁸ In addition to the lack of the good ore anticipated there was a dispute over the ownership of the property between Cooper and his English backers, ‘which led to the mine being closed down and protected’; legal proceedings eventually ended in Cooper’s favour.²⁰⁹ As he owed his bank £3,144 6s 6d, his creditors agreed to let him to go to London ‘to obtain assistance of his friends’. He cabled the bank in late February 1893 ‘from London that he had arranged a sale of the mine’, but this arrangement failed.²¹⁰

In May, Warden Northcroft reported that, although the mine had been worked ‘vigorously’ for a time, ‘unfortunately the ore treated did not equal the sanguine owners’ expectations’. Accordingly, Cooper had closed the mine while he obtained more capital to enable him to further develop it ‘and prospect for a better class of ore’.²¹¹ Early that month he cabled from

²⁰³ Bank of New South Wales, Inspector’s Half-Yearly Report, 5 September 1892, Thames, p. 220, Acc. no. 102, box 3, Westpac Archives, Wellington.

²⁰⁴ ‘Obadiah’, ‘Shares and Mining’, *Observer*, 17 September 1892, p. 11.

²⁰⁵ Ohinemuri Correspondent, *Auckland Star*, 23 September 1892, p. 4.

²⁰⁶ Downey, p. 215.

²⁰⁷ *Thames Advertiser*, 12 October 1892, p. 2.

²⁰⁸ *Ohinemuri Gazette*, 15 October 1892, p. 8.

²⁰⁹ Downey, p. 215.

²¹⁰ Bank of New South Wales, Inspector’s Half-Yearly Report, 6 March 1893, Thames, pp. 167, 252, Acc. no. 102, box 3, Westpac Archives, Wellington.

²¹¹ H.W. Northcroft to Under-Secretary, Mines Department, 19 May 1893, *AJHR*, 1893, C-3, Appendix 1, p. v.

England that within 14 days he would send sufficient money to pay his wages men.²¹² ‘Obadiah’, reporting that ‘word has just been received that our old friend Kersey is on his way out with British dollars in abundance to start operations once again at Waitekauri’, wished him ‘better luck and more of it than he has had in his last spell. For if pluck and “perseverance” are entitled to receive a reward Kersey should have a first-class ticket’.²¹³ But in the following month his solicitor received a letter from Cooper informing him that London brokers recommended not floating the Jubilee until the stock market settled down, possibly at the end of the month, after some bank failures. A prospectus and some plans were all ready, and the proposed directorate ‘further strengthened by another good name’, unspecified. The inspector of the Bank of New South Wales, then in London, would assist the flotation.²¹⁴

More funds did not arrive until September, when ‘Obadiah’ reported that not only had ‘our Kersey’ sent this cash but that he had written ‘that he intends to come himself and bring the dollars to thoroughly test the property’.²¹⁵ The syndicate’s capital was reportedly £100,000.²¹⁶ Cooper was included in ‘Obadiah’s New Year’s Wishes’: ‘May friend Kersey soon come back with British shekels wherewith to open up the tunnel and have a famous time and a fortunate result’.²¹⁷ Cooper ‘and others’ employed only two men while he sought more capital in England, where he ‘met with great difficulties and had to leave before completing the business’, which he was ‘endeavouring to do by letter and cable’ after returning.²¹⁸

When Cooper returned in February 1894 he asked the government ‘to amend the conditions on which the Jubilee owners have to spend £25,000 upon the mine within a specified time’.²¹⁹ He told his bank his attempt to float the Jubilee ‘has failed but in lieu thereof he has arranged with a Syndicate who have subscribed £5000 (on certain conditions) of which £3000

²¹² *Thames Advertiser*, 6 May 1893, p. 2.

²¹³ ‘Obadiah’, ‘Shares and Mining’, *Observer*, 6 May 1893, p. 17.

²¹⁴ *Thames Star*, 16 June 1893, p. 2.

²¹⁵ *Thames Advertiser*, 7 September 1893, p. 2; ‘Obadiah’, ‘Shares and Mining’, *Observer*, 16 September 1893, p. 18.

²¹⁶ *Thames Star*, 16 September 1893, p. 2.

²¹⁷ ‘Obadiah’s New Year’s Wishes’, *Observer*, 23 December 1893, p. 23.

²¹⁸ H.E. Kenny (Warden) to Under-Secretary, Mines Department, 4 May 1894, *AJHR*, 1894, C-3A, p. 12.

²¹⁹ *Thames Advertiser*, 15 February 1894, p. 3.

is available for working the mine and putting in a new Cyanide plant'; it would pay the debt to the bank within two years.²²⁰ In June he sold the mine to the New Zealand Jubilee Syndicate Ltd, an English company, of which he was a director and its attorney in New Zealand; the following month he arranged to purchase a Thames battery.²²¹

On 24 October Cooper received a surveyor's report on a proposed low level.²²² Three days later Cooper forwarded a copy to the minister, Alfred Jerome Cadman. 'You will notice the scheme is a very important one and likely to infuse new life and interest into the Waitekauri Gold field which for a number of years has been literally abandoned'. The cost to drive 3,200 feet over about three and a half years was about £3,000, which was 'small in comparison to its probable benefit' to all the old claims. As only six men could drive it, the cost in each year would be under £1,000, for which he sought a £ for £ subsidy; if granted, a contract would be let immediately.²²³ The following day another letter enclosed a cutting from the *Financial News* of 24 August reporting that one of the syndicate's directors, F.A. Thompson, chairman of directors of Mawson's Reward Claim in Western Australia, was being assisted by the state government. Should Cadman assist the Jubilee,

my friend Mr Thompson will be able by his connections with the Press to make a point of it – and it will assist us in bringing out the larger company proposed – with ample capital to carry out our operations on a scale like the Waihi G M Co – small plants to treat our large reefs of the up country cannot possibly pay as the cost of running a mill with a capacity of 60 to 100 tons per diem would be but very little more than the cost of running ten head of stampers.... To get a company started on a large scale is a matter of great difficulty and nothing would likely assist it more than to be able to show the Government's willingness to aid & foster the mining industry. The actual assistance asked for would look

²²⁰ Bank of New South Wales, Inspector's Half-Yearly Report, 5 March 1894, Thames, p. 252, Acc. no. 102, box 3, Westpac Archives, Wellington.

²²¹ Paeroa Warden's Court, Register of Licensed Holdings 1887-1896, folio 223, ZAAP 13293/1a, ANZ-A; *Thames Advertiser*, 12 June 1894, p. 2; correspondence between E.K. Cooper and John Watson, July 1894, A. & G. Price, Letterbook 1893-1895, A. & G. Price Archives, Thames; *New Zealand Gazette*, 29 November 1894, p. 1750.

²²² E.F. Adams to E.K. Cooper, 24 October 1894, Mines Department, MD 1, 04/251, ANZ-W.

²²³ E.K. Cooper to A.J. Cadman (Minister of Mines), 27 October 1894, Mines Department, MD 1, 04/251, ANZ-W.

much larger than it actually is in the eyes of the English investing people.²²⁴

On the same day he wrote to the Premier, Seddon, seeking his support. Although the reefs had higher assay values than at Thames, 'their paying any one to work is far from a certainty'. There had been rich surface blocks above where he was working 300 feet below 'the good flow of ground and it does not improve in acquaintance my object now is to go down a further 200 feet and drive in the main reef 3200ft'.²²⁵

When George Wilson inspected he decided that, although the planned level would only benefit Cooper, it was worth driving to see what could be found, for rich shoots should be found. 'I think the tunnel could be deemed of public utility but I may say that the scheme does not altogether commend itself to me as one calculated to be a success'.²²⁶ Not knowing the department's decision about the subsidy, on 23 December Cooper telegraphed Cadman, who understood 'it was refused some time ago'.²²⁷ His under-secretary responded that as Henry Andrew Gordon, the inspecting engineer, had been asked to inspect as Wilson's 'report was neither one thing nor another', the decision should be delayed until his report was received.²²⁸

In July 1894 Cooper attended a working trial of an improved cyanide process being tested at the Thames School of Mines, and as a probable consequence in the following January a cyanide plant was being erected.²²⁹ In February 1895 Cooper informed Cadman that his syndicate had been sold to a larger company, which would provide an extra £10,000, and

²²⁴ E.K. Cooper to A.J. Cadman, 28 October 1894, Mines Department, MD 1, 04/251, ANZ-W.

²²⁵ E.K. Cooper to R.J. Seddon (Premier), 28 October 1894, Mines Department, MD 1, 04/251, ANZ-W.

²²⁶ George Wilson to Under-Secretary, Mines Department, 16 November 1894, Mines Department, MD 1, 04/251, ANZ-W.

²²⁷ A.J. Cadman to Under-Secretary, Mines Department, 23 December 1894 (telegram), Mines Department, MD 1, 04/251, ANZ-W.

²²⁸ Under-Secretary, Mines Department, to A.J. Cadman, 24 December 1894, Mines Department, MD 1, 04/251, ANZ-W.

²²⁹ *Thames Star*, 26 July 1894, p. 2; *Auckland Star*, 26 January 1895, p. 4.

repeated his request for the subsidy.²³⁰ The following month, Gordon recommended providing £750 on condition Cooper provided a written guarantee the tunnel would be 3,000 feet long.²³¹ Cooper provided the guarantee, and stated that work would 'be started as soon as possible and carried out in a workman-like style'.²³² The tunnel would be driven 3,000 feet from 'the No. 1 Waitekauri Creek', following the main reef to the southern boundary of the property, giving 700 feet of backs.²³³

In April Cooper sent Cadman the prospectus of New Zealand Jubilee Gold Mine Ltd., which had been registered in London on 14 September 1896.²³⁴ He told Cadman that he formed the Jubilee Syndicate in 1893 but sold out after it had spent its £3,000 capital opening up the mine and nearly completing a cyanide plant. The new company would acquire another 100 acres as Waitekauri Jubilee Extended, and employ George Horn as mine manager.²³⁵ Horn, trained at the school of mines, was later a manager at Thames.²³⁶ The new company had a nominal capital of £100,000 and a working capital one-tenth of that. The vendors received 75,000 fully paid up shares. The directors were all based in London.²³⁷ The chairman, Wilberforce Bryant, was the longest serving chairman of the Bryant and May Match Company (from 1884 until his death in 1906).²³⁸ The other directors were Hugh Astley, Matthew G. Hale, Dudley A.C. Scott (a director of Luipaards Ulei Estate and Gold Mining Company), and the vendor and managing director, F.A. Thompson, was late chairman of the South Simmer

²³⁰ E.K. Cooper to A.J. Cadman, 12 February 1895, Mines Department, MD 1, 04/251, ANZ-W.

²³¹ H.A. Gordon to Under-Secretary, Mines Department, 7 March 1895; Under-Secretary, Mines Department, to E.K. Cooper, 11 March 1895, Mines Department, MD 1, 04/251, ANZ-W.

²³² E.K. Cooper to A.J. Cadman, 16 March 1895, Mines Department, MD 1, 04/251, ANZ-W.

²³³ *British Australasian*, 2 May 1895, p. 641.

²³⁴ *British Australasian*, 1 October 1896, p. 1629.

²³⁵ E.K. Cooper to A.J. Cadman, 5 April 1895, Mines Department, MD 1, 04/251, ANZ-W.

²³⁶ See *Thames Star*, 4 February 1891, p. 2, 17 August 1911, p. 2.

²³⁷ Prospectus of New Zealand Jubilee Gold Mines Ltd, enclosed with E.K. Cooper to A.J. Cadman, 5 April 1895, Mines Department, MD 1, 04/251, ANZ-W.

²³⁸ See *Otago Witness*, 2 February 1899, p. 45; *Ashburton Guardian*, 31 March 1900, p. 2; Google.

and Jack Deep Level Company.²³⁹ Thompson was ‘well-known in connection with West Australian flotations’.²⁴⁰ In February 1897 he was not listed as a director of this or any other New Zealand company; also at that date Bryant and Hale were not directors of any New Zealand company, and Astley was no longer listed as a director of this one.²⁴¹ Scott was also a director of the North Kapanga Company, mining at Coromandel.²⁴²

By January 1895, the rise in value of Waihi Company shares from £1 to £7 prompted a ‘great run on’ Jubilee shares.²⁴³ A London correspondent, writing on 1 March 1895, was sardonic about the flotation:

Our special Mahatma (a most respectable old gentleman, residing, for private reasons, not altogether unconnected with a petticoat, in the mountain fastnesses of Thibet) insinuated his astral body through my bedroom wall last night in order to say a word or two regarding the New Zealand Jubilee gold mine. This property (you are, of course, aware) is in the neighbourhood of the Waihi, and as the pound shares in that golden hole have been over £7 and are even now at £6 odd, the public tumbled over one another to be in the new good thing. The promoter and ostensible vendor is Mr F.A. Thompson, whom the Mahatma says knows a thing or two about company-mongering, and has been associated with more than one West Australian enterprise.... All I desire to draw attention to are the terms on which the public have been permitted to join in this “second Waihi.” And first let me observe that whatever may be one’s opinion of the terms of the sale they have been quite straightforward. The shareholders bought their shares presumably after reading the prospectus, and if the venture fails through one or two obvious possibilities they can’t blame anyone but themselves. The company’s capital is fixed at £100,000, the vendor asking £90,000 for his little lot. As the *net value of ore in sight* is £110,000, or less working ex[pense]’s £72,500, one is astounded at good Mr Thompson’s exceeding moderation. Would there were more kindly souls in the world like him. Payment is to be made of £15,000 in good hard cash, and £75,000 in fully paid up shares of the Company. The public had consequently to find £25,000, and did, I believe (as a matter of fact), subscribe the amount thrice. This leaves £10,000 for

²³⁹ Prospectus of New Zealand Jubilee Gold Mines Ltd, enclosed with E.K. Cooper to A.J. Cadman, 5 April 1895, Mines Department, MD 1, 04/251, ANZ-W.

²⁴⁰ *British Australasian*, 24 January 1895, p. 139.

²⁴¹ *British Australasian*, 4 February 1897, pp. 248-250.

²⁴² *British Australasian*, 4 February 1897, p. 250.

²⁴³ *British Australasian*, 24 January 1895, p. 139.

working capital, and of it the prospectus says £6,000 will be at once spent on a cyanide plant.²⁴⁴

In 1900, Cooper bitterly described how the company

only provided £10,000 of working capital, of which but a small portion was expended in actual mining; this on a property of more than 100 acres heavily timbered. The usual market was made in the shares belonging to the manipulators, my shares being carefully withheld by the directors till they could no longer interfere with the market, and then, after a tedious fight by my solicitor, he obtained my share certificates. In course of time a reconstruction took place, when £25,000 working capital was provided, but at what cost? The original shareholders' holdings were cut down a half; "the continual ministry" sat tight and remained on the board, and their remuneration was fixed at £1050 per annum; the chairman, Mr Wilberforce Bryant, getting £250 per annum, and his colleagues £200 each.

Cooper held 5,000 shares.²⁴⁵ In September 1896, a London correspondent had warned that many of the mines recently floated in London 'have, like the Jubilee, gone to work with too small working capital. It is all very well for directors at statutory meeting to enlarge upon (in the absence of more important information) the cheapness with which business can be done in New Zealand, but in the face of the Jubilee experience the general public will be disinclined to swallow all that they are told'.²⁴⁶ Later in the same article he reported a shareholders' meeting to discuss reconstructing the company and to obtain their approval of an agreement with another English company, Melville's New Zealand Corporation, to provide £25,000 working capital.

Before entering into the reasons why this fresh capital had become necessary, Mr Bryant thought it well to deny emphatically that either the directors or any of their friends would benefit from the arrangement, as suggested by certain correspondents of the "Financial Times." Having cleared the

²⁴⁴ London Correspondent [writing on 26 January 1895], *Auckland Star*, 1 March 1895, p. 5.

²⁴⁵ Letter from E.K. Cooper, 11 January 1900, *Mining Journal*, n.d., reprinted in *Ohinemuri Gazette*, 2 May 1900, p. 2.

²⁴⁶ London Correspondent [writing on 5 September 1896], *Auckland Star*, 8 October 1896, p. 2.

shareholders' minds of all suspicion, the Chairman proceeded to explain how the Company came to overrun the constable [spend more than its income].²⁴⁷ Apparently the great drain arose in connection with the purchase of 100 acres of land adjoining the original Jubilee ground, which the directors acquired on the strong recommendation of a Mr Cooper, of Sydney [presumably Kersey Cooper]. Well, that absorbed a certain amount of money, and the labour conditions also necessitated a larger outlay than was contemplated when the company was formed, and the directors found themselves in course of time short of working capital. They took the matter into their serious consideration and looked at the raising of fresh capital from this point of view. They considered first whether anything could be done in the way of debentures, and came to the conclusion that would be a very unwise course to pursue. Then the idea of preference shares came up, but as if any preference is established in the way of shares it can only be done on rather onerous terms, and the ordinary shareholders are at an immense disadvantage, and their shares often become practically unsaleable, the directors then consulted with several of the large shareholders to see if they could be prepared to supply any more capital. They did not see their way to advance the money. Then the directors, after several interviews and anxious negotiations with the Melville New Zealand Corporation, the outcome of which was that they consented to find the working capital of £25,000, on terms and conditions which necessitated reconstruction proposals by the Board, the meaning of which to outsiders seems to be as follows:-

- (1) To sell to the old shareholders 50,000 in the new company for £25,000 by taking and canceling the 100,000 old £1 shares.
- (2) To issue a second 50,000 shares to rank with the former and which the directors propose to sell for £25,000, half the amount which the old shareholders have just had to pay for their 50,000 shares. And as this is not quite hard enough to the old shareholders, the new comers are to have the option for two years of a further call for another 25,000 shares at par.

Mr Bryant didn't look at the matter quite in this light, though he acknowledged the terms were "onerous." But he urged shareholders to accept the Melville Corporation's help and make the Jubilee a really grand mine.

To do this required Hugh Astley to be appointed to liquidate the old company and register a new one, New Zealand Jubilee Gold Mines Ltd, and carry into effect the agreement with the Melville Corporation. One shareholder 'considered the scheme was rather unfair to the present

²⁴⁷ *Webster's Dictionary* [Google].

shareholders. He had every faith in the property, and pleaded that further time should be given to the shareholders in order to ascertain if they could themselves subscribe the money required', and moved to adjourn the meeting for a fortnight. Bryant responded that 'three or four shareholders' being willing to provide

a thousand or two apiece would not meet the case at all. The Board honestly believed this was the best scheme that could be put before them. They knew that when a mine got into a condition requiring extra capital, those who had money and were willing to advance such a large sum as £25,000 did expect to make favourable conditions for themselves. After consulting with the bulk of the shareholders, they found they were decidedly against finding more capital themselves. It would have been prejudicial to the interests of the company if they had called a public meeting of shareholders and found they refused to find the necessary working capital. They would not then have been in such a good position to make terms with the corporation.

A representative of the latter stated that it had gone 'carefully into the matter, but some of the parties with whom they were acting had actually withdrawn from the guarantee' and there was 'considerable doubt' about whether the corporation

should go on at all. A certain report was made for other parties, and on that report these other parties withdrew, therefore they would see that the property was not one they could play about with at all. It was a question as to the value and how to make it valuable. The next point was that they were in great want of money and the question was whether their leases would not be forfeited altogether. Melville's Corporation took the risk of advancing £1,000. That was during the time they were getting further reports. By the time that took place they had supplied another £500.... When the report came over they found that practically very little had been done, but that it was believed that with a large capital and appliances for treating the ore under cyanide, operations would be successful. These would have to be erected and the cost would be large, in fact he doubted whether £25,000 would be sufficient. He asked them as business men, would they put £25,000 into a concern making the property more valuable and permit of the shares rising to £4 or £5 without receiving some benefit. As regarded the guarantee, the matter was entirely ripe for settlement, and, as a matter of fact, the corporation was rather annoyed at the delay that had taken

place. He did not for a moment believe they would allow it to be hung up any longer.

After further debate, the directors' proposal was accepted.²⁴⁸

For the 12 months to July 1894, no output was recorded.²⁴⁹ Then, in mid-November, Cooper obtained 'some very rich stone', a 50lb boulder producing 209oz 11dwt 16gr of gold and 72oz 8dwt 8gr of silver. This discovery prompted him to ask Cadman for assistance:

There are times when people representing Home mining companies are at a great disadvantage – you know well enough of our ups and down and the disappointments we meet with which all have to be explained away the best – we know – how at times a piece of stone shown to a board of directors may raise their hopes &c.

Should a new discovery be made in his Waitekauri or Thames mines, 'I naturally would like to show my directors but owing to custom[s] duties regulations &c I am virtually debarred from carrying out my wish'. If he went to the mining inspector 'saying I have made a fresh discovery' or that the character of the ore had changed and that 'I would like my directors to see' the quartz, he wanted the inspector to be able to certify that he was 'sincere and not attempting to evade the customs and make capital out of the transactions'. Then the parcel could 'go forward without let or hindrance perhaps to save the poor mine manager two or three scoldings, and for a time to put the home people into a good temper'.²⁵⁰ After officials warned it would be impossible to know whether a 'reasonable construction' was being put on the concession granted, the duty on specimens was 'likely to amount to a very large sum', and to beware of setting a precedent, Cooper was told his request was declined because it 'might lead to the establishment of a dangerous precedent in connection with the payment of gold duty generally'.²⁵¹

²⁴⁸ London Correspondent [writing on 5 September 1896], *Auckland Star*, 8 October 1896, p. 2.

²⁴⁹ H.A. Gordon to Minister of Mines, 24 July 1894, *AJHR*, 1894, C-3, p. 47.

²⁵⁰ E.K. Cooper to A.J. Cadman (Minister of Mines), 17 November 1894, Mines Department, MD 1, 94/1634, ANZ-W.

²⁵¹ H.A. Gordon to Under-Secretary, Mines Department, 23 November 1894; Under-Secretary, Mines Department, to A.J. Cadman, 23 November 1894; Commissioner of

Early in April 1895 Cooper called tenders to drive the first 400 feet of a level intended to attain 3,000. The *Thames Star* considered this to be ‘an important piece of work which on all sides is conceded to be likely to be of a most remunerative character. To drive on a main reef of a district 3000ft, and that from which such good results have been got, cannot be looked upon with too much importance’. Because the government recognized its significance it had promised ‘£750 on completion of the work’, and the company had sent it ‘£100 as a guarantee that the full 3000ft will be driven. The newspaper wished the company ‘all the good fortune it so richly deserves’ and considered that the mining community should thank Cooper ‘for introducing such enterprising capitalists to our goldfields’.²⁵²

In July, Cooper complained to the minister that the instruction to man special claims as soon as the ground was granted would ‘cause undreamt of hardship – a man does not know when he applies for a lease whether he will get it or not – that he can make no arrangement for working capital till he has actually got the ground granted to him. It was not possible to obtain capital for an ‘untried piece of ground heavily wooded with no roads to it or on it’. Having been granted, with another man, a special claim at Waitekauri, he wanted six months’ protection while he went to England to raise capital. ‘Partial working ground beyond say one man to preserve boundaries & prevent bush fires’ was all that should be required, for employing more was ‘simply throwing away money’. Not having ‘saved capital’ during his years in New Zealand, he needed outside help; ‘I am getting an old man and I need to keep clear of charitable aid’.²⁵³ He was assured that the regulations had been made because of speculation and that bona fide claims would be assisted.²⁵⁴

Early in 1895 a winze was sunk ‘on what is known as Butler’s run of gold at the Golden Horn level, with every indication of remunerative results, but unfortunately a rather heavy inflow of water interferes somewhat with the speed of the work’; another rise was being made through the main lode in this level, and another drive being driven on Butler’s reef.

Customs to A.J. Cadman, 12 December 1894; Under-Secretary, Mines Department, to E.K. Cooper, 14 December 1894, Mines Department, MD 1, 94/1634, ANZ-A.

²⁵² *Thames Star*, 6 April 1895, p. 2.

²⁵³ E.K. Cooper to Minister of Mines, 4 July 1895, Mines Department, MD 1, 1895/1155, ANZ-W.

²⁵⁴ Under-Secretary, Mines Department, to E.K. Cooper, 12 July 1895, Mines Department, MD 1, 1895/1155, ANZ-W.

Cooper was erecting a new reduction plant and overhauling the old water race.²⁵⁵ In June a meeting of the company was told by a director that a return was expected 'long before six months had expired'. The mill would not commence until it was able to run continuously.²⁵⁶ The following month, Gordon provided full details of the Jubilee during the boom:

This mine is the property of an English syndicate, represented in the colony by Mr Kersey Cooper, who has taken up a large area of the southern end of the Waitekauri Reef. The richest portion of the Waitekauri lodes on the upper levels, as far as my information goes, has been taken out, but good stone is said to be going down underfoot. Mr Cooper was, at the time of my visit, working on the Golden Horn level. The old workings extend down to a depth of about 500ft below the crown of the hill, and it is said that gold to the value of about £100,000 has been obtained from these workings. Mr Cooper intends to construct a low-level adit from Waitekauri Creek No. 2, where the lode cropping out at the edge of the creek is from 8ft to 10ft in width, containing highly-mineralised stone. This adit-level is intended to be constructed for a distance of 3,000ft, which will bring it under the place where rich ore was got on the upper levels, and will be, allowing for fall, about 350ft below the old workings.

The richest auriferous stone on the upper levels was on a leader, sometimes on the foot-wall and sometimes on the hanging-wall; but when this leader came to cut into the main lode all the stone was good. Sometimes it is said that the good ore had a width of 28ft, and where rich ore in a large lode is found on or near the surface there is a great likelihood of rich ledges being found at a greater depth. The lode found at the surface may cut completely out, but the channel of country still exists where new lodes are likely to be again found underneath where the others break off. The venture is therefore one that will take a considerable amount of money to prospect, but nevertheless there is a reasonable chance of meeting with success.

There was a ten-head stamp battery of the old type, with the ordinary tables erected, two McKay pans, two shaking-tables, two settlers, and five berdans. Mr Cooper intends to resort to wet crushing.

Gordon gave details of the catch-pits, mixing tank, and dissolving tank, with 'all appliances to use the cyanide process if it is found to be

²⁵⁵ *British Australasian*, 2 May 1895, pp. 641-642.

²⁵⁶ *British Australasian*, 20 June 1895, p. 954.

required'.²⁵⁷ The warden, Henry Eyre Kenny, described the Jubilee as the 'chief work' in the district, and reported (in May) that crushing would soon commence.²⁵⁸ Wilson recorded only two men working for 'a portion of the year'.²⁵⁹

At the end of July it was announced that Richard William Raithly²⁶⁰ would take charge during Cooper's absence in England. 'Well known' at Thames and Coromandel, and 'most recently in charge of two or three leading mines at Reefton', he bore 'the reputation of being a miner of considerable experience, added to which he possesses the scientific knowledge requisite'.²⁶¹ He was almost immediately replaced by John Guest Ralph, who had trained under Corbett in the Moanataiari, had been in charge of the Waitekauri Company's mine and battery in the 1870s. After working tailings on the Thames foreshore for two years, he had returned to Waitekauri to manage the Jubilee 'for several months' whilst Cooper was in London floating mines at Thames and Wharekiraupunga.²⁶² In January 1896, Edwin John Clendon, a Thames lawyer,²⁶³ replaced Cooper as the attorney for the property.²⁶⁴

In mid-1895, Cooper and Ralph were granted a machine site and water race license, along with the Jubilee Extended Special Claim, and pledged to spend £10,000 in opening up this extra ground.²⁶⁵ In October, Cooper bought the Pearl, Iolanthe, and Mikado;²⁶⁶ the Iolanthe was forfeited in

²⁵⁷ H.A. Gordon to Minister of Mines, 24 July 1895, *AJHR*, 1895, C-3, p. 60.

²⁵⁸ H.E. Kenny to Under-Secretary, Mines Department, 14 May 1895, *AJHR*, 1895, C-3A, p. 3.

²⁵⁹ George Wilson to Under-Secretary, Mines Department, 21 May 1895, *AJHR*, 1895, C-3A, p. 13.

²⁶⁰ See Death Certificate of Richard William Raithly, 1921/4602, BDM; Supreme Court, *Daily Southern Cross*, 16 September 1870, p. 3; *New Zealand Herald*, 25 September 1872, p. 2; *West Coast Times*, 12 February 1878, p. 3; 'Our West Coast Letter', *Otago Daily Times*, 20 May 1893, p. 2; *Thames Star*, 21 April 1899, p. 4.

²⁶¹ *Thames Star*, 30 July 1895, p. 2.

²⁶² *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 2, p. 251; *Thames Advertiser*, 7 August 1895, p. 2.

²⁶³ See *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 2, pp. 875-876.

²⁶⁴ Advertisement, *Thames Advertiser*, 16 January 1896, p. 3.

²⁶⁵ Paeroa Warden's Court, *Thames Advertiser*, 23 May 1895, p. 3; Paeroa Warden's Court, Register of Special Claims 1895-1896, folio 5, ZAAP 13294/1b, ANZ-A.

²⁶⁶ Paeroa Warden's Court, Register of Licensed Holdings 1887-1896, folios 171-173, ZAAP 13293/1a, ANZ-A.

August 1896, two months before he bought the Pearl Extended, which was merged with the others into the Pearl Special Claim.²⁶⁷

In April 1896 driving was continuing on the new low level (known as the Jubilee) and the cyanide plant was still being constructed.²⁶⁸ Late that year, with another mine manager, Francis Hodge,²⁶⁹ Cooper tried to sell the Waitekauri Junction Company in London.²⁷⁰ By December the company's share quotation was the lowest in Hauraki.²⁷¹ On 11 January 1897, Bryant informed shareholders

that unfortunately the original working capital of the Company was found to be insufficient, and in consequence a reconstruction scheme had been carried out. Under this scheme the Melville New Zealand Corporation agreed to subscribe £25,000 in return for 25,000 shares, while in addition they were to receive a bonus of 25,000 shares, and also to be entitled to a call on another 25,000 shares for two years. The shareholders who came into the new Company received one share for every two they had previously held.²⁷²

Bryant said the new company was 'fairly under weigh to accomplish great things'.²⁷³ Thomas Melville, a member of the Edinburgh Stock Exchange for a 'considerable period' before settling in Auckland in 1881, had returned to Scotland before reappearing to New Zealand in early 1889 as the sole agent of the Cassel Company,²⁷⁴ whose patented cyanide system was being introduced to the colony. In the mid-1890s, when living in Glasgow, he was a director of Melville's New Zealand Corporation, the Waihi Silverton Extended Company, and the Kuranui-Caledonian

²⁶⁷ Paeroa Warden's Court, Register of Licensed Holdings 1887-1896, folios 171-173, 192, ZAAP 13293/1a, ANZ-A.

²⁶⁸ H.E. Kenny to Under-Secretary, Mines Department, 30 April 1896, *AJHR*, 1896, C-3A, p. 4; Downey, p. 215.

²⁶⁹ His involvement in Hauraki mining is dealt with in the section on Wharekiraupunga.

²⁷⁰ *New Zealand Herald*, 3 October 1895, p. 5; *Ohinemuri Gazette*, 24 December 1896, p. 5; *Auckland Star*, 12 March 1897, p. 3.

²⁷¹ *British Australasian*, 26 November 1896, p. 2011.

²⁷² *Thames Advertiser*, 2 March 1897, p. 1.

²⁷³ London Correspondent [writing on 23 January 1897], *Auckland Star*, 26 February 1897, p. 2.

²⁷⁴ *Auckland Weekly News*, 14 May 1881, p. 21; *Auckland Star*, 11 February 1889, p. 3; *Te Aroha News*, 13 February 1889, p. 5.

Company, which his corporation had floated.²⁷⁵ Ferdinand Faithful Begg (a Scottish Member of Parliament and prominent financier and mining investor as well as a director of Melville's New Zealand Corporation),²⁷⁶ had visited the property and been 'very favourably impressed with all he saw and heard'. Melville had 'been with our manager over the property more than once, and he has sent us a very interesting account of what he has seen and of his impressions. He will go over the property again, perhaps more than once before he comes back [to Britain]. He thinks our manager is an enthusiastic worker in the interests of the Company'. Of the £25,000 of new capital, £12,500 had been received. The new company took over liabilities amounting to £2,500 from the old one and had spent £200 already.

Our original area was 100 acres, but we took up another 100 acres, called the Jubilee Extended. Prospecting work is being carried out on that ground, and the manager in his last letter said that they were going to centre at one spot, so as to sink a shaft. The old battery site and the battery are reported to be in good working order, and a certain amount of stuff will be crushed there, but it seems important that the battery should be put in a different position, so that it should be available for stone obtained not only from the old ground, but also from the new ground. We have plenty of water, for nine months out of the twelve months we shall have enough waterpower for our requirements. To show the way in which the Government regards this enterprise, I may say that we have received a subsidy from them. After we had driven a certain distance on the low level under Christie's reef, we were to receive 4s per foot for every foot driven. We have to deposit £100, which the Government still holds, but we have received several pounds on this account. It is not the amount which we look at, so much as the fact that the Government regard the work we are engaged in as a most important one, bearing not only upon our property, but the various mining interests in that locality. Mr Christie, our under manager, thinks that at depth our lodes will junction, and, if so, experience in New Zealand mining is that extremely rich discoveries are found. At present in the drive and stopes it is estimated that there is from £60,000 to £120,000 worth of payable gold in sight. It only remains for us to erect suitable plant, and as to that we are not quite sure what

²⁷⁵ London Correspondent, *Auckland Star*, 13 April 1896, p. 3, 13 June 1896, p. 2; *British Australasian*, 4 February 1897, p. 249;

²⁷⁶ *West Australian*, 30 September 1896, p. 2; *British Australasian*, 4 February 1897, p. 248; *Toronto Sunday World*, 29 October 1913, p. 14.

character of plant will be best. It is most important that we should have the right plant to treat the ore in the most economical manner. The value of the ore is about £5 per ton, and we know it can be treated for £2 5s, but we should like to treat it at much less than that. Our area is so large that if we have the good fortune to strike good payable ore, we shall probably be in a position to form subsidiary companies. I think the outlook with our ample means is distinctly encouraging, and it only requires steady perseverance on the part of our managers out there, and close attention to your interests here, to enable us before long to give a good account of the work done. We know that we have plenty of rich ore, and it is only a question of a little time for us to decide on the method for treating that ore. We look forward to the return of Mr Melville who will be able to tell us a great deal more at an interview than by writing. I should like to make it clear that we have £20,000 of capital actually available. We have £8,000 in the bank and £12,500 to be paid up, so that we have £20,500 available at the present time.²⁷⁷

Also in that month, Cooper told an English journalist that, having obtained 'a large amount of working capital', he was 'satisfied' that 'with good, careful, and economical management', the Jubilee would 'become dividend-paying'.²⁷⁸ The company held just over 292 acres, and in mid-year work was being 'steadily carried on'. Although the low level had been extended by 576 feet and a 'considerable amount of work' done on two reefs by 20 miners, there had been no returns.²⁷⁹ A 20-head battery was being erected, and the low level would 'thoroughly test the whole property'. The warden, Robert Smelt Bush, believed prospects had 'considerably improved, a better class of ore being obtained from Christie's Reef'.²⁸⁰ S. Severin Sorensen advertised in May that he was the new attorney of this company, along with the Kuranui-Caledonian and Melville's New Zealand Corporation, of which he was both general manager and consulting engineer.²⁸¹ In subsequent years he would be prominent at Thames and

²⁷⁷ London Correspondent [writing on 23 January 1897], *Auckland Star*, 26 February 1897, p. 2.

²⁷⁸ Special Commissioner, 'Interview with Mr E. Kersey Cooper', *British Australasian*, 4 February 1897, p. 242.

²⁷⁹ George Wilson to Minister of Mines, 29 July 1897, *AJHR*, 1897, C-3, p. 95.

²⁸⁰ R.S. Bush (Warden) to Under-Secretary, Mines Department, 7 July 1897, *AJHR*, 1897, C-3A, p. 5.

²⁸¹ *Auckland Star*, advertisement, 8 May 1897, p. 5, 30 December 1897, p. 3.

Waihi, managing both the Kuranui-Caledonian and the Waihi Silverton mines.²⁸²

In May, Cooper surrendered the Pearl.²⁸³ In October he informed an English reporter that, when he visited earlier that year, 'I found the low level subsidized by the Government up to the reefs, which will be a means of unwatering the upper level, and development work can now go on apace'. Some rich ore had been extracted from 'the celebrated Butler's Reef', and 'a large stretch of that reef' had been driven upon and was ready to stope. 'This mine is now under good, live management, and I have no doubt about the ultimate results'.²⁸⁴ The following month, shareholders in Melville's New Zealand Corporation, 'largely interested' in the Jubilee, were assured that development work was 'not only being pushed forward with the utmost vigour but with promise of success, and with Mr Sorensen superintending operations the shareholders might rest assured that the working capital was being spent to the best advantage'.²⁸⁵

One year later, driving and sinking on the No. 2 level continued; a shaft was being sunk from this level to the low level tunnel, now in 1,000 feet, being driven towards the Waitekauri reef.²⁸⁶ Two weeks later, Bush was pleased that the company had 'at last struck a better class of ore, which, although slightly refractory, assays well'; crushing was about to commence.²⁸⁷ 'Apart, however, from one small block located below the entrance to the Horn level, no quartz of any value was got'.²⁸⁸ At the end of the year, Cooper surrendered the Waitekauri Jubilee Extended Special

²⁸² See *Auckland Star*, 14 January 1899, p. 5; *Thames Advertiser*, 1 May 1899, p. 3, 20 October 1899, p. 4.

²⁸³ Paeroa Warden's Court, Register of Special Claims 1896-1897, folio 49, ZAAP 13294/2a, ANZ-A.

²⁸⁴ *British Australasian*, 28 October 1897, p. 1926.

²⁸⁵ London Correspondent [writing on 27 November 1897], *Auckland Star*, 30 December 1897, p. 3.

²⁸⁶ George Wilson to Minister of Mines, 12 May 1898, *AJHR*, 1898, C-3, p. 72.

²⁸⁷ R.S. Bush to Under-Secretary, Mines Department, 1 June 1898, *AJHR*, 1898, C-3A, p. 6.

²⁸⁸ Downey, p. 216.

Claim.²⁸⁹ In the first four months of 1899, 40 men were employed 'in work mostly of a development character, but latterly very little has been done'.²⁹⁰

In January 1899 it was reported that Cooper, newly returned from England, had inspected the Jubilee, 'condemned past plans of operations', and would supervise a new scheme of development.²⁹¹ He promptly denied inspecting it.²⁹² One year later, he criticized the owners in the London *Mining Journal*:

After a time, a new mine manager [identity not revealed] was appointed to supersede their other choice, and that in the person of an electrical engineer. The wasteful expenditure during this period, and the fiascos that have been enacted paralyse belief. Three men have been killed, the mine has been set on fire, the machinery buried, and left to perish, lawsuits have been fought, and the final act to this tragedy is now being performed. The mine with the use of the battery has been let on tribute at 10 per cent. The ore, of good value, has been given to the tributers, as well as the blocks of ground opened up ready for stoping. The manager, as formerly, still lives in Auckland, nearly 100 miles away from the mine, and a man is employed to look after the tributers. Tributers don't inspect mines; they only take away the easily won ore and pick the eyes out of the mine, but don't look for fresh discoveries. The ore, which is refractory, is being crushed wet and treated by amalgamation, and at least two-thirds of its values are lost.

Query. Where do the shareholders come in?

It is one of the many mines in which the shareholders have had no run for their money, and for an object lesson, if for nothing else, I would like the opportunity of analysing the accounts, and take an inventory of what is left on the mine – it would be an eye-opener. As a shareholder of 5000 shares I have written to the directors on the shameful condition of the business, but I might just as well expect to get a bray out of a dead donkey as to get any satisfaction from them. Such abuse of confidence shown by company directors, who are encouraged in their dubious ways by

²⁸⁹ Paeroa Warden's Court, Register of Special Claims 1895-1896, folio 5, ZAAP 13294/1b, ANZ-A.

²⁹⁰ James Coutts (Inspector of Mines) to Under-Secretary, Mines Department, 29 April 1899, *AJHR*, 1899, C-3A, p. 53; George Wilson to Minister of Mines, 12 May 1899, *AJHR*, 1899, C-3, p. 64.

²⁹¹ *Thames Star*, 10 January 1899, p. 2.

²⁹² *Thames Advertiser*, 14 January 1899, p. 2; Auckland Correspondent, *Thames Star*, 14 January 1899, p. 2.

the apathy of the shareholders, has brought mining into the doubtful position it now holds. It is the worst form of robbery, as it requires the least amount of courage.²⁹³

Cooper's views of tributers were confirmed by the figures. In the 12 months to May 1900, Robert Worth,²⁹⁴ who later applied for a mine at Tui,²⁹⁵ and his party held the whole mine on tribute. These 15 tributers obtained 681 ounces, valued at £1,644 18s 1d, from 1,081 tons taken from the block below the entrance to the Horn level.²⁹⁶ Four men tributed until October 1900, extracting another 46 tons for a return of £257 14s.²⁹⁷

The company was reconstructed once again, in late 1900, as the New Zealand Jubilee Gold Mine (Limited). Under an agreement with the liquidator of the old company, shareholders were 'entitled to an allotment of the number of shares of 5s each in the new company. These shares are credited as having 4s 6d per share paid thereon, and are subject to a liability of 6d per share, payable 3d on application, and the balance as and when required'.²⁹⁸ In mid-October Cooper received a cable from London appointing him mine manager, taking over at the beginning of November, allowing the tributers time for a final clean up.²⁹⁹ With work resuming, he intended to put in a low level to open the reef at depth.³⁰⁰ He worked so vigorously that, when visiting Te Aroha later that month, he was 'suddenly

²⁹³ Letter from E.K. Cooper, 11 January 1900, *Mining Journal*, n.d., reprinted in *Ohinemuri Gazette*, 2 May 1900, p. 2.

²⁹⁴ See Mines Department, MD 1, 92/649, ANZ-W; *Thames Advertiser*, 5 February 1892, p. 2, 22 April 1897, p. 3; N.S. Climie, 'Pre Borough Times', in *Waihi Borough Council: Diamond Jubilee 1902-1962*, ed. Climie (Paeroa, 1962), pp. 10-11.

²⁹⁵ Te Aroha Warden's Court, Mining Applications 1910, 76/1910, BBAV 11289/16a, ANZ-A.

²⁹⁶ James Coutts to Under-Secretary, Mines Department, 28 May 1900, *AJHR*, 1900, C-3, p. 86; Bank of New Zealand, Ohinemuri Branch, Half-Yearly Balance Book, 30 September 1899, Overdrawn Accounts, Robert Worth; Half-Yearly Balance Book, 31 March 1900, Advances, Robert Worth, Bank of New Zealand Archives, Wellington; Downey, p. 216.

²⁹⁷ James Coutts to Under-Secretary, Mines Department, 8 February 1901, *AJHR*, 1901, C-3, p. 54.

²⁹⁸ *Auckland Weekly News*, 4 January 1901, p. 35.

²⁹⁹ *Thames Star*, 19 October 1900, p. 2; *Ohinemuri Gazette*, 31 October 1900, p. 2.

³⁰⁰ *Auckland Star*, 25 October 1900, p. 2.

seized with a slight attack of paralysis' caused by 'over-fatigue', according to one newspaper, or a serious 'fit' according to another.³⁰¹ When dressing he 'was suddenly seized with a slight shock of paralysis affecting the right side. Mr Cooper had a heavy day's work at Waitekauri on the previous day, the strain of which doubtless led to the seizure'.³⁰² Within a week 'the popular mine manager', as the *Ohinemuri Gazette* described him, had recovered.³⁰³

At the beginning of the following year, he moved his home to Waitekauri.³⁰⁴ It was also announced that mainly through his influence John Sudamore Sellon,³⁰⁵ 'a principal partner in 'one of the largest assaying firms in London', Johnson, Matthey & Co, had 'acquired very large interests'.³⁰⁶ In early 1901 he employed 12 men repairing drives and prospecting.³⁰⁷ Mostly their work consisted of extending the low level tunnel, which in several years would attain 'a total distance of 4,500ft, of which the last 3,250ft were on the Waitekauri reef'. In places some promising ore was found, but insufficiently promising to warrant extracting it.³⁰⁸ In mid-year he was 'making ready to again exploit the gruesome shaft' and 'looking up the old hands who know the run of the ropes'.³⁰⁹ In November, he went to England to raise more capital, taking with him photos of the property and planning to commence 'new and extensive' work on his return.³¹⁰ Elaborate details of the company's operations were given in March 1902 by the mining inspector:

A considerable amount of work was done during the early part of the year in the upper levels – viz, the Moonstone and Horn levels – consisting principally of driving and crosscutting. As there were no fresh discoveries of any importance met with in those

³⁰¹ *Thames Star*, 26 November 1900, p. 2; *Ohinemuri Gazette*, 28 November 1900, p. 2.

³⁰² Te Aroha Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 30 November 1900, p. 34.

³⁰³ *Ohinemuri Gazette*, 5 December 1900, p. 2.

³⁰⁴ *Ohinemuri Gazette*, 4 February 1901, p. 2.

³⁰⁵ Recorded as J.S. Pybus-Sellon, who had died in 1898: Google; 'Memorandum of Association of Johnson Matthey Public Limited Company', 10 April 1891, The National Archives, Kew, London.

³⁰⁶ *Thames Star*, 2 January 1901, p. 1.

³⁰⁷ James Coutts to Under-Secretary, Mines Department, 8 February 1901, *AJHR*, 1901, C-3, p. 54.

³⁰⁸ Downey, p. 216.

³⁰⁹ *Thames Star*, 27 June 1901, p. 1.

³¹⁰ *Ohinemuri Gazette*, 28 October 1901, p. 2; *Thames Star*, 28 October 1901, p. 4.

workings, it was decided (in view of the promising results obtained in the low-level tunnel) to temporarily suspend work in the upper levels and confine operations to the thorough exploiting of the deep-level portion of the mine. The result of this work will be looked forward to with some interest, as it is on these the ultimate success of the mine depends. The low-level tunnel has been extended a distance of 850ft in a southerly direction during the year, making the total distance from the mouth of the tunnel to the face 2,810ft.

He provided details of reefs cut and of 'some highly encouraging' assay results.

The intention is to open up an intermediate level between the low and Horn levels (a distance of 260ft vertical), and the levels will be connected. This will insure good ventilation, and give facilities for working out the blocks of ground between the levels. The present low-level tunnel will also be extended indefinitely towards and under the old Waitekauri Company's ground, in order to ascertain whether the rich runs of gold formerly worked in the upper levels hold down. The results of this work should prove the capabilities of the mine. At a recent reconstruction of the company in London a further sum of £6,000-odd was raised, and it is the intention of the directors to devote this money entirely on the development works mentioned. Should they turn out as satisfactorily as anticipated, further capital will require to be raised in order to erect machinery to treat the ore.

An average of 19 men had been employed in the past year.³¹¹

Late in April, Cooper returned from England, 'looking very well'.³¹² He inspected the mine with its manager and announced there was 'every prospect of further capital being expended in development work, etc'.³¹³ He was 'hopeful of ultimate success', but did not reveal the outcome of his attempt to raise capital, though this was 'stated to have been satisfactory'.³¹⁴ In June he informed the minister that, as the low level had

³¹¹ James Coutts to Under-Secretary, Mines Department, 13 March 1902, *AJHR*, 1902, C-3, p. 40.

³¹² *Ohinemuri Gazette*, 23 April 1902, p. 2.

³¹³ *Thames Star*, 24 April 1902, p. 4.

³¹⁴ Thames Correspondent, *Auckland Star*, 23 April 1902, p. 5.

been driven 3,000 feet, he wanted to receive the remainder of the subsidy.³¹⁵ Because of doubts that this distance had been driven, he explained that Gordon had gone over the ground with him and decided where to commence the tunnel. Its direction had changed as it was driven, but with other tunnels the total distance driven was 3,000 feet, and he asked that Gordon verify his explanation 'as it is unpleasant to me to have my word doubted and places me in an awkward position with the people I represent in England'.³¹⁶ He was told that final payment could not be made until the mining inspector had certified the distance driven.³¹⁷ In November Cooper reported that he was still driving and 'just coming under the rich surface run of gold on the big-hill', and requested payment.³¹⁸ He received £283 10s.³¹⁹ At the end of the following January it was reported that he had picked up a rich run of gold which looked 'most promising'.³²⁰

Cooper acted as general manager until February 1903, when he retired from mining and prepared to return to England.³²¹ At the end of 1902, 'the company's funds were again exhausted, and work had to cease' for a time.³²² An average of 28 men were employed in the 12 months to March 1903 extending the low level and prospecting. The development work had 'reached a point which should enable the owners to determine' what to do with their property,³²³ so full of promise yet so lean in output. By July 1903 the mine was mostly closed down.³²⁴ For six months of the following year, it was protected, but subsequently 15 men were employed extending two levels. The low level had been driven 4,000 feet by March 1904, the last 300

³¹⁵ E.K. Cooper to Minister of Mines, 3 June 1902, Mines Department, MD 1, 04/251, ANZ-W.

³¹⁶ E.K. Cooper to Minister of Mines, 22 June 1902, Mines Department, MD 1, 04/251, ANZ-W.

³¹⁷ Under-Secretary, Mines Department, to E.K. Cooper, 29 July 1902, Mines Department, MD 1, 04/251, ANZ-W.

³¹⁸ E.K. Cooper to Minister of Mines, 12 November 1902, Mines Department, MD 1, 04/251, ANZ-W.

³¹⁹ Voucher, 12 December 1902, Mines Department, MD 1, 04/251, ANZ-W.

³²⁰ *Auckland Star*, 30 January 1903, p. 8.

³²¹ *Ohinemuri Gazette*, 9 February 1903, p. 2.

³²² Downey, p. 216.

³²³ James Coutts to Under-Secretary, Mines Department, 21 March 1903, *AJHR*, 1903, C-3, pp. 87-88.

³²⁴ *Ohinemuri Gazette*, 15 July 1903, p. 2.

being 'very broken, and not of a favourable description for the existence of gold-bearing lodes'.³²⁵ As the driving had been completed, the attorney asked for and received the return of the £100 deposit, which was to be refunded when the work was concluded.³²⁶ Although there was further development in the following year, no ore was treated apart from samples sent to London.³²⁷ Continued prospecting in the Horn level did not produce 'any satisfactory result'.³²⁸

At the end of 1904, Cooper re-visited Waitekauri, and planned another trip to England to raise capital because he was 'sanguine of good results. All that is wanted is honest managers and honest directors. The old veteran had great hopes of Waitekauri and the district generally', a local newspaper reported.³²⁹ There was talk of testing the lower depths using diamond drilling, should more English capital be raised.³³⁰ In May 1906 Bush noted that the mine had 'given no encouragement to its owners during the year to cause any activity in their mining operations. A large sum has been spent on this mine during past years. Five men employed'.³³¹ By then, Cooper was living in England, where he died in January 1907.³³² The syndicate continued to work it until 1912, 'affording as good an instance of persistent, if somewhat ill-advised, prospecting effort as the district has afforded', in the opinion of a later mining inspector.³³³ During the last six years of the mine prospecting was 'persisted with' in 'the Jubilee and Horn adits, as well in the more superficial parts of the claim, but nothing of value was found'.

³²⁵ James Coutts to Under-Secretary, Mines Department, 14 March 1904, *AJHR*, 1904, C-3, p. 44.

³²⁶ A.H. Sellon (Attorney for Jubilee Company) to Under-Secretary, Mines Department, 19 February 1904; memorandum by Under-Secretary, Mines Department, 29 February 1904, Mines Department, MD 1, 04/251, ANZ-W.

³²⁷ James Coutts to Under-Secretary, Mines Department, 18 February 1905, *AJHR*, 1905, C-3, p. 34.

³²⁸ Downey, p. 216.

³²⁹ *Ohinemuri Gazette*, 12 December 1904, p. 2.

³³⁰ James Coutts to Under-Secretary, Mines Department, 18 February 1905, *AJHR*, 1905, C-3, p. 34.

³³¹ R.S. Bush to Under-Secretary, Mines Department, 22 May 1906, *AJHR*, 1906, C-3, p. 92.

³³² *Auckland Weekly News*, 28 September 1905, p. 32; Death Certificate of E.K. Cooper, 26 January 1907, Register of Deaths 1907, Hastings District, no. 458, English BDM.

³³³ Downey, p. 215.

In all its years of being worked, it produced 2,118 tons of quartz yielding 1,292 ounces of bullion valued at £3,019.³³⁴ No further mining occurred after this company abandoned it.³³⁵

THAMES, 1887-1889

Late in October 1887, with another miner, Henry Hughes,³³⁶ and on behalf of the Hidden Treasure Company, Cooper applied for the Hidden Treasure at Gentle Annie Creek, Te Mata, which was granted three months later.³³⁷ Cooper did not show any further interest in this mine, which was worked by Hughes.³³⁸ In 1889, he was granted the Reve d'Or at Tararu Creek, despite other miners claiming it encroached on their land;³³⁹ nothing further was heard of it.

At the beginning of October 1887 Cooper applied for the Fame and Fortune Special Claim,³⁴⁰ between the Waiotahi and Moanataiari creeks, adjoining the Moanataiari mine 'on the inland side of the great fault'.³⁴¹ It 'originally consisted of a number of small claims, concerning some of which little information' was recorded, although the owners 'probably' extracted some ore.³⁴² The inspecting engineer reported that it had been worked 'for many years' before being abandoned as 'valueless', and in 1889 Cooper wrote that it had been 'laying idle for 20 years, open to any one to take

³³⁴ Downey, p. 216.

³³⁵ Downey, p. 287.

³³⁶ For his mining in Thames, see *Thames Advertiser*, letter from Henry Hughes, 26 June 1889, p. 2, 14 January 1891, p. 1, 21 March 1895, p. 4.

³³⁷ *Thames Advertiser*, 28 October 1887, p. 3; Thames Warden's Court, Register of Applications for Licensed Holdings and Special Claims 1887-1896, folio 15, BACL 14376/1a, ANZ-A.

³³⁸ Warden's Court, *Thames Advertiser*, 27 April 1888, p. 2.

³³⁹ Warden's Court, *Thames Star*, 5 September 1889, p. 2.

³⁴⁰ See Colin Fraser, *The Geology of the Thames Subdivision, Hauraki, Auckland* (Geological Survey Bulletin no. 10 (New Series)), (Wellington, 1910), pp. 85-87, with map facing p. 66.

³⁴¹ *Thames Advertiser*, 4 October 1887, p. 3; H.A. Gordon to Minister of Mines, 17 June 1896, *AJHR*, 1896, C-3, p. 52.

³⁴² Downey, p. 125.

up'.³⁴³ One miner responded that Walker had worked the ground from 1883 onwards, 'and several small patches of gold have been extracted by others'.³⁴⁴ 'Bluff', in complaining that the 'cry of English capital is "all bosh"', cited Cooper as an example of men trying to hold large areas of unworked ground when Thames needed smaller, worked, claims.³⁴⁵ Cooper called his bluff, according to the newspaper which printed his response:

My attention has been called to what "Bluff" writes in your issue of yesterday, and as he has chosen to mention my name I can't let his nonsense remain unnoticed. He speaks of my having 100 acres protected; I have made application for a special claim of 50 acres on this field (the Thames). All the ground I have pegged off was not only vacant, but not a single soul was working or fossicking on it. The object of granting a special claim is this, to induce foreign capital; a small area of ground would not do it, neither would a man be able to solicit to work neglected ground unless he can show some inducement. Now the gentlemen who have the care of our mining industry saw this, recognised the apathy shown by people in Auckland and other New Zealand cities in developing our mineral resources, and determined to make a bid for foreign capital. Whether the concession they have offered would meet the case to the extent it was hoped remains to be proven, at least the experiment is worth trying. As to the legality of granting a special claim, Bluff wants simply to read the Mining Act of 1887 through, and not select clauses of the act simply to support the rubbish he has written. In conclusion, I would ask Bluff to disclose his name that I might have an opportunity of studying him, believing with Pope, "The proper study of mankind is man," and as Bluff gives it as his opinion that the getting of English capital is "all bosh," I will bet him a pony (£25) that I will get English capital to work the ground I have applied for, and meet him at 10 a.m. on Thursday morning to post the money in the hands of Major Murray.³⁴⁶

Major Murray was Thomas Leitch Murray, manager of the Thames branch of the Bank of New Zealand.³⁴⁷ The following day, Cooper wrote

³⁴³ H.A. Gordon to Minister of Mines, 1 June 1890, *AJHR*, 1890, C-3, p. 35; H.A. Gordon to Minister of Mines, 8 June 1891, *AJHR*, 1891, C-4, p. 31; Letter from E.K. Cooper, *Thames Star*, 6 December 1889, p. 4.

³⁴⁴ Letter from 'Old Chum', *Thames Star*, 9 December 1889, p. 4.

³⁴⁵ Letter from 'Bluff', *Thames Advertiser*, 8 November 1887, p. 2.

³⁴⁶ Letter from E.K. Cooper, *Thames Advertiser*, 9 November 1887, p. 2.

³⁴⁷ See *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 7, pp. 96-97; *Thames Star*, 19 January 1900, p. 2.

again: ‘Ed Kersey Cooper was at the Bank of New Zealand corner at 10 a.m. to meet “Bluff,” and waiting ten minutes for him. His offer is still open, but “Bluff” must come to him. A letter will find him always within a day or two addressed the Thames’.³⁴⁸ ‘Bluff had the last word: ‘Oh, you say the “Kersey” bluffed me do you, well he may have bluffed me, but still the nut “re” pegging off special claims is beyond his power to crack’. He was objecting to ‘the indiscriminate mode of pegging off 100 acres or so, and then waiting for something to turn up to take the incubus from off their hands’, but did not accuse Cooper of being one of these speculators.’³⁴⁹

Cooper, granted the property in November, soon ‘formed a syndicate to take the claim up and work it’.³⁵⁰ The investors were English,³⁵¹ although there may have been other New Zealanders apart from Cooper, who was ‘one of the principal shareholders, and managing director’.³⁵² Dividing his interest into 100 shares, he sold these from August 1888 onwards, retaining only 39 1/2 when a company was formed in 1894.³⁵³ These sales contradicted an interview about his Waitekauri and Thames properties he gave when he ‘passed through’ Te Aroha in September 1888:

I am prospecting the Fame and Fortune in several parts of the ground, extending the Australasian tunnel up under the Two Finger ground, towards the two shafts sunk in the old days in what was then called the Duke of Edinburgh’s claim, close to Weston’s old Battery. I am putting in a cross cut from the Waiotahi Creek to the Moanataiari Creek to intercept all the reefs running through my ground, and in driving a cross cut from the “Fame” shaft to intersect the Day Spring reef. I have no shares for sale. I am going to work my leases on their merits, and want the gold to furnish the reports.

He denied trying to float either it or the Jubilee in London,³⁵⁴ although when in England earlier that year he had ‘induced friends’ to provide financial support.³⁵⁵

³⁴⁸ Letter from E.K. Cooper, *Thames Advertiser*, 11 November 1887, p. 2.

³⁴⁹ Letter from ‘Bluff’, *Thames Advertiser*, 11 November 1887, p. 2.

³⁵⁰ H.A. Gordon to Minister of Mines, 1 June 1890, *AJHR*, 1890, C-3, p. 35.

³⁵¹ *Thames Advertiser*, 22 May 1890, p. 2.

³⁵² H.A. Gordon to Minister of Mines, 8 June 1891, *AJHR*, 1891, C-4, p. 31.

³⁵³ Thames Warden’s Court, Register of Licensed Holdings 1887-1891, folio 184, BACL 14355/1a; Transfers and Mortgages 1894-1895, no. 38252, BACL 13964/1a, ANZ-A.

³⁵⁴ *Te Aroha News*, 29 September 1888, p. 2.

After work commenced in August 1888 'a vigorous policy of development' reopened almost all the old adits.³⁵⁶ In his report dated 25 April 1889, George Wilson considered the mine 'promises success'. Eighteen men had been employed clearing out and repairing 3,000 feet of old levels and driving 400 feet on reefs, and a block opened in Fox's leader would take 18 months to work out. Only 20 tons had been crushed, producing 45 ounces.³⁵⁷

At the end of December a mining reporter argued that there was no better mine to spend capital in than the Fame and Fortune, under Cooper's 'able management'. Whereas previous owners had restricted themselves to surface working, Cooper had been 'opening up the ground in a thoroughly systematic manner', doing work, especially a low level tunnel, 'which cannot fail to ultimately unearth reefs and leaders which will prove a source of profit to the enterprising shareholders'. As several 'capital hauls of picked stone' and 'some excellent returns of gold' had recently been obtained, he obtained permission from Cooper to inspect the mine, and was given considerable detail of all the workings. Having earlier concentrated on the Moanataiari side, he was now 'confining his attention to the Waiotahi end', where 'nice colours of gold' were being found in all three levels. In the highest, the Euston, after driving 225 feet 'a promising leader, since proved to be in the footwall of "Cooper's," was cut through, and as when intersected it showed colors of gold and produced 10lb of picked stone', Cooper drove on it for 75 feet, 'colors of gold being seen every breaking down'. A winze was then sunk to the next level, the Balmoral: 'the prospects met with while sinking auger well for the payableness of the block of ground available upon this leader here, as gold was observed distributed through the quartz all the way down to the point where communication was effected'. Further large developments were planned, 'a large amount of prospecting' being done elsewhere 'by extending levels'. His ultimate intention was 'to erect a battery on the flat, and connect the low level with the same by a wire tramway', believing that the reefs would 'prove by this economical proceeding to be payable'. Since the first crushing on 23 February, '1,610oz

³⁵⁵ E.K. Cooper to Minister of Mines, 8 July 1891, Mines Department, MD 1, 91/566, ANZ-W.

³⁵⁶ H.A. Gordon to Minister of Mines, 1 June 1890, *AJHR*, 1890, C-3, p. 35; Downey, p. 125; for map of workings in 1887, see Waikato University Map Library.

³⁵⁷ George Wilson to Under-Secretary, Mines Department, 25 April 1889, *AJHR*, 1889, C-2, p. 97.

2dwt of melted gold has been banked, of which 841oz 19dwt was obtained from 1,380 pounds of picked stone. All the underground workings, buildings, &c, are of a most permanent nature, and I with confidence predict a most successful future'.³⁵⁸

In the 1940s, Alfred Frederick Sawyer, an old Thames miner,³⁵⁹ recalled that, in re-working the old Euston low level (which he recalled as the Union), miners came to where his father, Alfred Wilkinson Sawyer, had bored a drill hole two feet into the reef without finding the lode. The level had been abandoned because little gold had been found. 'The first thing Kersey Cooper's miners did was to carry on – and from this hole – when fired gave the First big rich Gold – This Lode afterwards was called Cooper Reef – Thousands of oz of gold was now here'.³⁶⁰

WANTING THE GOLD DUTY ABOLISHED

In mid-August 1889, claiming to 'have been anxiously waiting for someone of longer residence' at Thames than himself to raise the question of abolishing the gold duty but finding residents wanted to leave the issue alone, he wrote his first letter on this issue:

Why the gold miner is to be more favored in the South Island than in the North Island is to me an enigma. One has only to look around our goldfields to be satisfied that the shoe is pinching somewhere, to see what a languid way capital comes forward to support this all important industry, and how many gold miners, who have followed mining for a number of years, have recently left and are leaving our fields to court Dame Fortune's smiles elsewhere.

He argued that if the duty 'had been properly allocated and carefully expended' the condition of this and other fields would be 'very different'. To illustrate, he examined the small area bounded by the Moanataiari and Waiotahi creeks and extending from the batteries to Punga Flat.

³⁵⁸ *Thames Star*, 28 December 1889, p. 4; Thames Correspondent, *Auckland Star*, 30 December 1889, p. 3.

³⁵⁹ See *Thames Electoral Roll, 1887*, p. 20; Death Certificate of Alfred Frederick Sawyer, 28 August 1964, Deaths, 1964/38275, BDM.

³⁶⁰ A.F. Sawyer, handwritten reminiscences, n.d. [1940s], W.G. Hammond Papers, folder 34a, MS 134, Library of the Auckland Institute and War Memorial Museum.

The gold duty that has been levied on the gold won on this small area of ground would have enabled the County Council to have driven the Moanataiari low level up to the Punga Flat, crosscut to its eastern and western boundaries, and ventilated this entire area. Now, against this picture, with thousands of men working in the ground, what equivalent have the occupiers and workers of this said area of ground received from this extortionate charge on their winnings? There is not even a road up the Moanataiari creek beyond the junction that a sleigh can travel up, much less a dray. The path is ankle-deep with mud, which the miner has to wade through at all hours of the day and night at his risk, whilst the money charged to his earnings is expended elsewhere. The only means of getting quartz to the mills is by the County tramway, which is in a most rickety condition, and must in a short time, unless thoroughly overhauled, become a thing of the past. The cost of transit by this said tramway is about 50 per cent more than would be charged by a Thames carter, did a road exist. The future has been so little thought of that actually a short time will see all available space for tipping mullock above creek level appropriated. Then the poor goose which has laid so many golden eggs for these thoughtless representatives of the goldfields (I am reminded of the parable of the unwise Virgins, but then they don't look much like virgins either), will, in making its last gasp, declare, "I was game to go on if you had only fed me; the fault rests with you." In the view of the misappropriation of the gold duty, and the complete wreck the false working of the system shows, I contend it is time to abolish the duty, which would be a means to give a fresh impetus to mining, the outcome of which must naturally be work for the unemployed. I would ask, can any thinking man, with his eyes open, walk about this town without asking himself a question – when he sees a quantity of men out of employ, no work for the youths and smaller boys who in many instances work over old tips, pick up stone from behind the drays, with the hope of getting a few shillings to help the head of the house to keep that anxiety which debt always brings with away, and that a radical change is absolutely necessary – where then should an attack first be made? I say where the wrongs are proved to exist.³⁶¹

His letter was provoked by duty charged on sales of over eight tons of ore treated by Johnson, Matthey & Co of London, which produced a net

³⁶¹ Letter from E.K. Cooper, *Thames Star*, 15 August 1889, p. 4.

profit to Cooper of £130 17s 7d.³⁶² Two days after his letter was published, Cooper wrote to the Collector of Customs in Auckland:

I now enclose you copy of account sales of quartz shipped per Rangitiki. I have not had an opportunity of ascertaining how the Waihi GM Co & other Co have paid duty – the Basis must be hard to determine. Can the Government with its declared determination of assisting the Gold mining industry go so far as to exact duty on ore which I took home [to England] at a great expense to ascertain the proper way of treating it. A basis should be determined on when it is found remunerative to ship ore to Europe which contains both Gold & silver in a non-metallic form. And I would be glad to hear from you on the subject – as I am likely to have ore I can't treat in New Zealand to ship home.³⁶³

No response was recorded in the Customs file. In early November, Cooper wrote a long letter about the state of the county roads, which were handicapping mining, headed with two brief quotes:

“Come here, come here, my good goose quill,
Slave of my thoughts, subservient to my will.”

“Fools are my theme, but satire be my song”

It was ‘literally astounding ... to see the helpless attitude assumed by those who contribute to the funds of the local bodies’ and ‘preposterous to see the condition of the roads on this gold field’ when the councils received ‘very large sums of money’ from gold duty and rates.

It has often been a puzzle to me why people in New Zealand, no matter what their qualifications may be, are so eager to serve the public. They willingly pretend to sacrifice themselves on the altar of duty as if it were a real good paying game, but if by any chance, after being placed in office, their supporters are not content with their conduct, they assume a defiant air and hold on to their so-called honorary position most tenaciously as if it were as good as an annuity to them. Now, I contend the state of the roads on the Thames goldfield is a most pronounced verdict against the trustworthiness of the ratepayers’ representatives. They are a

³⁶² Account from assay office, London, 28 May 1888, Customs Department, BBAO 5544, 1889/821, ANZ-A.

³⁶³ E.K. Cooper to Collector of Customs, Auckland, 17 August 1889, Customs Department, BBAO 5544, 1889/821, ANZ-A.

monument to incapacity and abused trust. Is there one good road on the Thames goldfield after all the lavish contributions towards their construction? I say most emphatically, no! There is not a road over which quartz and mining material can be carted for less than double the cost of what such carting would be over good roads.

This difference was 'big enough to alter the scale of profit and loss, and might influence the capitalist in his calculations whether to determine to try the Thames or no as a place to invest some money in'. He blamed the 'apathy' of the inhabitants for allowing 'what should be expended to assist in lightening the burdens of the gold miner to be wasted on unremunerative works and expenditure that can bear no good fruit'. The field would continue 'to retrograde, and lose whatever little chance it has of winning the smiles of outside capitalists'. He offered a speech for the chairman to deliver at the next county council meeting:

Gentlemen – When I took office I found the Council heavily in debt. I immediately conceived the happy idea of what I call retrenchment. I determined we would, as speedily as possible, cut off all sources of revenue, as making and keeping roads on a goldfield is a mistake. The people of the Thames must not look to goldmining as a means of support. Gum-digging, bee-farming, preserving a few pots of jam, and fishing in the gulf for the Auckland market must be the industries to be considered, not forgetting my saw mill, where, gentlemen, I pay positively £10 a week in wages, but owing to a form of truck system I have instituted, I get the principal part of that back. My attention has been called to promises made by the Council before I held office to encourage foreign capitalists to invest money on this horrid goldfield, such as "roads would be properly made and kept in order," "quartz would be carried down the Moanataiari County tramway without charge." These and other such clap-trap promises, for which you know New Zealand is proverbial, we have not kept, neither is it our intention to do so. The £50 voted to be expended on the Waiotahi road by your Council was simply a dodge to keep Mr Cooper quiet. We have let a contract for £4 instead, and the work done for this amount will likely create sufficient mud to get Mr Cooper stuck in it, for which I earnestly and devoutly pray. Report says the Waiotahi road is in a disgraceful state; this we cannot help, we never made it – should any fresh outside capitalists come along, you know we can do the usual thing, *promise*. It is all nonsense about visitors' first impressions of a place. As to the people leaving the Thames owing to their inability to get work, I can simply say there will be less

rates to collect, and through this means I hope to make a further saving by reducing the Collector's salary. This, with the other forms of retrenchment which I have happily instituted, will, I hope, before long successfully close the goldfield."- NB – It is anticipated after the Chairman's speech the meeting will close with prayer. – In conclusion, I beg of every body connected with mining to try and realise the true position of affairs; watch closely how the revenue is being expended, and to do everything in their power to prevent expenditure in channels where honesty of purpose forbids it. Should the efforts in this direction fail, the sooner the miners petition the Government *en masse* for the abolition of the gold duty, the better it will be.³⁶⁴

Edwin Wise Hollis, the council clerk and treasurer,³⁶⁵ responded that Cooper's letter demanded a reply for two reasons:

First, because his statements are not altogether justified by facts. Second, because while ostensibly writing in the interests of the miners, he makes that interest subservient to his own, and instead of confining his strictures to the state of the roads and the official acts of the County Chairman, he sneeringly alludes to the manner (allegedly) in which this gentleman conducts his private business. I am sure every man of honor will condemn this style of attack, and I am strongly of opinion no man would more keenly resent an insult of this character than Mr Cooper.

Hollis explained that gold duties and goldfields revenue, which Cooper claimed was 'phenomenal', totalled £429 1s 9d for the last half-year. 'I venture to assert the whole of this money would barely suffice to meet the expenditure required by' Cooper's mine. He listed some other mining roads whose maintenance required

ten times the amount at the Council's disposal, and if Mr Cooper, instead of fulminating childish tirades against the County Chairman, and disparaging innuendoes against members of the Council, would direct his invectives against the general Government for its manifest disregard of our goldfield's requirements, he would be saddling the right horse, and may peradventure do a little good; or, if he is desirous of serving himself and the mining industry, and writing what he considers the scandalous wrongs which oppress it, let him seek a seat at the Council Board, and give the members (and through them the

³⁶⁴ Letter from E.K. Cooper, *Thames Star*, 9 November 1889, p. 4.

³⁶⁵ See *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 2, p. 867.

public) the benefit of his political, financial, and administrative genius. 'Tis an awful pity so distinguished luminary should have his light only occasionally reflected in the columns of a newspaper.³⁶⁶

James Inglis, a quarrelsome Moanataiari Creek resident,³⁶⁷ interposed that neither Cooper nor Hollis had 'struck the mark'. Cooper had erected a hopper in the Waiotahi Creek before asking the council to construct a dray road to it. The council voted the funds, but when formed it was 'found to be unfit for the traffic that has to pass over it; in fact it is only fit to look at, or for a foot track in wet weather'. He blamed the county surveyor for the money being 'thrown into a mud hole'.³⁶⁸ Cooper responded to Hollis by claiming that the figures used, for the half year ending at the end of September, were 'most misleading. Could this gentleman have selected a period in the history of the Thames goldfield when mining was more depressed and the yield of gold smaller? I question it'. Figures should be provided from when the council 'first had the handling of this revenue'. Hollis was 'attempting to further throw dust in the people's eyes, by claiming I am working in this matter only for myself, and allows his weak arguments to lend help to my cause'. He asked why gold won at Thames 'be charged with work done' in nearby small fields, and claimed Hollis' letter endorsed his argument that gold duty was an 'unjust charge on the miner' and should be abolished. 'The other twaddle contained in his letter is beneath my notice'.³⁶⁹ Cooper's assistance for a parliamentary candidate nominated by the Thames Miners' Union³⁷⁰ prompted 'Old Hand' to write that it was 'well known' that the candidate's principal backer, 'a determined opponent of the gold duty', was 'a representative of the English plutocrats'.³⁷¹

³⁶⁶ Letter from E.W. Hollis, *Thames Star*, 12 November 1889, p. 2.

³⁶⁷ See *Thames Star*, letter from James Inglis, 22 October 1884, p. 2, letter from 'Observer', 23 October 1884, p. 2, letter from 'Cause and Effect' [James Inglis], 25 October 1884, p. 4, Police Court, 27 April 1891, p. 2, Police Court, 2 December 1896, p. 2, 21 February 1899, p. 2.

³⁶⁸ Letter from James Inglis, *Thames Star*, 14 November 1889, p. 4.

³⁶⁹ Letter from E.K. Cooper, *Thames Star*, 18 November 1889, p. 4.

³⁷⁰ *Thames Star*, 4 November 1890, pp. 2, 4, 6 November 1890, p. 2.

³⁷¹ Letter from 'Old Hand', *Thames Star*, 29 November 1890, p. 4.

At the beginning of December, in writing that he had 'been waiting anxiously' for Hollis to produce the figures he requested, Cooper claimed Hollis had given 'a few figures intended to misdirect the judgment of the readers', but, 'as I conjectured, the amount of gold duty and goldfields revenue' received by the council assumed 'such large proportions that it would be impossible for Mr Hollis to indicate any work on the goldfield that would justify the amount of expenditure'. He challenged Hollis

to make a showing from the books that he has access to that will be satisfactory to the contributors of the gold duty and goldfields' revenue. Figures are very stubborn things, and I would ask what can anyone say in support of the gold duty when I assert there is not a single gold mining company in the entire Thames County paying dividends?

What would the minister think?

This field has been buoyed up by tales of rich patches found years ago, assisted by people whose business it is to make and sustain a fictitious value in mining shares, and not on the merits of the mines. The mining industry is being bled to death with the charges it is called upon to bear, and it is a notorious fact that the people who are living out of those engaged in it are the very last people who will be found to acknowledge the necessity of lifting off some of its burdens.

Those who should be fostering 'the interests that should support a population' were 'as indifferent to the public prosperity as it is possible to be', as proved by the level of unemployment, the numbers seeking charitable aid, and men leaving for other countries because of 'the gloomy outlook of this place'. He would 'get up a petition' for the abolition of the gold duty, and hoped for 'the support of all those who have the welfare of the goldfield at heart. It will be the first step in the right direction to ease the shoe which is now pinching so tightly', and by making Thames mining 'attractive' might attract outside capital. He would 'be glad to enter into a controversy with Mr Hollis, or any member of the County Council, in support of the abolition of the gold duty, if they will first produce the figures I asked for'.³⁷²

'Old Chum' said 'no; decidedly no', to abolishing the gold duty, for it was 'the only means by which non residents are made to contribute to the

³⁷² Letter from E.K. Cooper, *Thames Star*, 3 December 1889, p. 3.

maintenance of roads used for traffic to their mining properties'. Why should residents bear this burden alone? It was 'absurd' for Cooper to argue that abolishing this duty was 'the panacea'. There were several causes for the decline of the field, notably lack of gold, poor terms offered to tributers, and large areas being locked up. Cooper was wrong to demand a branch road to his hoppers, 'having decided not to utilize the existing road, which would have been of less expense to himself. Mr Cooper seems to be very ignorant of local events, as he professes to be ignorant of the knowledge that we have dividend mines here', some of which 'Old Chum' listed.³⁷³ Cooper immediately responded:

When I offered to enter into a controversy with Mr Hollis or any member of the County Council ... on the abolition of the gold duty, my wish was to take a commonsense business stand, and fight the thing fairly out on its merits. I never bargained to be called upon to fight a thing with a mask on. "Old Chum" admits that local residents are not large shareholders in the mines – perfectly true – if they were they would be the first people to clamour for the abolition of the gold duty; but, as outside capitalists are expending the money in the mines, "Old Chum" is satisfied in his short-sightedness to let the industry be worked at a loss till it dies a natural death, so long as the local governing bodies have plenty of money to play ducks and drakes with.

As for terms offered to tributers in the Alburnia, they were earning 'considerably under the current wage on the goldfield. This undoubtedly he knows, but the knowledge does not awaken any sympathy with him, the miner must be taxed to death under any or all circumstances according to his lights'. As for the branch road to his mine, it had 'existed for years', and the council spent only £4 on it, whereas he had spent 'over £5000' on his property.

The gold revenue derived alone from this ground should be twenty times more than the £4 the County has so magnanimously expended, leaving altogether the gold duty out of the question, and now, in its efforts to make the former promises good, contracts are let to metal part of the Waiotahi Creek road, terminating at about the Fame and Fortune's lowest boundary. As to the authorities locking up large areas of ground without regard to the mining regulations, the Warden has to use his judgment in this matter, which is far sounder than "Old Chum's"

³⁷³ Letter from 'Old Chum', *Thames Star*, 4 December 1889, p. 4.

twaddle. I venture to say that if all the ground alluded to was thrown open to-morrow there is not a man on the Thames that would risk £5 in prospecting any of it. The Warden knows this, and he sees the only chance to get capital to work it is to give those who have gone to the expense of taking out leases a chance to look round to get capitalists to help develop the ground. I am not putting in a word for myself; my ground is more than fully manned. I make these remarks only in a spirit of fair play, and with a wish for the future prosperity of the goldfield.

After denying the letter's 'misrepresentations' about dividend-paying mines, Cooper described it as 'one tissue of nonsense, behind which he hides his cowardly head, ashamed even of his name'. He hoped that there was 'some one at the Thames yet to be found manly enough to come forward, without any *nom de plume*, to fight this important question out, if it has more than one sound side to it'.³⁷⁴

Hollis responded that, from 'the tenor' of Cooper's first letter, he could not but take it as a personal attack on the chairman and that Cooper was 'further relieving his high pressure feelings in undignified innuendoes against the Councillors'. Hollis denied being a mouthpiece for the latter: 'I wrote not as an official but as a citizen'. Cooper's second letter challenged him to publish full details about the gold duty received 'and to meet him in a controversy' about this; Hollis considered 'the tone' of his letters suggested Cooper was 'so confident of his own greatness and knowledge that he can but regard other men as fools, and their writings as "twaddle," but with strange inconsistency he gives an example of his versatile genius, in the speech he puts into the mouth of the Chairman'. Even knowing the income from gold duty and the expenditure it allowed, Cooper 'would still fail in a just and accurate conclusion': before being 'competent to form an opinion', he needed to understand the improvements made since the establishment of the field, outlined, which depended on taxation, both direct and indirect.

The gold duty as a tax is admittedly special, and therefore is considered unjust, but, unlike other forms of taxation it is expended exclusively for the benefit of the contributing industry, and therefore, though special, ceases to be unjust. It is collected without cost; it is not paid by the miner who wins no gold, but he still participates in its benefits, because the track to his claim is made out of this revenue, and it thus places the individual miner more on an equality with a company. It is the only tax upon

³⁷⁴ Letter from E.K. Cooper, *Thames Star*, 6 December 1889, p. 4.

absentee shareholders – a contribution out of their dividends, or a fraction added to their calls, in either case a trifle – for the maintenance of the roads, *which their traffic destroys*, and without which a ten times heavier payment would be exacted for the transit of quartz; and it exempts mines, batteries, and all mining machinery from local taxation.

Although the community was, mainly, supported by mining, it did not follow that tramways should ‘run quartz down gratis’ and that syndicates like the Fame and Fortune ‘should contribute nothing to local requirements’. A duty of 2s an ounce on refined gold was ‘so small a levy that it could scarcely create a perceptible margin in profit or loss, especially when the amount is liberally subsidised out of the County revenue, for the maintenance of roads’. Although indifferent to retaining the duty, Hollis believed ‘the miner would be the loser by its abolition, and the gainers, those companies whose mines are in the Borough or contiguous to the main County roads’.³⁷⁵

“Old Chum” did not apologize for being anonymous, commenting that ‘I may just assure him his importance centres in his own conceit, and that I, and the larger portion of the community, are absolutely indifferent as regards the man’. Parliament had abolished the duty for the South Island but not the North because the latter wanted it retained. Mining would continue at Thames even if overseas capitalists boycotted it. ‘Is it stupidity, or wilfulness, that made Mr Cooper say I sneered at the people who were obliged to leave the Thames?’ Cooper had distorted his meaning ‘in his usual blundering style’. “Old Chum” revealed himself to be an independent miner who paid the duty ‘most cheerfully’.

What a false statement Mr Cooper makes when he says the money was spent on the old road. It was other people criticizing the mad folly of his placing the hoppers in such a place, which necessitated the making of a roadway right on a mullock tip, which road, in addition to its not possessing a solid foundation, would be at the mercy of every freshet [sudden rise in water level after rain], that caused me to go and have a look. What a delightful and unselfish old man he is, to think that roads which have caused this community such a heavy expense to form and maintain against wear and tear, shall be allowed to be used by him for traffic without his being necessitated to pay any toll

³⁷⁵ Letter from E.W. Hollis, *Thames Star*, 9 December 1889, pp. 2, 4.

whatever, except for what they at present may require to keep in good repair.

The warden was not permitted to use his judgment about unworked ground, and Cooper's statement that nobody at Thames would spend £5 prospecting any areas thrown open was

only another proof that he has no regard to truth in making statements. I myself am spending money prospecting ground, and have been doing so for many years, and intend doing so longer. I am not the only one doing so, and – mark this – not as a paid servant for others. In concluding this letter, I would advise Mr Cooper to study his Waitekauri monument in all its bearings before he assumes the *role* of teaching others how to spend money.³⁷⁶

A 'monument' meant an unprofitable mine (though not unprofitable to Cooper, who, as 'Old Chum' had snidely pointed out, was being paid even if the mine was not producing gold).

Cooper responded by claiming Hollis must be the council's mouthpiece. 'If a clerk of mine presumed to fight my battles uninvited, I should rap him most severely over the knuckles, and call his attention to what I hired him for'. Hollis' motives were 'too transparent' and he 'fences the question at issue, and relies on misstatements being taken for the truth. His wordy letter fails to prove anything beyond this, that he has command of words, but not of common sense', and some of his arguments were mocked, his 'skeleton history' of the district being 'charmingly naïve'. As Cooper did not think anyone could prove he had 'a wrong view of the gold tax', he promised to 'go on with my petition, taking first the precaution to get the assistance of those who are actually supporting mining here, so as to do away with any undue influence being brought to bear on the wages men'. Hollis and the 'narrow-minded' council were opposed to the interests of the field. 'If any further evidence is wanted that "Old Chum" is a coward and beneath my interest, his letter of yesterday gives it, and until he consents to remove his mask, I will decline to take any notice of his or any one else's signed with a *nom de plume*'.³⁷⁷

One correspondent who supported Cooper hoped 'every miner on the field' would do likewise, but did wonder whether the banks 'would give the

³⁷⁶ Letter from 'Old Chum', *Thames Star*, 9 December 1889, p. 4.

³⁷⁷ Letter from E.K. Cooper, *Thames Star*, 10 December 1889, p. 4.

miner all the advantage of the duty'.³⁷⁸ Cooper thought the answer was 'certainly no – they could not be so blind to their own interests'. Yet as a prosperous goldfield was 'of such vital importance to them', they would 'gladly welcome any circumstance that would enhance the miners' well-doing. If by any chance such a view was not taken by them, the possessor of gold always has his remedy – buyers are numerous enough'.³⁷⁹ Hollis, after noting that Cooper had challenged him '*to a controversy on the gold duty*', wrote that in Cooper's letter 'the language of the upstart and the mean bully predominates and the subject of discussion is completely ignored. I decline to continue the controversy with one whose intellectual (?) capacity seems incapable of distinguishing the difference between cowardly abuse and manly arguments'.³⁸⁰

On the last day of the year, Cooper pleaded with Edwin Mitchelson,³⁸¹ Minister of Public Works, to abolish the gold duty, and four days later followed up their conversation by writing to him. Assuming that the duty was established to pay for the making and maintaining of goldfield roads 'when very rich finds were the order of the day', he noted that those days were 'past, the problems now is how to make low grade ore pay to work'. His experience at Thames revealed that letting local bodies spend this money meant 'the object sought has most hopelessly failed'. Instead of making roads, the duty had 'brought into life and form of jobbery and swindling which pervades the entire system of local Government and instead of the mining industry being carefully nursed and fostered' it was 'most ruthlessly bled and the exorbitant charge on its earnings' was 'expended anywhere but where' it was 'so hardly earned'. He wanted a commission to examine the council's accounts to discover how it spent this money and to see the state of the roads. As the bulk of the Thames gold was extracted from a small area centred on the Waiotahi mines, these mines required 'at least' some 'decent dray roads'. These had been 'partially formed but to call them roads in the proper acceptation of the word is an absurdity', and goldfield revenue had not been spent on these 'so called roads'. As no Hauraki companies were paying dividends, he hoped Mitchelson would 'see that to keep life in such an important industry out of which so many depend for a living abuse must

³⁷⁸ Letter from G.T. Morrison, *Thames Star*, 10 December 1889, p. 4.

³⁷⁹ Letter from E.K. Cooper, *Thames Star*, 11 December 1889, p. 2.

³⁸⁰ Letter from E.W. Hollis, *Thames Star*, 11 December 1889, p. 2.

³⁸¹ See paper on Henry Hopper Adams/

not exist' and that it was 'most necessary to sustain and promote its welfare'.³⁸²

As the Mines Department considered 'the remedy for Mal-administration by the County rests with the electors', it took no action.³⁸³ By April, Cooper had drawn up a petition, to be bound in book form, and would seek signatures from all Hauraki mining centres. It described the gold duty of 2s per ounce as 'a direct tax upon industry' and complained that 'the difficulties of paying such duty upon small quantities of gold tends to create a monopoly of purchase' by the banks, which fixed 'a basis of purchase to be adhered to' by them all.

Such duty was first imposed when rich alluvial and quartz deposits were the order of the day, and was consequently but a small tax upon the then earnings of the miner, but large earnings ceased with the rich deposits, and the problem now is how to make low grade quartz and wash dirt pay with the direct and indirect charges upon the mining industry, the languid condition of which throughout the colony, and the shyness of capitalists to embark any money on it, is evidence enough that it cannot bear the charges imposed upon it.

The 'idea' that gold duty paid to local bodies 'would furnish and maintain the roads of the goldfields has been entirely dispelled by past experience', though Cooper refrained from mentioning his own problems. The duty was 'a very high form of rates paid by the miner', who received 'no voting privileges whatever in respect of it, whilst the penny ratepayers who may be living out of the miner is entitled to all such privileges'.³⁸⁴ 'Microphone' wrote that, after reading the petition, he was 'more than ever convinced that this impost upon a producing industry should be promptly removed'.³⁸⁵ As a large number of local miners signed it, the *Thames Advertiser* warned that such a step would be a 'deliberate act of suicide' because of the loss of revenue.³⁸⁶

³⁸² E.K. Cooper to Edwin Mitchelson, 4 January 1890, Mines Department, MD 1, 92/520, ANZ-W.

³⁸³ Under-Secretary, Mines Department, to Minister of Mines, 28 January 1890; Under-Secretary, Mines Department, to E.K. Cooper, 26 February 1890, Mines Department, MD 1, 92/520, ANZ-W.

³⁸⁴ *Thames Star*, 12 April 1890, p. 2.

³⁸⁵ 'Microphone', 'General Gossip', *Observer*, 19 April 1890, p. 6.

³⁸⁶ *Thames Advertiser*, 8 May 1890, p. 2.

After a trenchant speech by one councillor, James Renshaw, a merchant,³⁸⁷ at the beginning of May the borough council voted to retain the duty.³⁸⁸ ‘An Old Tributer’ responded that tributers had ‘to pay £6 18s 8d gold duty per man each year if we make wages’, and criticized the councillors’ self-interested reasoning.³⁸⁹ Renshaw, after regretting his ‘personalities’, asked whether abolishing the duty would ‘make Mr Kersey Cooper’s road? Would he be as near to it as now?’ Renshaw could ‘understand why owners of mines should favor the abolition, but why the working men should help them is not so clear’.³⁹⁰ Cooper was quick to attack:

Mr Renshaw’s contentions are so frivolous and empty in support of the gold duty that he deserves the rough handling “Old Tributer” so justly gives him. Mr Renshaw claims “the expenditure (of the gold duty) could not be in better hands.” Ye Gods – Dean’s defalcations, and how this sagacious Councillor watched over the public’s interest in this connection should be a sufficient denial to such a theory – a governing body losing half its income at the hands of its clerk year after year, and they did not know it, so they said!

(Sir Charles Dean, formerly secretary of the borough council, had been convicted of embezzlement.)³⁹¹

And with this undeniable proof of the incompetency, and the glaring neglect of the public’s interest, Mr Renshaw and his brother workers did not even apologize or tender their resignations, but stuck tenaciously to the sweets of office. There must be something about the flavor of these sweets that the public knows nothing of. Well, hardly has this lasting disgrace finished the rounds of the papers, when another crops up in the same governing body – a boy, the son of the Borough Councillors’ turncock, and a valued friend of Cr Renshaw, has been regularly in receipt of wages furnished by the ever suffering ratepayers, whilst the boy in question has been an almost constant attendant at the High School and School of Mines. When this outrageous

³⁸⁷ See *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 2, p. 863; *Thames Star*, 27 November 1915, p. 4.

³⁸⁸ *Thames Star*, 2 May 1890, p. 2.

³⁸⁹ Letter from ‘An Old Tributer’, *Thames Star*, 5 May 1890, p. 2.

³⁹⁰ Letter from James Renshaw, *Thames Star*, 6 May 1890, p. 2.

³⁹¹ *Thames Advertiser*, 6 July 1889, p. 2, Borough Council, 9 August 1889, p. 2, 3 September 1889, p. 2.

fraud was sheathed home by our worthy Mayor, what did Cr Renshaw do? Did he move that the most drastic measures should be immediately taken to bring the culprit to justice? No; he defended the action, and other Councillors who ought to be ashamed of themselves lent him their sympathy. I judge a man by his actions and not by his professions, and to me it is very clear that the secrets of our troubles can all be traced to this fact. The members of our governing bodies have sought office not through any patriotic motives, but entirely to satisfy their selfish ones. One hopes by virtue of his office to get more trade; another wants a nice footpath round his house and garden, with the necessary concrete gutters; another wants a good road and better approach to his suburban residence; and then, with an occasional package of lollies marked "sweets of office for Councillors only" to put in their pocket, they pat another on the back and defy the public. I can't let the absurd remarks of Cr Renshaw in his letter ... go by unchallenged. He says, "I wish I could pay my taxes in the way 'Tributer' suggests on each pound of business done." Does Cr Renshaw then think he would be placed on an equal footing as a tax-payer with the miner? Certainly not! But he hopes some fools may think he would be. Mr Renshaw in his business as an ironmonger pays the taxes that fall upon a shopkeeper. He know what these are as well as what his rent and shop expenses are – in fact, if he knows his business he can determine within a very small trifle, after an experience of a number of years at the Thames, what yearly charges he has to provide for. He buys his goods and places upon such, or in a book of reference, their cost. Now, the selling price of these goods can be determined by this gentleman having reference to data in his possession, such as profitable sales of the year, charges to be provided for, and the amount of remuneration he considers he should be entitled to, and the interest charged on the capital employed in his business. If then "on each pound of business done" Mr Renshaw had a tax to pay, he would clearly make his customers pay it. There is no defence, Mr Renshaw; you might put in the plea [of] falling off of business, bad debts, &c. All business men make provision for these contingencies. My desire is that the men not conversant with business shall not be deceived by your clap-trap. You are a thriving man. Many of your old customers who have worked hard all their lives have hardly a feather to fly with. Yet if you took the trouble to investigate your books you would find you have made a good sum of money out of them. And now you, the last man in the world, have laced on record your veto against these poor men getting a better price for the gold they won. "Old Tributer" shows that the tributer does not earn the current wage of the field. This being the case, has not the man employing a quantity of hands and paying the wage of the field some claim to consideration? Mr Renshaw concludes with two questions about myself: Would

abolition of gold duty make Mr Kersey Cooper's road? Would he be as near to it as now? My answer to start with is that the Waiotahi road is a County road, not my road, but is used by a great many others as well as myself. It is in a shameful state, and will necessitate my knocking off a lot of hands for the winter. If I had the gold duty to come and go on I could put two or three men on the road all the winter, and make it passable for my carts, and not be compelled to put men out of employment. Mr Renshaw must not lose sight of the fact that the miner, unlike himself with his wares, can't fix the selling price of gold. If his gold costs him £20 an ounce, as is often the case, he has to take the 53s or 54s the Bank pays for it, and despite his hard luck Mr Renshaw and other storekeepers expect their accounts paid in full, including in many instances very large profits.

He added a postscript asking James McGowan, another councillor, and a merchant and a future Minister of Mines,³⁹² to clarify the meaning of one of his points. 'I would like to answer his letter, but I must first really understand it. Will he kindly help me in this?'³⁹³ McGowan had supported the duty, but wanted the revenue spent on goldfields roads;³⁹⁴ he did not respond, at least publicly, to Cooper's request for clarification. 'Vox' also criticized Renshaw, commenting about Cooper's road that if the council had made it 'there would be one good argument at least in favor of the duty. When the tax is abolished, Mr Cooper can make his own road out of the oppressive tax now paid to local bodies who evade their duties, and clutch at revenue with the tenacious talons of birds of prey'.³⁹⁵

Renshaw responded that Cooper had 'given his letter a wrong heading: instead of "gold duty" it should have been "James Renshaw," as it is myself that is threshed out, and not the subject referred to at all. I expected better from Mr Cooper, who must for some time have had the whole thing on his mind'. He had introduced the topic in the council 'to give a public character to the discussion', which should not be concerned with which side anyone took. He believed his stance was 'for the good of the district as a whole. It cannot be to my interest to defend anything that would be against the interests of those who are my customers. I am open to conviction, but abuse or threats are not arguments'. He asked Cooper to 'suggest a better body to

³⁹² See *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 2, p. 860; *Thames Star*, 7 May 1912, p. 2.

³⁹³ Letter from E.K. Cooper, *Thames Star*, 8 May 1890, p. 2.

³⁹⁴ Letter from James McGowan, *Thames Star*, 7 May 1890, p. 2.

³⁹⁵ Letter from 'Vox', *Thames Star*, 8 May 1890, p. 2.

whom he would like to entrust' the duty 'or who would be more likely to carry out the wishes of those who pay?' The duty was

levied on the proceeds of a special industry, in consideration of which that industry is freed from all local rates to which other industries are liable. This particular work involves an outlay in directions which but for it would make no call on the public purse. The net proceeds, without deduction, are handed to the locality in which it was raised, to be spent for the special benefit of that particular industry which had paid it, by men often largely interested in its welfare, sometime subsidized by an equal sum, if spent on works previously approved by Government. It is not paid by those who are unsuccessful, falls even lightly on those who pay most, because they only do so when they can best afford it. If the gold duty be taken away, what is to be put in its place? If nothing, then work now done would have to be left undone. If mining property is to be rated, on what basis? Who is to estimate the value of the unseen? Progressive works would have to pay before returns came in. Prospecting would be discouraged instead of encouraged; and who would benefit but those who made the rich hauls, who would be practically getting off scot free. These and other aspects of the case require thought, and no man should commit himself to abolition until he has thought them out. The difficulties to be faced if the duty is abolished seem to me far more than those attendant on paying it.³⁹⁶

'Fairplay' could not understand 'why a public question cannot be discussed through the Press without such an amount of abuse and mud slinging at public men'. Cooper was 'the champion of the Abolition party, and himself and his backing think abuse, importing motives, bounce and disrespectful letters to public bodies the proper tools to use'. Should the gold duty be removed, Cooper 'from the large area which he mines will find himself infinitely worse off than he is now'. He urged Cooper, 'if he wants to do any good for the place, to seek a seat in the County Council, and by so doing he can check any favouritism etc, if he thinks it exists. But to be always imputing motives to men who are just as straight, upright, and honest, as himself and probably more so, is neither gentlemanly nor even manly'. He was 'only a new chum comparatively, and goes in a great measure upon hearsay'; and had 'really little to complain of' as the road to his mine was 'infinitely better than most. Fight fair E.K. Cooper and Co, and don't imagine that people mean to sit down quietly under your lash and

³⁹⁶ Letter from James Renshaw, *Thames Star*, 9 May 1890, p. 2.

abuse'.³⁹⁷ 'Scrip' considered the issue was being 'brought forward more for personal than public benefit'. Cooper owned a mine in which no New Zealander could acquire interests, 'yet he asks the New Zealander to abolish a tax which will benefit foreign capitalists and does not shew as how he will benefit us. Are we to be taxed to keep roads in repair for foreign capitalists and have our gold taken away from us?' Cooper must explain what benefits removing the duty would provide and what would replace it.³⁹⁸ Cooper ceased writing letters to newspapers for a while, prompting 'Vox' to comment that 'the principal parties to the discussion' had 'either made a treaty of peace, or called a truce'.³⁹⁹

One Thames resident, 'Blastus', gave his perspective in late June:

The agitation at first sprang from the over-bearing conduct and blind policy of the County Council. Mr E.K. Cooper, who owns one of the largest and most valuable mines in the field, having by the employ of much labour, and at very great expense, ascertained the resources of his mine, applied to the Council to repair a road, so that he might get his quartz to the battery. The Council peremptorily refused, and Mr Cooper of course expostulated. The underlings of the Council, in reply to these expostulations, spluttered such vulgar abuse upon him that honest citizens blushed with shame and indignation.

Mr Cooper got up a petition to the Government to have the gold duty abolished. The petition met with most liberal success. The County and Borough Councils shook in dire alarm, fearing lest their principal source of revenue should be cut off. The Borough Council held a meeting, and great speeches were made against the petition – such speeches as put intelligence to the blush, and cover local politics with contempt. From this meeting there sprang a newspaper controversy, in which Mr Cooper, with the help of some local scribes, drove with unsparing severity most unwelcome and condemnatory facts to the hearts of his adversaries.

The main 'champions of the local bodies' were 'wealthy storekeepers'. After criticizing their arguments, 'Blastus' attacked the 'fossilized scoundrelism' of the local bodies, 'a museum of mummies embalmed in trickery and political corruption'. He considered it 'an enigma' that some

³⁹⁷ Letter from 'Fairplay', *Thames Advertiser*, 9 May 1890, p. 2.

³⁹⁸ Letter from 'Scrip', *Thames Advertiser*, 9 May 1890, p. 2.

³⁹⁹ Letter from 'Vox', *Thames Star*, 15 May 1890, p. 2.

leading council members who were also mine managers opposed the removal of the duty, thereby inflicting

a wrong upon investors in mining property, and consequently upon the horny-handed labouring swain. They have opposed Mr Cooper's claim (who is a generous employer of labour, a gentleman in his demeanour, a friend and a brother to those under him), with every paltry expedient which mean jealousy could invent, and overbearing pomposity and arrogance could enforce.⁴⁰⁰

Seddon presented the petition to parliament in July; it had been signed by seven legal managers, 58 owners and directors, 343 miners, and two members of the Thames County Council and a member of the Ohinemuri one.⁴⁰¹ Cooper wanted goldfield roads controlled by road boards elected by miners, revenue to repair them being raised by taxing those mines using them.⁴⁰² The Goldfields and Mines Committee, which considered the petition on 21 August, by which time it had 498 signatures in addition to Cooper's, recommended that 'effect be given' to it and that the government 'be urgently requested to proceed' with the Gold Duty Abolition and Mining Property Rating Bill.⁴⁰³ Two days later, Cooper wrote that he was pleased abolition was likely. 'In fairness to those who signed' his petition, he provided an extract from a letter he had written to Alfred Jerome Cadman, one of the two Thames parliamentarians: 'If stronger claims than those already set forth are wanted that the gold duty should be abolished, I will give you one', and he hoped Cadman would see Thomas Fergus, Minister of Mines, and Seddon, who represented the West Coast miners.

Silver has risen very considerably in value on the world's markets; naturally you would say our gold and silver bullion called gold here is worth more money. Yes; it is to the bankers. But they have not altered their combination price to the poor struggling producer. We are not getting a cent more for our gold than we got when silver was worth 1s less per ounce. Until the duty is removed and the difficult restrictions of sale are done

⁴⁰⁰ Letter from 'Blastus', *Observer*, 28 June 1890, pp. 17-18.

⁴⁰¹ *Thames Star*, 19 July 1890, p. 2.

⁴⁰² *Thames Star*, 14 July 1890, p. 2.

⁴⁰³ 'Goldfields and Mines Committee', *AJHR*, 1890, I-4, p. 1.

away with, such as passing entries, paying duty, &c, &c, we shall remain at the mercy of the Banks.⁴⁰⁴

A week after its first recommendation, the committee repeated that the bill should proceed.⁴⁰⁵ On the same day as the second recommendation was carried, the local parliamentarians, Cadman and William Fraser, the former warden, spoke in the House of Representatives. Whilst Fraser supported the bill, Cadman pointed out that the Hauraki district was not unanimous on the issue and that goldfield residents should decide whether to abolish the duty.⁴⁰⁶ Cooper promptly sent a telegram to both Seddon and Fergus:

Miners here are most incensed by the action of Messrs Cadman and Fraser. Pray make no compromise making abolition of gold duty permissive in North Island. It is offering a premium to corruption and jobbery. Our electoral roll is stuffed for the coming election, and hardly an owner or gild mining company has a vote. The old associates of the notorious Dean are already at work. Is it possible that the Government in these serious times refuse justice to the industrious class? The late rise in silver has given our Thames gold fourpence an ounce more value, yet the Banks have not altered their combination price.⁴⁰⁷

On 2 September the Wellington correspondent of the Thames evening newspaper reported ‘some amusement’ amongst ‘goldfields members’ of parliament at Cooper’s telegram, commenting that he seemed to have chosen Seddon ‘as his representative, to the exclusion of the local members’. Cadman told this correspondent that he did not agree with Seddon’s ‘proposal to tax unproductive mining properties, and increase the miners’ right fee from 5s to 10s, in order to recoup the local bodies for the loss of the gold duty’. He wanted miners to consider the proposals, adding that the telegram was ‘the outcome of a letter from Mr Seddon to Mr Cooper, which Mr Cooper ought now to feel himself in honor bound to make public’. Fraser pointed out that the bill proposed to rate both claims and machinery and, whilst raising the miners’ right fee would be ‘very foolish’, by ‘inserting a

⁴⁰⁴ Letter from E.K. Cooper, *Thames Star*, 23 August 1890, p. 4.

⁴⁰⁵ ‘Goldfields and Mines Committee’, *AJHR*, 1890, I-4, p. 2.

⁴⁰⁶ *New Zealand Parliamentary Debates*, vol. 69, 27 August 1890, p. 276.

⁴⁰⁷ E.K. Cooper to Richard John Seddon and Thomas Fergus (Minister of Mines), n.d., printed in Wellington Correspondent, *Thames Star*, 2 September 1890, p. 2.

permissive clause' the people could elect local bodies that would 'give effect to their wishes one way or the other'.⁴⁰⁸

At the request of a *Thames Star* reporter, Cooper provided the letter he had received from Seddon expressing 'very great pleasure' that the Goldfields' Committee had 'reported strongly in favor of' his petition and recommended the government proceed with its bill.

The only dissentient on the Committee was Mr Cadman, the member for Coromandel. I am at a loss altogether to understand why he persistently opposes the removal of this unjust and obnoxious tax, or why the miners and those who invest in gold mines should suffer injustice simply because it might for a short time disarrange the finance of the local bodies. Had the goldfields' members been united this tax would have been abolished years ago. On behalf of the miners and those interested in the gold mines of the South Island, I tender you sincere thanks for the very practical way taken in showing that the tax is obnoxious on the North Island goldfields, notwithstanding the assertions made to the contrary by your representatives.⁴⁰⁹

Their statements prompted Cooper to send a telegram to Fergus alleging that 'our members have thrown the miners over to further the interests of a few, the result of which may become very serious for the "industry" '.⁴¹⁰ Two days later, he sent another telegram: 'Cadman & Fraser's contentions about miners rights are frivolous it is claptrap no miner working for wages or tributing holds a miners right the Thames roll is stuffed with residents the local Govt servants & people that can be convinced'. In the 'most important riding', Waiotahi, containing over 30 claims, no miners were on the roll. 'The roll is stuffed so to insure another three years reign of abuse & virtually the gold mining industry from which all the revenue & employment comes has no representation'.⁴¹¹ Fergus replied that 'too much opposition' prevented applying the Act to the North

⁴⁰⁸ Wellington Correspondent, *Thames Star*, 2 September 1890, p. 2.

⁴⁰⁹ R.J. Seddon to E.K. Cooper, n.d., printed in *Thames Star*, 2 September 1890, p. 2.

⁴¹⁰ E.K. Cooper to Thomas Fergus, 31 August 1890, Mines Department, MD 1, 92/520, ANZ-W,

⁴¹¹ E.K. Cooper to Thomas Fergus, 3 September 1890 (telegram), Mines Department, MD 1, 92/520, ANZ-W; reprinted, with punctuation added, in *Thames Star*, 3 September 1890, p. 2.

Island,⁴¹² and when the bill was passed two days later it was ‘permissive’ about the North Island, meaning it would apply only if councils requested the duty’s abolition.⁴¹³ Cooper announced he would renew his demand that it be abolished for the North Island ‘at the next favourable opportunity’.⁴¹⁴ As an indication of Cooper’s continuing links with Seddon, in May 1891 he accompanied him on an inspection of Waihi mines.⁴¹⁵

THAMES MINING, 1890 ONWARDS

Now living in Thames, Cooper recorded his occupation as ‘mine owner’.⁴¹⁶ In 1889 he bought the Privateer, at Waiotahi Creek, later included in the Joker, which he acquired at the beginning of the following year.⁴¹⁷ He sent samples of Fame and Fortune ore to his backers in England,⁴¹⁸ and in March 1890 paid £800 for the Caledonian Company’s battery, of 20 head of stamps.⁴¹⁹ The following month it was reported that ‘Cooper’s leader’, on the Euston level, contained picked stone; 67oz of melted gold was obtained from six loads. A reporter he personally showed through the mine, ‘of which the public seldom hear much except occasional bare results’, was impressed:

As we entered the mine about 9 o’clock and did not emerge until 1 o’clock, it may be inferred that the workings are both numerous and extensive. Comparisons, as a rule, are invidious, but truth requires it should be known that this mine is opened up in a way that cannot be said of any other, with one or two exceptions, such as the Waiotahi. The Fame and Fortune is being systematically

⁴¹² Thomas Fergus to E.K. Cooper, 3 September 1890 (telegram), Mines Department, MD 1, 92/520, ANZ-W.

⁴¹³ *New Zealand Parliamentary Debates*, vol. 69, 5 September 1890, pp. 577-581.

⁴¹⁴ *Thames Star*, 6 September 1890, p. 4.

⁴¹⁵ J.B. McAra, *Gold Mining at Waihi 1878-1952* (Waihi, 1978), p. 68.

⁴¹⁶ *Thames Supplementary Electoral Roll, October 1890*, p. 1; *Thames Electoral Roll, 1893*, p. 12.

⁴¹⁷ Thames Warden’s Court, Register of Claims 1886-1888, no. 1614, BACL 14397/17a; Register of Licensed Holdings 1888-1892, folio 54, BACL 14355/2a, ANZ-A; Warden’s Court, *Thames Advertiser*, 24 January 1890, p. 2.

⁴¹⁸ For example, *Thames Star*, 28 December 1889, p. 4.

⁴¹⁹ *Thames Advertiser*, 29 March 1890, p. 2, 22 May 1890, p. 2; H.A. Gordon to Minister of Mines, 1 June 1890, *AJHR*, 1890, C-3, p. 35.

and legitimately worked. No sacrificing prospecting for dividends, or picking the eyes out of the mine with Mr Cooper. The levels are being driven and lodes opened up so that the benefit will be reaped in future, should the lodes prove rich or profitable. Matters are being so ordered that operations may be carried on efficiently and cheaply in time to come. And there is every reason to believe that the mine will prove highly remunerative: firstly, because of results already realized by Mr Cooper; secondly: because of the appearance of the numerous lodes and their surroundings; thirdly: because of the mine being in the heart of the choicest portion of the field, and the excellence of returns therefrom long anterior to Mr Cooper's advent; fourthly, because, taking in such a considerable area of the favourite locality, it would be strange if energetic prospecting did not disclose at least one first class patch. On one boundary is the Moanataiari, and on another the Alburnia, each of which has a dividend record, probably amounting to hundreds of thousands, whilst the Cambria, distant only a few minutes' walk, has paid £70,000 or £80,000 to the fortunate shareholders within the past five years. Of course mining here partakes largely of the lottery, but all persons acquainted with the locality will be constrained to admit that Mr Cooper has an excellent chance of drawing a £50,000 prize from the lucky bag.

The reporter listed the former claims now included in these 55 acres, and gave elaborate details of the workings on the three main levels: the Balmoral, Golden Age, and Euston. Including battery hands and carters, 54 men were at work, and Cooper anticipated employing 70. 'About £700 a month' was being spent, but crushings had been 'irregular, likewise the returns'.⁴²⁰ Another reporter was 'pleased with the highly satisfactory manner in which the various works have progressed since his former inspection, and the success with which they have been attended'. About 300oz of gold had been obtain that month. Once the mine was connected by an aerial tramway to the Caledonian battery 'regular and substantial returns should shortly be coming to hand, and the mine become reproductive'.⁴²¹

As Cooper had failed to get the council to repair the road to his mine, he 'set an example that might be followed with advantage by some other folk', the *Thames Advertiser* considered. 'A portion of the road near his mine being bad, he has had a considerable quantity of fascines laid and covered

⁴²⁰ *Thames Advertiser*, 18 April 1890, p. 2.

⁴²¹ *Thames Star*, 18 April 1890, p. 2.

over, thus improving the road very much'.⁴²² In May, Cooper wrote to the council:

I hope if the Council are going to do anything to the Waiotahi Road they will do it with this fine weather. If they won't I shall knock off 40 men next pay day and work my ground as lots of other mines are worked on the field, by protection, until the sun makes roads for us. I have a better excuse to go to the Warden with than the very thin one of "going to float a company in London."

Councillor [Thomas Aitken] Dunlop moved that the letter be returned to the writer and he be asked to state his wishes to the county in official terms. This looked like trying to get at the Warden through the Council.

The letter was duly withdrawn.⁴²³ (Dunlop was a leading mine manager.)⁴²⁴ Cooper in another submission asking the council to improve the Waiotahi road explained that during winter he intended to take 25 loads daily to his battery, and commented it should be called 'Cooper's road, as he had made his own road from the mine to the hopper' and had spent £20 on it recently. The council agreed to maintain it.⁴²⁵ The following day, 'Fairplay' described it as one of the best mining roads.⁴²⁶

In May the considerably improved Caledonian battery was re-opened as the Fame and Fortune battery.

The formal opening took place in the presence of a number of gentlemen interested in mining. The whole plant has been completely overhauled, the building having been enlarged, a specimen stamper erected, two new stamper boxes put in, new tables and blanket streaks provided, while new buddles have also been constructed. The battery now consists of 21 head of stampers and 16 berdans, and is in splendid order, being one of the most efficient plants on this field. Water is used as a motive power, and when the stamps were set in motion everything was found to work as smoothly and satisfactorily as could be desired, and Mr

⁴²² *Thames Advertiser*, 18 April 1890, p. 2.

⁴²³ County Council, *Thames Advertiser*, 8 May 1890, p. 2.

⁴²⁴ See *Observer*, 'Thames', 17 November 1894, p. 23, 11 November 1905, p. 4, 16 May 1908, p. 5, 23 May 1908, p. 5; *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 2, pp. 479, 866; *Thames Star*, 11 May 1908, p. 2.

⁴²⁵ Thames County Council, *Thames Advertiser*, 8 May 1890, p. 2.

⁴²⁶ Letter from 'Fairplay', *Thames Advertiser*, 9 May 1890, p. 2.

Cooper was the recipient of the hearty good wishes of all present for the future success of the mine and plant. There are at present about 80 loads of quartz awaiting treatment at the battery, and should the roads be kept in good order, Mr Cooper expects to keep the plant going continuously.⁴²⁷

When attempting to repeal the gold duty, Cooper was also arguing with officials over importing mining machinery. Although an editorial described the infringement as ‘small and unimportant’, a principle was involved; all gratings for batteries were imported from Victoria, and as an integral part of these plants were exempted from customs duty. ‘We were greatly surprised, therefore, to learn’ that recently Cooper had been ‘mulcted by the authorities in Auckland’ before he could obtain his gratings. As there were no grounds for levying this tax, it anticipated that following Cooper’s appeal, through Cadman, to the government, a refund would ‘be at once authorised’. It printed Cooper’s telegram to Cadman:

See the Minister of Mines. The Government profess a desire to foster mining, and offered to remove the duty on mining machinery, yet the Auckland Customs always make difficulties. They are now attempting to charge me 20 per cent *ad valorem* [‘in proportion to estimated value of goods’]⁴²⁸ duty on gratings imported from Victoria – on one gross of gratings four guineas. Imperative instructions should be given to facilitate clearing the Customs of anything belonging to the mining industry.⁴²⁹

As because of his ‘vigorous protect’ the levy was dropped, the newspaper considered other battery owners ‘were under an obligation to him’. The attempt to levy duty had been made ‘because he imported them in his own name, and the Customs officers may therefore have had a doubt whether they were intended for mining or private purposes’.⁴³⁰

In June, Gordon reported that since work commenced in August 1888 1,146 tons had been crushed for 1,809 ounces of gold. ‘The whole of the ground is full of string-like veins and leaders of auriferous quartz, similar to those found in the Waiotahi Mine’, adjoining, and Cooper had been ‘working on a number of these’. A large lode from six to seven feet thick had been

⁴²⁷ *Thames Star*, 21 May 1890, p. 2.

⁴²⁸ *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Current English*, 5 ed. (Oxford, 1964), p. 19.

⁴²⁹ Editorial, *Thames Star*, 4 August 1890, p. 2.

⁴³⁰ *Thames Star*, 5 August 1890, p. 2, 7 August 1890, p. 2.

tested, producing an average of £1 8s 11d per ton, 'which ought to pay for working a lode of this dimension'. A 'large amount of work' had been done recently repairing and extending old levels, and a low level was being driven to open up the mine 150 feet below the existing workings. Being 'thoroughly satisfied with the value of their property' the syndicate had purchased the Caledonian battery and proposed to connect it by a 60-chain aerial tramway.⁴³¹ Wilson gave additional details about the 53 miners repairing and extending levels, improving the ventilation, and driving the new low level from Waiotahi Creek to become 'the main adit-level'.⁴³² Gordon was pleased with the revitalizing effect on the goldfield. 'The discoveries made by Mr Cooper in ground which was for years considered to be worked out cannot fail to attract attention and cause mining to be carried on with more energy, and in a more systematic way'.⁴³³ However the new low level, called the Fame and Fortune, would produce 'very little bullion'.⁴³⁴

In August, a mine manager complained that Cooper 'was tipping the mullock from his low level into the Waiotahi creek in front of the Pinafore road and hopper. The effect would be in the event of a fresh that the whole of the *debris* would be carried on to the road'.⁴³⁵ The following month, Cooper wrote to the press regretting that no account had been published of the council's discussion about charging for water used by batteries.

I was anxious to find out which of the County Councillors was desirous to increase the burdens already borne by the Thames miners by adding to the cost of crushing. Though the matter has been kept very quiet, it is of sufficient public importance to be ventilated, and I propose to let a little daylight into it.

He provided details about how the basis of charging had changed, without notice, meaning an additional daily charge of 4s, and quoted his letter to the chairman of the council dated 8 September:

⁴³¹ H.A. Gordon to Minister of Mines, 1 June 1890, *AJHR*, 1890, C-3, p. 35.

⁴³² George Wilson to Under-Secretary, Mines Department, 17 April 1890, *AJHR*, C-3, p. 146.

⁴³³ H.A. Gordon to Minister of Mines, 1 June 1890, *AJHR*, 1890, C-3, p. 36.

⁴³⁴ Downey, pp. 125-126.

⁴³⁵ County Council, *Thames Star*, 7 August 1890, p. 4.

In reference to your Council's alteration in the charge for water, I think at least you should have given me notice that you intended to make this alteration. I have caused Mr Paterson to measure the nozzle, and by any table he cannot make 2 1/2 sluice heads of it. However, I now beg to give you notice that I intend to alter the nozzle for less water, at the same time I commence to-day to run my battery only eight hours in the twenty-four.

The following day he received a letter from James Monteith McLaren, the former mining inspector who was now the council engineer,⁴³⁶ requiring him to fix smaller nozzles.

You must know that in the meantime I had seen Mr McLaren on the street, and he told me I had better not say anything about it, or I might be charged for the water I had used and not paid for. This is absurd. I have paid for every drop of water I have used, and given the Council their own charge for it. I also saw Mr Hollis on the street, and asked him what it meant. He referred me to "the Act." What would some people in New Zealand do if there were no Acts of Parliament to hide behind? However, so far my nerves have sustained no shock but what they could easily get over; but yesterday (Friday) I was fairly astounded. I met the Chairman of the County Council, and approached him in the same friendly way I have been accustomed to do ever since I have known him, but to my surprise on the mention of water it was like showing a red rag to a bull. He asserted, without wishing to reason, that if I used the water I had a right to pay for it, and that a man who tampered with the water was liable to a £50 penalty, and when I asked him if he thought I had tampered with the water, he said it looked very much like it. The nozzle that was in use when I bought the battery has never been removed till last Tuesday, when it was substituted by a smaller one, of which due notice was given to Mr [John] Law [foreman of the water race],⁴³⁷ and I consider it an outrage that on account of a charge being determined upon by the County Council as to the charge of water to certain batteries, whether through the difference of two engineers' measurements or some other reason, that dishonesty should be imputed to a comparative stranger at the Thames who is doing nothing worse than employing a large quantity of labour and paying his way regularly with foreign capital. Is this the form of encouragement foreign capitalists are to receive at the hands of

⁴³⁶ See *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 2, p. 867.

⁴³⁷ See *Thames Electoral Roll, 1890*, p. 20; *Thames Advertiser*, advertisement, 21 October 1891, p. 3 27 November 1891, p. 2, 7 October 1892, p. 2, 6 April 1898, p. 4, 19 December 1898, p. 3.

the local governing bodies, and does the quantity of gold being won at the Thames say miners can afford to pay more for crushing? I say beware! Don't abuse your power, Councillors, or you might lost the substance you covet and only have its shadow left to contemplate.⁴³⁸

The following day, two letters criticized him. 'Waiotahi' asked whether it was true that he had 'over *two tons* of blasting powder stored in a hut on the Waiotahi creek road? If so, I would direct the attention of the authorities to the great danger incurred by such a reckless action'.⁴³⁹ Cooper immediately replied, 'for the information of the public, and not for a person who is ashamed of his name', that the charge was incorrect:

I have a little over half a ton stored in a proper magazine approved of by the Mining Inspector and situated on the Fame and Fortune mine, some distance from any road. I would like to know the name of this snake in the grass called "Waiotahi," and for that reason I will bet him a guinea that he dare not publish it and that of his informant.⁴⁴⁰

The second letter, from McLaren, was undiplomatic:

Gently, my dear Kersey, do go gently! You may remember in the course of the conversation alluded to in your letter of last night's STAR, you expressed great detestation at the line of conduct of a certain individual who, you declared, was an enemy of yours, because "he did not fight fair," but did so only through other people, and not "face to face like a man." Now, my dear boy, these are your own words, but what must you think of yourself when I point out that you are now doing the very thing you profess so much to dislike in others! Not one of the County Councillors had the slightest knowledge of my intention to measure the water consumed by the various machines. Why then go for them, and that in a manner you detest so heartily, viz: through another party? Why not go for me, "face to face like a man," and not for others. To use your own motto, "fight fair," my boy, "fight fair." As regards the water question, the simple fact, as acknowledged by yourself, that you are now using a smaller nozzle to drive your machinery tells its own tale, and conclusively shows that you were formerly using a larger nozzle than was requisite. From this it is apparent that it was time I did my duty, "to take your

⁴³⁸ Letter from E.K. Cooper, *Thames Star*, 15 September 1890, p. 4.

⁴³⁹ Letter from 'Waiotahi', *Thames Star*, 16 September 1890, p. 2.

⁴⁴⁰ Letter from E.K. Cooper, *Thames Star*, 17 September 1890, p. 2.

measure.” You are quite aware that had I found you were using less water, instead of more, your charges would have been reduced accordingly, and in fact, on this and other kindred points, you expressed yourself thoroughly satisfied with the justice of my action, because you had found that “I had dealt with all machine owners alike.” You thus see what a treacherous thing memory is. Again, did I not point out to you that you were most likely using too large a nozzle, and recommend you to put in a smaller one, for which less would be charged? Does that look like trying to take advantage of you, or increase the charges? You forget these little points. Truly, as I have said, “memory is a treacherous thing.” I have no objection to your making as much political capital as ever you like, but not at my expense, or that of others through me. Take my advice and stick to your own motto and “fight fair.” Go for me if you like, “face to face like a man.” “Barkis is willing.”⁴⁴¹

Cooper professed to be ‘amused and astonished’ at this ‘childish letter’, having thought McLaren was the ‘servant’, but if indeed he ranked ‘above the Chairman, I sincerely regret that I addressed’ the latter ‘at all’.⁴⁴²

The controversy over storing blasting powder in his own magazine continued into the following month, when Cooper wrote that he was ‘astonished’ that

the unfriendly feeling against foreign capital has extended from the County Council to the Harbor Board, after all the professions that have been made by these bodies as to what concessions they would make if they could only get foreign capital expended on the goldfield. Don’t forget the old adage, Councillors, “You can tread on a worm till he turns on you.” The statement read by the Secretary of the Harbor Board as to the amount of powder I am receiving, and the childlike supposition as to the quantity I am consuming, speaks of the great mind Mr [Thomas Cook] Bayldon [the harbourmaster]⁴⁴³ possesses, to whom I am indebted in a great measure for much undue annoyance in this matter. If I am only to use the quantity of powder the Harbor Board’s talented Secretary surmises I consume, it will be necessary for me to discharge at least fifty men. Does Mr [Joseph Lewis] Walton [a grocer and councillor],⁴⁴⁴ who takes upon himself the responsibility of fathering the statement of the Secretary of the Harbor Board, think this is desirable? Would he and his brother

⁴⁴¹ Letter from J.M. McLaren, *Thames Star*, 16 September 1890, p. 2.

⁴⁴² Letter from E.K. Cooper, *Thames Star*, 17 September 1890, p. 2.

⁴⁴³ See *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 2, p. 865; *Thames Star*, 27 December 1919, p. 2.

⁴⁴⁴ See *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 2, p. 868.

Councillors give work to the men thus set free? Echo says not a single one. That being the case, Mr Walton, your attention is best employed selling tea and sugar. Would you like me to draw the attention of the police to the quantity of paper you have in store as an element of danger to the neighbourhood, for should the rats get at the matches, the paper might be set on fire to the danger of Block 27. The mining industry, out of which the inhabitants of the Thames are all living either directly or indirectly, is suffering with far too much interference. We are too much governed, and the people who are supporting the mining industry with money are continually subject to persecution. As a member of the Harbor Board I will give Mr Walton a matter to investigate. In July I was charged by the Board wharfage on 25 cases of dynamite. Mr C[harles] Short [a carter]⁴⁴⁵ took upon himself to pay Mr Bayldon this charge on my account, but I can't acknowledge its correctness. I have never used a case of dynamite since I have been at the Thames. Would not the Secretary be better employed in attempting to keep his accounts accurately than in trying to induce the Sergeant of Police to prosecute me for storing powder on the Fame and Fortune mine, a right I possess by virtue of the covenants of my lease? And if an attempt is made to deny me this right I will enforce it by law. In consequence I must give Mr Bayldon, who has had so much to say and to do in the matter of my storing and using powder, a word of advice:-

When I was a boy I am sure I have read
 Of a Frog who so envied an Ox,
 That he swelled his inside till his features grew red,
 And a squash ended Froggy Ferox.

If you follow that Frog in his hopeless attempt
 Colossal in shape to appear,
 'Tis perfectly certain you won't be exempt
 From the grief which cut short his career.⁴⁴⁶

Bayldon denied interfering unreasonably with Cooper's work and complained at his 'most unwarrantable attack' and 'the treat in his doggerel verse'.⁴⁴⁷ 'Junius' responded in detail to Cooper's claim that his lease gave him a right to store as much powder as he wished: 'nothing but ignorance,

⁴⁴⁵ See *Auckland Weekly News*, 4 August 1910, p. 24; *Diamond Jubilee of the Ohinemuri County, 1885-1945: Souvenir and Historical Record* (Paeroa, 1945), pp. 65, 69.

⁴⁴⁶ Letter from E.K. Cooper, *Thames Star*, 9 October 1890, pp. 2-3.

⁴⁴⁷ Letter from T.C. Bayldon, *Thames Star*, 10 October 1890, p. 2 [not in PapersPast, but in original hard copy].

or presumption, could induce him to make such an assertion'. Clauses from the Act were cited, and Cooper, 'assuming you have ready this carefully', was asked whether he agreed he had no right to store powder without written permission and being subject to 'severe restrictions'. 'Junius' did not believe Cooper, 'or any other individual who claims to have introduced foreign capital, can act in violation of the law, whether local bodies are, or are not, willing to make concessions; or has a right to evade the payment of any dues or charges properly belonging to such local bodies'. Cooper's taking 2,500lb of powder to his mine was 'in direct violation of the law', and he was told to read another clause with 'a direct reference to your case, and will be instructive, if not amusing. I beg of you, when you have done so, not to whimper about the way in which foreign capitalists are treated'. After providing the details, he addressed Cooper directly:

You have read them! what do you think of them? My good fellow let well alone. You have been well treated, better than you deserve, for your constant endeavor since you have been here is to give the local bodies and general public as little as you can out of the large profits you are making from your mine. The former have ever been willing to assist the establishment of legitimate enterprise. An infant needs support, but the vigor of maturity has no claim. They have assisted you, but with the ingratitude born of an intensely selfish nature you return evil for good. The petition you sent to Parliament *re* the abolition of the gold duty affords a fair example. The consequence was an increase in the miner's right fee to the Southern miners, and had your wishes been carried out, the wealth of your mine would have contributed little, and the burden would have been shifted from the shoulders of the wealthy to those of the poor.⁴⁴⁸

In April 1891, the *Thames Advertiser* cited Cooper as an 'example of energy and pluck'; all acquainted with him were 'free to acknowledge his very unusual earnestness and enterprise', and it hoped his 'pluck and perseverance' would be rewarded.⁴⁴⁹ Early in June, Gordon reported on the previous 12 months' work:

Since the present company or syndicate commenced reworking the ground it has been shown that it is a valuable property. There are several lodes running through the ground, the largest of which is termed the Golden Age, which is from 10ft to 11ft in

⁴⁴⁸ Letter from 'Junius', *Thames Star*, 11 October 1890, p. 4.

⁴⁴⁹ *Thames Advertiser*, 29 April 1891, p. 2.

thickness. This lode contains low-grade ore; but when there is such a large body of stone very low-grade ore can be made to pay for working, especially where there is a crushing plant belonging to the same proprietors.

When he visited, ore was being extracted from 'Fox's Leader, the Golden Age Foot-wall Leader, and on Cooper's Leader'. A new low level was being driven, but Gordon believed there was 'no doubt that the best way to get into and work the ground would be from the adit-level on the Moanataiari Mine'. By extending this by from 400 to 500 feet 'this mine would be a great deal more valuable, as the quartz could be got out and sent to the battery at a cheaper rate, besides the greater depth of backs it would give'. A particular difficulty in winter was 'the state of the roads. All the quartz from his mine has to be conveyed in drays down the road alongside the Waiotahi Creek for about 60 chains. The road gets cut up greatly', making carting more expensive. Cooper was considering erecting an aerial tramway, 'which no doubt would lessen the cost of transit, and thereby be the means of making lower-grade ore pay for working'. During last year 3,922 tons had yielded 3,314oz 19dwt of gold. The battery had been repaired, at a cost of £400.⁴⁵⁰ Fifty-five men were employed.⁴⁵¹ The warden, Henry William Northcroft, noted it as one of the 'newer mines which have contributed materially to the gold returns'.⁴⁵² Wilson gave details of the work done, mainly concentrated on driving the main adit, in 1,175 feet by May.⁴⁵³

In July, the *Thames Advertiser* explained Cooper's scheme for extending the Moanataiari low-level tunnel, which was dependant on government assistance.⁴⁵⁴ That month, he told the Minister of Mines, Seddon, that his English 'friends' had spent £30,000 on the Fame and Fortune and the Jubilee. Needing more capital, he was going to England to encourage them to contribute further amounts.⁴⁵⁵ In September the Bank of

⁴⁵⁰ H.A. Gordan to Minister of Mines, 8 June 1891, *AJHR*, 1891, C-4, pp. 31-32.

⁴⁵¹ *AJHR*, 1891, C-4, p. 33.

⁴⁵² H.W. Northcroft to Under-Secretary, Mines Department, n.d., *AJHR*, 1891, C-4, p. 147.

⁴⁵³ George Wilson to Under-Secretary, Mines Department, 4 May 1891, *AJHR*, 1891, C-4, p. 153.

⁴⁵⁴ *Thames Advertiser*, 11 July 1891, p. 2.

⁴⁵⁵ E.K. Cooper to R.J. Seddon (Minister of Mines), 8 July 1891, Mines Department, MD 1, 91/566, ANZ-W.

New South Wales recorded Cooper as being ‘our principal gold customer’ who had ‘sold us nearly £6,000 from the “Fame and Fortune” mine’ after spending ‘large sums’ developing it.⁴⁵⁶ A history of mining recorded that ‘up to the end of 1891 the company did fairly well, mining on its own behalf 7,016 tons of ore, which yielded 6,150oz bullion, valued at £16,144, while 43 tons were won by tributers, which yielded 55oz bullion, valued at £133. Practically the whole of this output came from the upper levels’.⁴⁵⁷

In early July, in requesting that Henry Willetts, an old Thames and Waitekauri miner,⁴⁵⁸ receive a mine manager’s certificate, Cooper argued that some of those granted certificates were ‘far less worthy’. Willetts had ‘been mining now 40 odd years’, and had the Fame and Fortune ‘opened up and better timbered than any mine on this Field’. Cooper’s English ‘friends’ would not ‘entrust their money’ to the mining inspector’s friends who had received these certificates. As Willetts was

denied a certificate I have been compelled to appoint one of our Mining Inspector’s friends John Northey as manager – a man who would ruin me if I let him do as he wants. He is incapable of keeping books, writing correctly in the authorized diary and as for surveying he does not understand the use of a scale.

Now here I am saddled with an extra needless charge on my mine in the fact of my having run behind £4000 since November, but to secure myself in the sight of the law I am compelled to do so particularly when I am absent as I leave shortly for England to see my shareholders who are getting so discontented with the varied obstructions that have been put in my way – that they write: “we don’t feel inclined to send any more good money after bad.”⁴⁵⁹

At the beginning of August, he repeated the request, arguing that he could not ‘possibly leave New Zealand’ before Willetts was given one. Northey ‘could not possibly have in charge I would rather throw up the

⁴⁵⁶ Bank of New South Wales, Inspectors’ Half Yearly Report, 7 September 1891, Thames, p. 196, Acc. No. 102, Box 2, Westpac Archives, Wellington.

⁴⁵⁷ Downey, p. 126.

⁴⁵⁸ See Marriage Notice, *New Zealand Herald*, 7 January 1874, p. 2; Paeroa Warden’s Court, *Auckland Star*, 17 September 1895, p. 5; Paeroa Warden’s Court, *Thames Star*, 23 October 1895, p. 2; Death Certificate of Henry Willetts, 1902/4607, BDM.

⁴⁵⁹ E.K. Cooper to R.J. Seddon (Minister of Mines), 8 July 1891, Mines Department, MD 1, 91/566, ANZ-W.

ground – I am running behind enough now, it would be a great deal worse if he held the ribbons’,⁴⁶⁰ meaning ‘holding the reins’.⁴⁶¹ He was told to wait until the new Mining Bill became law, as until then there was no power to give Willetts as certificate of proficiency.⁴⁶² (It is not known why he was so critical of Northey, an experienced Thames miner.)⁴⁶³

In his long letter to Seddon in July, Cooper noted that the government recognized ‘the importance of preventing the miners and Capitalists leaving New Zealand and I hope now you will as our now ruling power acknowledge and rectify some of our injustices we are smarting under’. He was ‘satisfied the Government must institute a careful enquiry into the Mining Industry. The miners have not near the causes of complaint that the Capitalist has – and unless the rings are broken up’ the population of Thames, ‘about 4600 people mostly old men women & children’, would be ‘of such a description no man breathing would be able to utilize it further – our young able bodies men are leaving weekly and the material we shall have left us soon to work with would not make a Caledonian pay’, a reference to an early Thames bonanza.

You must understand the mining industry at the Thames depends entirely upon outside Capitalists to work the mines. The people of the Thames do not support mining they only live out of it – and the fallacy of allowing the local Governing bodies such power as to enable them to impede and obstruct a person not belonging to their set must be recognized by the Government.

He claimed that ‘the water race entrusted to the care of’ the county council was ‘most outrageously abused some batteries pay little more than half what I have to pay for my water supply per Sluice head’. The borough was

⁴⁶⁰ E.K. Cooper to R.J. Seddon, 1 August 1891, Mines Department, MD 1, 91/566, ANZ-W.

⁴⁶¹ See Partridge, p. 973.

⁴⁶² Under-Secretary, Mines Department, to R.J. Seddon, 14 August 1891, Mines Department, MD 1, 91/566, ANZ-W.

⁴⁶³ See Thames Correspondent, *New Zealand Herald*, 27 December 1880, p. 6; Warden’s Court, *Thames Advertiser*, 17 July 1891, p. 2, 16 October 1896, p. 4; *Thames Star*, Warden’s Court, 20 March 1896, p. 3, Warden’s Court, 8 June 1897, p. 2, letter from John Northey, 11 August 1900, p. 2, 9 March 1911, p. 2; *Auckland Star*, 13 September 1929, p. 6; Death Certificate of John Northey, 1910/4579, BDM.

allowed a supply far beyond its right – thus it sells water to industries and as it takes its supply a long way up the race from the Batteries in the summer our Engineers, Fire-wood cutters all the Butchers with their Sausage machines &c are running full blast – whilst the Batteries are hung up – at the same time there are something like eleven direct connections with the water race supplying Chinamen gardens a dairy and private people – now I have made it my business to find all this out – and if the Government will only institute an enquiry – it will at once see that the water race can be made to produce £500 a year more revenue – by treating all people alike – that a system of jobbery exists here that is fatal to the introduction of foreign capital and to the retaining of any of our good miners who all clear out to fields of fair play and no favour.

He promised to send Seddon ‘a scheme to extend the Moanataiari low level which will increase the present area of our now Thames Gold Field to more than double its present size, and I hope you will give it the attention it deserves’. The plans for it were ‘not out of the surveyors hands yet’. Gordon, the department’s inspecting engineer, was ‘most favorable to the ideas but there has been only talk so far for years on this matter. You shall have a feasible scheme’.⁴⁶⁴

In August the council sued him for £100 for water supplied.⁴⁶⁵ Also in that month, it was announced that, as the Fame and Fortune did not have favourable prospects, he had suspended work, dismissed all his workers, and planned to visit England shortly ‘on business in connection with the mine’.⁴⁶⁶ In November work continued making connections, necessary because of the gas coming from the reef; prospects remained good.⁴⁶⁷ Also in that month he provided Seddon with ‘a further proof of how prejudicial it is to extend so much power to local governing bodies where the interests of an industry is at stake’. He had purchased the ‘wreck’ of the Caledonian Company’s battery in March 1890 ‘for £800 with a lease of nearly 7 years to run of the allotments and Building of £40 per annum. I put the building into creditable order and painted it’. James Alfred James (a prominent and

⁴⁶⁴ E.K. Cooper to R.J. Seddon, 8 July 1891, Mines Department, MD 1, 91/566, ANZ-W.

⁴⁶⁵ Thames Magistrate’s Court, Plaint Book 1890-1892, entry for 27 August 1891, BACL 13737/2a, ANZ-A.

⁴⁶⁶ *Thames Advertiser*, 18 August 1891, p. 2.

⁴⁶⁷ *Auckland Star*, 27 November 1891, p. 4.

controversial mine manager)⁴⁶⁸ was ‘put on the books’ as owner of part of the ground ‘for electioneering purposes’, namely ‘to keep me off the roll, as he was one of the ring’s followers’. For the year ending 30 June James paid £1 0s 2d in rates; Cooper received his account ‘too late to appeal against the assessment’, although the borough council claimed he had received it in time. The council had assessed the annual value of his allotments, battery and buildings as £130 in lieu of the previous £8, and other rates also increased. ‘Here is one of the advantages foreign capital has shown it’. He had believed the battery building, like mining machinery, was exempt. ‘Again the water rate is a hideous outrage the Boro water pipes are in no way connected with the Battery which receives its entire supply from the County Main’. He hoped Seddon would not only ‘show me my way out of this difficulty but to take power out of hands who only abuse it’.⁴⁶⁹ The under-secretary responded that Seddon considered ‘the case appears a hard one’ but wondered why Cooper had not objected; he suggested he appeal to the council not to enforce payment, and to consult a solicitor if it refused.⁴⁷⁰ In the following March the *Observer* noted that he had ‘been showing up the members of Thames County Council as petty tyrants who mercilessly sue outsiders for monies due while they themselves are in arrears’.⁴⁷¹

The mine was ‘paying well’ by late December.⁴⁷² In July 1892, Gordon repeated that, if the Moanataiari tunnel were extended straight ahead, it ‘would go through the Fame and Fortune ground, and head towards Karaka Creek’, but others wanted to shift its direction to the north to cut more reefs.⁴⁷³ Wilson reported that for ‘the greater part of the year the owners

⁴⁶⁸ See ‘Red Cap’s Thames Letter’, *Auckland Free Lance*, 4 October 1879, p. 3; *Te Aroha Mail*, n.d., reprinted in *Thames Advertiser*, 22 January 1883, p. 2; *Thames Star*, 9 October 1889, p. 2, 10 October 1889, p. 2, 11 October 1889, p. 2, 12 October 1889, p. 2; *Observer*, 22 June 1889, p. 20, 19 October 1889, p. 17; Supreme Court, Judge’s Notebooks, Conolly J, Banco, 1889-1895, pp. 34-38, 41, BBAE A304/141, ANZ-A; Supreme Court, *Auckland Weekly News*, 8 February 1890, p. 9, 15 February 1890, p. 19.

⁴⁶⁹ E.K. Cooper to R.J. Seddon (Minister of Mines), 20 November 1891, Mines Department, MD 1, 91/984, ANZ-W.

⁴⁷⁰ Under-Secretary, Mines Department, to E.K. Cooper, 8 December 1891, Mines Department, MD 1, 91/984, ANZ-W.

⁴⁷¹ *Observer*, 5 March 1892, p. 6.

⁴⁷² *Thames Advertiser*, 28 December 1891, p. 2.

⁴⁷³ H.A. Gordon to Minister of Mines, 28 July 1892, *AJHR*, 1892, C-3, p. 35.

worked the mine, but latterly the whole has been let on tribute'.⁴⁷⁴ Although Cooper had 'afforded profitable employment to a large number of men for several years past', Gordon reported the returns for the past year being 'not nearly so good as for the year previously'. The owners, employing 30 men, had crushed 1,928 tons for 981oz 12dwt, and ten tributers had crushed 43 tons for 54oz 14dwt. Gordon considered there was 'still a large quantity of gold in the ground, and richer stone may be cut at any time'. Most of the gold had been extracted from the upper levels, and the low level adit, 'constructed at great expense, did not open out payable ground at the deep levels'.⁴⁷⁵ Willetts had been appointed mine manager, as Cooper intended 'devoting his entire time to the up-country districts'.⁴⁷⁶ In November, as he could not pay the water supply charges he asked his syndicate for funds. By then, the mine was 'just about holding its own', employing eight wages men and three battery hands; 22 tributers were mining as well.⁴⁷⁷ For most of 1892 to 1895, 'owing to the falling-off in the supply of payable quartz, the mine was given over largely to tributers, but the company continued to do a little work of a prospecting nature'; during these years 1,071 tons yielded 3,113oz, valued at £10,199.⁴⁷⁸

In June 1893, Gordon described the Fame and Fortune as a 'company or syndicate of gentlemen in England, represented by' Cooper, who was in England trying to raise more capital 'on this and other properties'. Before leaving on this quest, he had 'not been for some time successful in getting sufficient gold to meet the expenditure', and had 'let the mine in sections on tribute', employing only four men himself compared with 32 tributers. His miners were 'principally opening up the mine and prospecting', but managed to crush 49 1/2 tons for 25oz, whereas the tributers obtained 1,791oz 19dwt from 949 1/2 tons.⁴⁷⁹ An average of 54oz 6dwt per man had been obtained during the past year.⁴⁸⁰ Northcroft noted that the tributers

⁴⁷⁴ George Wilson to Under-Secretary, Mines Department, 14 May 1892, *AJHR*, 1892, C-3A, p. 11.

⁴⁷⁵ H.A. Gordon to Minister of Mines, 28 July 1892, *AJHR*, 1892, C-3, p. 43.

⁴⁷⁶ *Thames Advertiser*, 15 June 1892, p. 2.

⁴⁷⁷ *Thames Advertiser*, 3 November 1892, p. 2.

⁴⁷⁸ Downey, p. 126.

⁴⁷⁹ H.A. Gordon to Minister of Mines, 8 June 1893, *AJHR*, 1893, C-3, p. 53.

⁴⁸⁰ *Thames Star*, 11 August 1893, p. 4.

had worked 'some rich patches, but of limited extent'.⁴⁸¹ In late July, a cable announced that the Fame and Fortune Gold Mining Company of New Zealand had been registered in London, with a capital of £50,000. The *Thames Star* was sure this news would 'be learned with feelings of satisfaction throughout the district'.⁴⁸² Cooper was then able to send £65 4s 10d to the council for water supplied to his battery.⁴⁸³ 'Obadiah' wrote, in November, that the planned extension to the Moanataiari tunnel had been postponed until the return of 'our Kersey' with the required funds. 'Let us hope that he will arrive soon and often with the money bags, and that those duffers who did their best to run the little man out will be ashamed of their doings'.⁴⁸⁴

When he returned in the following February, Cooper explained that the new English syndicate had 50,000 £1 shares.⁴⁸⁵ By May the mine was being 'vigorously worked' and he announced that the new company would conduct mining 'on a large scale'.⁴⁸⁶ Two months later, Gordon described his mine as one of the three principal ones at Waiotahi.⁴⁸⁷ It was being worked principally by 12 tributers, who obtained 799oz from 338 tons; his seven miners crushed 50 tons for 48oz 9dwt.⁴⁸⁸ In October he told Seddon that 'the out-look here is really very serious – we can't get away from the fact our big reefs at the Thames won't pay to take in the face and the rich little stringers and droppers in the walls of them are so far apart that the game is not worth the candle'.⁴⁸⁹ At the end of the year he complained that the council's engineer had deprived him of water for the battery. 'I cannot think that your Council would instruct one of its servants to treat me as Mr McLaren has done, and I will be glad if you will investigate the matter, and

⁴⁸¹ H.W. Northcroft to Under-Secretary, Mines Department, 19 May 1893, *AJHR*, 1893, C-3, Appendix 1, p. iv.

⁴⁸² *Thames Star*, 28 July 1893, p. 2.

⁴⁸³ *Thames Advertiser*, 7 September 1893, p. 2.

⁴⁸⁴ 'Obadiah', 'Shares and Mining', *Observer*, 11 November 1893, p. 23.

⁴⁸⁵ *Thames Advertiser*, 15 February 1894, p. 3.

⁴⁸⁶ H.E. Kenny to Under-Secretary, Mines Department, 4 May 1894, *AJHR*, 1894, C-3A, p. 2.

⁴⁸⁷ H.A. Gordon to Minister of Mines, 24 July 1894, *AJHR*, 1894, C-3, p. 38.

⁴⁸⁸ H.A. Gordon to Minister of Mines, 24 July 1894, *AJHR*, 1894, C-3, p. 39.

⁴⁸⁹ E.K. Cooper to R.J. Seddon, 28 October 1894, Mines Department, MD 1, 04/251, ANZ-W.

see that I am not subjected again to such treatment'. The council simply received his letter.⁴⁹⁰

In the 12 months to May 1895 a large amount of prospecting was undertaken but 'did not lead to any success', and Cooper reported a loss of £3,500. Twenty wages-men had crushed 570 tons for 239oz 7dwt, whereas six tributers had a much better return of 190oz 2dwt from 67 tons.⁴⁹¹ Gordon, who considered it to be one of only two mines at Waiotahi doing much work, noted the decreasing yield. 'Much credit' was due to Cooper for taking up this ground after it had been abandoned for some years, and there was evidence of a 'large quantity of gold-bearing stone left', but although in his first two years he had obtained a 'good profit', the company had 'not met with the success they deserve'.⁴⁹² In June, Cooper sold the Joker to it for £10.⁴⁹³ Two months later he went to England once again to float 'some country, which, although prospected and giving very handsome results, has never been properly worked', a reference both to his Thames property and to a new venture at Wharekiraupunga. He was given presents by his Thames and Waitekauri miners, and the *Thames Advertiser* believed he had 'the good wishes of every one who knows him. He has fought a long uphill fight and there is not a soul on the field who would envy him of any of the good fortune he so richly deserves, and which we have every reason to believe he will soon be blessed with'.⁴⁹⁴

In the 12 months to June 1896, 131 wages-men and 37 tributers extracted 6,274 tons of quartz and 1,088 tons of mullock for the disappointing return of 2,835oz 16dwt.⁴⁹⁵ Gordon noted that it was not being worked 'at anything like a profit'. Two 'very large lodes', the Waiotahi and the Golden Age, traversed his ground; the former, when cut in the lower level yielded an average of 7dwt per ton, which was unprofitable 'with the system adopted for the transport and treatment of the ore'. The manager reported 'that nothing less than 1oz of gold would pay, as the quartz had to be carted a considerable distance to the crushing-battery, yet this lode is

⁴⁹⁰ *Thames Advertiser*, 6 December 1894, p. 2.

⁴⁹¹ George Wilson to Under-Secretary, Mines Department, 21 May 1895, *AJHR*, 1895, C-3A, p. 10.

⁴⁹² H.A. Gordon to Minister of Mines, 24 July 1895, *AJHR*, 1895, C-3, p. 47.

⁴⁹³ Thames Warden's Court, Transfers and Mortgages 1894-1895, no. 54882, BACL 13964/1a, ANZ-A.

⁴⁹⁴ *Thames Advertiser*, 7 August 1895, p. 2, 8 August 1895, p. 2.

⁴⁹⁵ H.A. Gordon to Minister of Mines, 17 June 1896, *AJHR*, 1896, C-3, p. 53.

fully 12ft thick, having a value of about £1 per ton'. Gordon repeated his opinion that the 'most economical' working would be to extend the main Moanataiari level.

The Golden Age has been laid bare for a great length on the foot-wall side, but none of the lode itself has been worked, all operations being confined to droppers or stringers from the foot-wall into the country-rock, and some of these gave very good returns for working.

Small quartz-mining properties will not now give sufficient remuneration for the large expenditure required to develop them. Ground will have to be held in large areas, and a considerable capital found to properly develop them, and to erect a more suitable class of machinery.... There is no doubt that the Fame and Fortune Mine could be more economically worked in conjunction with the Moanataiari Mine, and the day is probably not far distant when steps will be taken to accomplish this operation.⁴⁹⁶

Late in the year Cooper sold his property to the Whitehead and Sultan Company (occasionally the Whitehaired Sultan),⁴⁹⁷ an English firm formed in August 1895 'to deal exclusively with West Australian mines' which it had abandoned after their 'complete failure'. As its chairman informed shareholders later in the year, the directors believed the Fame and Fortune showed 'such excellent promise' that they unanimously recommended its purchase. They had acquired the Fame and Fortune, Fame and Fortune Extended, Joker, and Pinafore, a total of just over 71 acres. 'Right in the heart of the Thames field, the property was 'easily accessible', and a 40-head battery 'of the most up-to-date standard' was being constructed. Three experts gave 'highly favourable' reports, notably Cooper:

Up to date there has only been £12,850 capital subscribed to open up so large an area of ground, purchase the newly-acquired property, construct all buildings, furnish the necessary plant, and acquire a 21 stamper battery, properly equipped. Whilst opening up the property to the present time we have won 8807oz 15dwt of gold, which shows an average of over 1oz of gold to the lode treated by the most primitive of batteries, and I felt sure that as much gold was lost as was won, owing to our inability to save the

⁴⁹⁶ H.A. Gordon to Minister of Mines, 17 June 1896, *AJHR*, 1896, C-3, p. 52.

⁴⁹⁷ For two versions of its name, see *Auckland Weekly News*, 12 December 1896, p. 50, and London Correspondent, *New Zealand Herald*, 29 September 1898, p. 6.

float gold and that contained in the base metals. The proceeds of the gold, amounting to over £20,000, along with the £12,850 capital above referred to, have all been devoted to the further development and equipment of the mine. Our late developments have been entirely directed to opening up our new areas, and more particularly to driving a low level to unwater what is known as Dunlop's shaft. This has been a very costly and tedious undertaking, but the results fully warrant the heavy expenditure, as assays taken from the big reef are most satisfactory.

He gave details of results that gave values per ton of £2,203 1s 3d and £164 16s 11d.

It only remains to make the necessary ventilation connections to enable these promising quartz reserves to be worked advantageously, when I fully anticipate it will be proved we have in hand one of the Thames Bonanzas. In other portions of the mine where work is progressing the prospects are decidedly good. It has been an acknowledged fact that the Thames batteries constructed so many years ago have only been saving a small percentage of the ore treated, and to avoid these serious losses steps have been taken to acquire a freehold battery site adjoining the County water race, on which is being erected a plant with all the most modern appliances for saving gold. A further saving will also be made by the construction of a wire tramway to connect the mine with the battery.... With an up-to-date plant to treat the ore, connected by a wire tramway with the property, the mine cannot help but be an unqualified success. The extraction from the mine in the past has averaged about one ounce of gold per ton.... I may further add that the ore bodies in the mine above the level of the present lowest adit should, at a low estimate, contain at least three millions of tons of quartz, half of which should be payable.

The chairman considered it to be 'a conspicuous example of a property starved for lack of capital'. Containing many reefs, this 'immense property' would have 'no difficulty' in keeping the new battery 'constantly employed', and an even larger battery would be required later. The price was £6,750 in cash and £35,000 in fully paid up shares. 'The vendors had agreed to subscribe 5000 shares at par, so that the company would only be out of pocket to the extent of £1750 in cash. These were highly favourable figures, which could not have been obtained but for the depressed state of the markets' in London and because 'the vendors' option expired at the end of the month'. With crushing expected to commence as soon as the battery was

erected it was expected calls would 'be at reasonable intervals, and in smaller amounts' than the initial one of 5s, which had been cancelled. The purchase was agreed to, with only two dissentients.⁴⁹⁸

Whilst spending 18 months in England during 1895 and 1896, Cooper could not control the mine's working.⁴⁹⁹ In January 1897, the ground, now of just over 71 acres,⁵⁰⁰ became the property of Hauraki Golden Age Mines; the London Board of Trade had approved the change of name from Whitehead and Sultan.⁵⁰¹ When the Discoverers' Finance Corporation 'launched' the new company, Cooper clearly retained faith in his mine, being one of the largest shareholders, with 'over 10,000 shares'.⁵⁰² He told an English journalist that, having obtained 'large amount of working capital', he expected that 'with good, careful, and economical management' it would pay dividends.⁵⁰³

Upon his return to Thames, when asked by a reporter about the plans he responded that 'so far as the supervision of the mine is concerned, he had now nothing to do with it', future developments and erecting machinery being controlled by Argall, the consulting engineer. 'As far as I am aware' the new company intended to erect a 40-stamp battery 'with all the latest gold-saving appliances', connect the mine and plant with a tramline, 'and if possible endeavour to conduct future operations on a gigantic though economical basis'. Developing the mine was 'well advanced', and his visit on that day had revealed 'fine ore reserves in sight, and also a splendid looking quality of ore at grass'. Asked if he was interested in the future of the mine, he responded: 'I should think so, considering that I am one of the largest shareholders'.⁵⁰⁴

⁴⁹⁸ *British Australasian*, 5 September 1895, p. 1365; *Financial Times*, n.d., reprinted in *Thames Star*, 9 December 1896, p. 2; *Auckland Weekly News*, 12 December 1896, p. 50.

⁴⁹⁹ *Thames Advertiser*, 13 March 1897, p. 2.

⁵⁰⁰ George Wilson to Minister of Mines, 29 June 1897, *AJHR*, 1897, C-3, p. 67.

⁵⁰¹ *British Australasian*, 28 January 1897, p. 167.

⁵⁰² *Thames Advertiser*, 26 March 1897, p. 3; London Correspondent, *New Zealand Herald*, 29 September 1898, p. 6; Special Commissioner, 'Interview with Mr E. Kersey Cooper', *British Australasian*, 4 February 1897, p. 240.

⁵⁰³ Special Commissioner, 'Interview with Mr E. Kersey Cooper', *British Australasian*, 4 February 1897, p. 242.

⁵⁰⁴ 'Interview with Mr Kersey Cooper', *Thames Star*, 26 March 1897, p. 4.

The new company ‘instituted considerable prospecting effort’.⁵⁰⁵ To June 1897, its 15 miners drove on and opened up reefs on four levels, and planned to erect a new battery of 40 stamps and an aerial tramway. Only 27 tons were crushed, for another disappointing result, 6oz 3dwt, a return of £16 5s 11d.⁵⁰⁶ In October, Cooper told an English reporter that when he inspected the mine when revisiting New Zealand

I found that rich ore had been discovered in the mine, more particularly in the newer portions which I acquired before the property was sold to the present company. I am satisfied that if this property is carefully managed, that when the new battery with its wire tramway connection with the mine are completed, it will pay handsomely. In considering this mine, one has to take into calculation the rich bonanzas that have been found in reefs traversing the property, and remain to be found. We have over 3,000ft on the line of the Caledonian Reef, which produced the richest patch of gold so far found in the world.⁵⁰⁷

In February 1898, a ‘great transformation’ in its working was reported, with the new 40-head mill and the aerial tramway from the low level hoppers being erected. Cooper was described as one of the Thames field’s ‘staunchest supporters and believers in’.⁵⁰⁸ During the 12 months to May, 30 men cleaned out and drained adits, remade roads, and drove prospecting tunnels; £7,962 was spent on the battery and £1,712 on erecting the aerial tramway, but no ore was crushed.⁵⁰⁹ Warden Bush reported that the new tramway was hardly used because nothing payable was found.⁵¹⁰ Because of a shortage of funds, all work ceased in late 1898.⁵¹¹

A special general meeting was held in late August 1898. There was ‘no public announcement’ of it, ‘circulars being sent to the shareholders direct’. Robert Smith, the chairman, raised several issues: ‘the circumstances under which the property was purchased’; the engineer’s report, ‘which must be a great disappointment to all’; how fully paid shareholders would benefit if

⁵⁰⁵ Downey, p. 126.

⁵⁰⁶ George Wilson to Minister of Mines, 29 June 1897, *AJHR*, 1897, C-3, p. 67.

⁵⁰⁷ *British Australasian*, 28 October 1897, p. 1926.

⁵⁰⁸ *Auckland Star*, 15 February 1898, p. 2.

⁵⁰⁹ George Wilson to Minister of Mines, 12 May 1898, *AJHR*, 1898, C-3, p. 54.

⁵¹⁰ R.S. Bush to Under-Secretary, Mines Department, 1 June 1898, *AJHR*, 1898, C-3A, p. 3.

⁵¹¹ Downey, p. 126.

the company was liquidated; and ‘the desirable policy to pursue’. Smith listed five ‘eminent’ New Zealand experts, including Cooper, ‘late manager of the Fame and Fortune Company’, who had reported favourably on the property. An English mining engineer named Patterson,⁵¹² whose first name was not given, replaced William Henry Argall,⁵¹³ one of those who had reported, as mine manager, and immediately examined the workings to discover the value of the ‘large ore bodies’ opened up.

It is plainly evident that the past system of working the mine has been driving through the country in search of patches. Thousands of feet of driving has been done in the hope of finding rich ore. The ore tonnage that has been taken from the mine, and the amount of gold extracted, is very small indeed.

The battery reports from May 1890 to March 1895 made clear that the value of the ore had been ‘made up of specimens. When no specimens had been obtained, the results have been poor. The returns from 1890 to 1895 show a continual falling-off in value, and the amount of the ore that was considered worth crushing’ decreased, until ‘finally the mine was worked by tributers with poor results’. The ‘only conclusion’ possible was ‘that the eyes have been picked out, and any ore of anything like a payable nature has been gutted out, and the only chance is to get into new ground and look for more payable ore’. Patterson concluded with damning words:

After spending nearly three months on the mine, the only conclusion to come to is that the large ore bodies are of a grade too low to be worked, that all rich ore has been taken out by the old company, and nothing but ore worth a few shillings remain; that is, unless developments reveal further patches. The mine is an extremely risky and speculative proposition, and the success of the enterprise depends entirely on finding further patches. The prospects of finding these are at present small.

In another report Patterson referred to Thames mining being at its lowest ebb ever, with no mine paying expenses. Smith then quoted Patterson’s 15 April report:

The several places that have been mentioned by Mr Kersey Cooper, as likely ones for gold, are being examined, but I should

⁵¹² See *Thames Star*, 1 September 1898, p. 2.

⁵¹³ See *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 2, p. 464.

like to point out that the credit is chiefly due to that gentleman for the creation of the new mill, and it is very late in the day to advise where to prospect for payable ore, should it exist. The mine foreman, [William] Willetts,⁵¹⁴ states that when the mine was sold to you, Mr Cooper had not the faintest idea where to look for pay ore, and that practically matters were at a low ebb.

The directors recommended that instead of winding the company up the mine should continue to be let on tribute. Smith claimed the board had 'been misled' by Cooper's report just before the new company purchased it. After one director wanted it developed to determine whether Argall's optimism about their '70 acres of enormous ore bodies which had hardly been touched' was justified, Cooper told the shareholders that after Patterson's report was received he had written a response, and 'proceeded to read a long document, going into the history of the property. He said the returns from the mine were quite equal to an ounce to the ton in his time. Mr Patterson had not done so well, and it was not likely he would, because he had no local experience'. Although 'accused of being responsible for the erection of the new battery', he had merely given the directors the tender price for it. 'As for the eyes being picked out of the mine', its working plan showed 'they had stoped about 250ft to 300ft on the Golden Age. All they had to do now was to work on the levels, and they would get plenty of gold. It was a fine property, and it could not be spoilt by Mr Patterson's report'. After the company's solicitor commented that 'the directors were largely influenced by' Cooper's report in deciding to purchase the property, the meeting resolved that an attempt be made 'to carry out an arrangement with the vendors, by which further calls may be avoided, and in default, that the mine be let on tribute'. A London correspondent later interviewed Cooper about the meeting:

He said: "The notice of the meeting was so vague that I was quite unprepared to answer the outrageous statements. You see by the chairman's remarks that my figures are discredited: it is said that the returns were not half what I said they were. As a matter of fact, if anyone will examine the New Zealand Government reports on the mine, 9104 1/2 tons of quarts were crushed up to the year 1896, from the time it was taken over by me and my friends, for a return of 9200oz 3dwt. The statement that no work was done in the mine from the year 1892 is utterly fallacious. Unfortunately, I

⁵¹⁴ See Warden's Court, *Thames Advertiser*, 27 July 1894, p. 3, 31 August 1894, p. 3, 14 September 1894, p. 3, 25 October 1895, p. 3, 5 June 1896, p. 1.

am at a disadvantage, for all my books and papers relating to the mine are in New Zealand. I am, however, now going busily through all the reports and documents I can find here, and it is a hundred to one on me. The attack by the company's solicitor was merely the word-splitting of a clever lawyer as against a miner. As to Mr Patterson's report, he had simply depended, as, of course, he must have done, on others for the history of the mine. He puts the returns of the Fame and Fortune at about half what I do; I can prove what I say to be right. The fact is, part of our crushing took place at the old Cambria and Bull's battery, and of these Mr Patterson appears not to have heard. So incensed was Captain [meaning mine manager] Argall at the treatment he received, that he sent in his resignation at once. Apparently, the directors of the company think that reports will get gold, and that work is quite a secondary consideration. But outside of all this, the directors of the Hauraki Golden Age, who purchased the Fame and Fortune property, do not seem a very happy family. For some time they have been flirting with the Moanataiari Company for amalgamation, but there was a stipulation for a payment in cash, and then things did not go on so comfortably. The shareholders in the old company are calling upon the present company to expend their uncalled capital in developing the property, and the old Fame and Fortune shareholders have now made a proposition to take the mine back, so that developments are likely to occur in the not distant future. I can prove," Mr Kersey Cooper added, "every word I have said, and every statement I have made with regard to the Fame and Fortune. The property has been worked 10 years, and how can people judge of it on insufficient data?"⁵¹⁵

This correspondent reported that after the meeting Cooper had 'taken up the cudgels of the past reputation of the mine, declaring 'his intention with, if anything, greater earnestness than ever, of seeing the fight through. He is circularizing the shareholders – over 1,000 in number he finds by reference to Somerset House – with a statement for the purpose of substantiating his reports'.⁵¹⁶ When interviewed by the *British Australasian* before leaving England, he gave details of his 'long letter' to the shareholders in response to Patterson's 'absurd statements'. Claiming he 'was denied a hearing' at the August meeting, 'in self-justification' he had 'deemed it advisable to give his version of the working of the mines,

⁵¹⁵ London Correspondent, *New Zealand Herald*, 29 September 1898, p. .6.

⁵¹⁶ London Correspondent, *New Zealand Herald*, n.d., reprinted in *Thames Advertiser*, 10 November 1898, p. 4.

especially when he had charge of one of the properties, the Fame and Fortune', his 'main contention' being that 'what applies to one field can have no bearing upon the other'. To mine a reef that was 'uniform in character' was

comparatively a simple operation, and the set principles upon which Mr Patterson works might apply better to a coal seam, but when he faces operations on a goldfield like the Thames, of volcanic formation, he faces a scientific problem which he cannot toy with. If he will be true to himself, and to those who have employed him, he will acknowledge the value of local experience, which to gain must be a question of years, and the cost of which no one body of shareholders should be called upon to pay.⁵¹⁷

As the company abandoned the mine, Cooper returned to save it 'from being totally wrecked'.⁵¹⁸ Immediately after arriving in Thames in January 1899 he took charge of it on behalf of a new syndicate, Fame and Fortune Gold Mines.⁵¹⁹ According to Cooper, when the mine was sold to Hauraki Golden Age he and the other vendors had received no cash, only 35,000 paid up shares. When the company refused to provide the promised working capital of £40,000, he and 'some of his gamest shareholders got the property back by paying the debts (£2,300)'. He considered it was useless to take legal action to compel the company to complete its contract, and revealed the battery to be worth £70 in 1900, having earlier been £150.⁵²⁰

At the end of April 1899, James Coutts, the mining inspector,⁵²¹ reported an aerial tramway was being erected and the battery completed 'when some monetary difficulty arose and all work was stopped, and the mine was then protected' until work resumed under Cooper's management.⁵²² 'With a view of working it more economically', he 'extended

⁵¹⁷ *British Australasian*, 6 October 1898, p. 1843.

⁵¹⁸ E.K. Cooper to Minister of Mines, 27 February 1899, Mines Department, MD 1, 01/80, ANZ-W.

⁵¹⁹ *Thames Advertiser*, 4 January 1899, p. 1, 11 January 1899, p. 3; *Thames Star*, 20 January 1900, p. 4.

⁵²⁰ *Thames Star*, 31 March 1900, p. 4.

⁵²¹ See *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 2, p. 186.

⁵²² James Coutts to Under-Secretary, Mines Department, 29 April 1899, *AJHR*, 1899, C-3A, p. 46.

the Point Russell level into it, and connected with the Gladstone level'.⁵²³ He was driving on the reef from the Moanataiari mine and prospecting in the Golden Age section. A trial crushing in March of 225 tons taken from the mullock heap had produced 30oz 1dwt, a return of £81 2s 8d. Although the mine was still protected, ten men were employed.⁵²⁴ Wilson's report, written just over a week later, noted the area as being just over 91 acres, gave Cooper 'and others' as the owners, and Henry Willetts as the manager. Once the battery was completed, no ore was treated because the company ceased work; once Cooper restarted mining he renovated 'the old crushing-mill' and would resume crushing 'at an early date. The mine is well opened up, six different levels being in working use, and it is intended to extend one of the levels of the Moanataiari Mine in order to prospect the Golden Age reef at a greater depth'.⁵²⁵

Good prospects were forecast in early June 1899,⁵²⁶ and later that month Cooper's 'friends' formed a new company. The *Thames Advertiser* commented that, considering 'how this property has been reported on by so-called experts, and the short time' Cooper had 'been in possession of it for the old shareholders, no small praise is due to him for the masterly way in which he has taken hold of his old mine'. It was 'doubly gratifying' to know that the development work he had instituted had 'such good promise'.⁵²⁷ Cooper said the mine's success 'should be guaranteed, when it is considered that the property has been well reported on by experts'.⁵²⁸ On 6 July, it was reported that in the past month 210oz 19dwt, worth £563 11s, was extracted.⁵²⁹ Developments were 'progressing very favourably' under his management, with more reefs being cut and regular crushings; 'altogether the prospects of the mine are good, and appear to be improving daily'.⁵³⁰

In August, Cooper, hoping to work the mine 'to greater advantage', was supervising contractors and wages men. Encouraging prospects were seen in reefs cut, and it was expected he would be able to add another shift at the

⁵²³ Downey, p. 126.

⁵²⁴ James Coutts to Under-Secretary, Mines Department, 29 April 1899, *AJHR*, 1899, C-3A, p. 47.

⁵²⁵ George Wilson to A.J. Cadman, 12 May 1899, *AJHR*, 1899, C-3, p. 53.

⁵²⁶ *Thames Advertiser*, 9 June 1899, p. 2.

⁵²⁷ *Thames Advertiser*, 26 June 1899, p. 1.

⁵²⁸ Thames Correspondent, *Auckland Star*, 24 June 1899, p. 5.

⁵²⁹ *Thames Advertiser*, 6 July 1899, p. 2.

⁵³⁰ *Thames Star*, 6 July 1899, p. 1.

battery prior to working it continuously.⁵³¹ In the following January men were doing more prospecting, and two months later he was employing a ‘considerable number of miners’ and driving on a new reef.⁵³² Also in April he complained to the minister, James McGowan, that he and his partners ‘have continuously lost money and all our workings constructed at great cost belong to our landlord who allows nothing for permanent fixtures or improvements it is a case of, you are done with, clear out, next turn’. Shortly he would have ‘prospected the top of my mine [at] Punga Flat end and unless successful could throw off ground enough to man what I fancy most, with twelve men’, meaning he would not require a certificated mine manager but ‘would have to confess to my co-partners that there was a lot of ground not worth holding’.⁵³³ The following month, the *Thames Star* noted that during the past year, under his management, there had not been a single accident, though probably the main credit should have gone to his mine manager, Willetts, who was replaced in that month by William Connon,⁵³⁴ who was still manager in August 1903 before becoming manager of other mines.⁵³⁵ At a farewell presentation, Willetts ‘expressed the hope and belief that Mr Cooper would shortly strike a patch of gold’.⁵³⁶ Coutts reported that, after taking over the mine again, Cooper had ‘first carefully examined the different sections of the property, with a view of discovering the best way of systematically developing the mine, and has since done a great amount of prospecting’, consisting of more driving, which he described in detail. ‘A good deal of work has been done on the hanging-wall leader of the Golden Age reef, and from here a payable quantity of ore was obtained’. Ore taken from two winzes on one reef averaged ‘a little over 1oz to the load’, and plenty of ore was in sight. An average of 26 men were employed, and 860 tons produced 699oz 5dwt, valued at £1,889 8s 3d.⁵³⁷

In early July it was reported that 132 loads, ‘mostly trial parcels from several ore bodies encountered in the course of development’, had produced

⁵³¹ *Thames Star*, 4 August 1899, p. 4.

⁵³² *Auckland Star*, 23 February 1900, p. 2; *Thames Star*, 12 April 1900, p. 4.

⁵³³ E.K. Cooper to James McGowan (Minister of Mines), 24 April 1900, Mines Department, MD 1, 01/80, ANZ-W.

⁵³⁴ *Thames Star*, 21 May 1900, p. 1.

⁵³⁵ *Thames Star*, 22 August 1903, p. 3, Magistrate’s Court, 15 December 1905, p. 2.

⁵³⁶ *Thames Star*, 21 May 1900, p. 1.

⁵³⁷ James Coutts to Under-Secretary, Mines Department, 28 May 1900, *AJHR*, 1900, C-3, p. 78.

£478 13s 11d.⁵³⁸ During the following seven months, work continued on the reefs mined profitably during the previous year. On No. 3 reef, 'although a little gold was frequently seen in the quartz in breaking it out, yet no rich chute of ore was met with'. For a time over 40 men were employed, 'but through the returns falling off the number was reduced' to 25. 'A large sum of money has been spent in developing this mine from time to time, and it is to be regretted that something of a payable nature has not been obtained. 824 tons of quartz has been treated for 618oz 7dwt of gold; value, £1,773 18s 9d'.⁵³⁹ As a future mining inspector would comment, Cooper worked until 1901 'without doing much good'.⁵⁴⁰ In September that year, when he applied for six months protection, the miners' union wanted the mine opened to tributers 'on reasonable terms'. Cooper's counsel argued that if any Thames mine deserved protection it was this one.

From 1899 to 1901 the company had spent £10,000 and had not asked for a single period of protection during that time. It had taken 15 and 20 men to man the ground. In this year a reduction in the number of men employed had been asked for and consented to, and 6 men had been at work, while others had been employed at other work on the property. It was now necessary that the company should have a little breathing time, and it was for this purpose that the present application had been made. Mr Cooper did not want to throw open the mine to tributers, as he was afraid that it would interfere with the negotiations now proceeding for the raising of further capital to work the mine. It was thought that those from whom the capital was expected did not like the idea of a mine being thrown open for tribute as they had an idea that when this was done the mine was of little use to the company....

E. Kersey Cooper said he had been in charge of the mine since 1899. The mine had been fully manned and no protection had been granted during that time. This year the company had obtained permission to work ... with 6 men, but they had employed more than that number. The sum of £7071 had been paid in actual wages. They had taken from the ground gold to the value of £3500. In addition they had spent £3000, making in all £10,000 expended in 2 1/2 years. He had a scheme in hand for raising more money by amalgamating the property and then to extend the low level through the Fame and Fortune. He thought

⁵³⁸ *Auckland Star*, 7 July 1900, p. 5.

⁵³⁹ James Coutts to Under-Secretary, Mines Department, 8 February 1901, *AJHR*, 1901, C-3, p. 48.

⁵⁴⁰ Downey, p. 126.

that the letting of the mine on tribute would interfere with the sale of the property, because it might have some effect upon the granting of the title. At Home they had an idea that the letting of a mine on tribute was only done as a last resort.

The warden was sympathetic and granted protection, but warned that after six months 'the company would be expected to throw open the mine for tribute'.⁵⁴¹ The following day Cooper placed an advertisement in the Thames press that reports that his battery would stop crushing 'any day are entirely without foundation. It will keep going as long as the public will support it. – "Beware of false prophets." '⁵⁴² Three days later he stated that the gold won from the Fame and Fortune 'was worth about half of the colonial expenditure on the mine'.⁵⁴³

In January 1901 it was reported that 'mainly through' Cooper's influence 'one of the principal partners in one of the largest assaying firms in London', Johnson, Matthey & Co, had 'acquired very large interests' in the company.⁵⁴⁴ He may have been John Sudamore Pybus Sellon, who along with his brother H.T. Sellon visited Cooper in 1894 when on a visit from London. It was reported that, 'as will be imagined by his connection with so eminent a firm', he took 'a great interest in mining' and would examine the local ore and methods of gold saving.⁵⁴⁵ Arthur Herbert Sellon, a mining engineer, came to New Zealand from Western Australia late that year 'to represent the interests of his uncle', John Sudamore Sellon,⁵⁴⁶ in both the Jubilee and Fame and Fortune.⁵⁴⁷ In November Cooper left for England again to raise capital for both mines 'despite the fact that the market is not altogether favourable to New Zealand ventures'.⁵⁴⁸ During his absence

⁵⁴¹ *Thames Star*, 17 September 1901, p. 2.

⁵⁴² Advertisement, *Thames Star*, 18 September 1901, p. 3.

⁵⁴³ *Thames Star*, 21 September 1901, p. 2.

⁵⁴⁴ *Thames Star*, 2 January 1901, p. 1.

⁵⁴⁵ *Thames Star*, 24 March 1894, p. 2.

⁵⁴⁶ Recorded as Y.S. Sellon; John S. Seddon was a founding member of Johnson Matthey in 1891: 'Memorandum of Association of Johnson Matthey Public Limited Company', 10 April 1891, The National Archives, Key, London.

⁵⁴⁷ *Thames Star*, 17 March 1909, p. 2; *Auckland Star*, 17 March 1909, p. 4.

⁵⁴⁸ Thames Correspondent, *Auckland Star*, 29 October 1901, p. 4.

Sellon would 'act as substituted attorney' in Thames and act for him in the Jubilee.⁵⁴⁹

In early July, Cooper wrote to James McGowan, the Minister of Mines:

So far as the Thames is concerned I promised to write you with my panacea but I really can't see my way to be sure of success – I did think of going home [England] and bringing my wife back. The way we can get the most permanent relief for the least amount of money expended is to get by some means the Moanataiari low level extended. If the Government would think with me I will draft out a scheme if you say so.

Sinking a winze on the Pinafore reef made him 'think the idea of the runs of gold at the back of the slide are dipping seaward' was incorrect, as a mining surveyor agreed. 'I fancy £ for £ scheme might be launched. Simply a nod from you will set me at work'.⁵⁵⁰

One month later, he informed McGowan that he had 'made substantial progress', with 'my people' in London and the Moanataiari Company agreeing on 'the advisability of working together'. He was sending him a plan made by a mining surveyor, and provided details of some of the features, which would provide 'proper ventilation' for his mine. The total distance of the extension, 3,586 feet, would bring it to the northeastern boundary of the Fame and Fortune and benefit several mines. 'We ask for nothing from any adjacent claims we seek to rob no one but desire to open up a permanent way through the Fame & Fortune ground to the claims beyond, and unwater this vast area of ground at the same time make it accessible to prospect and work economically'. If the government provided £5,000 the work would be done 'as expeditiously as possible'. After providing further details of the proposal and its potential, he noted that John Watson Walker was 'posing in a new role' as 'the benefactor of the unborn millions and mentions the Fame & Fortune mine in connection with his scheme – this is quite without our sanction and will neither get our endorsement or support'.⁵⁵¹

⁵⁴⁹ Advertisement, *Thames Star*, 2 November 1901, p. 3.

⁵⁵⁰ E.K. Cooper to James McGowan (Minister of Mines), 11 July 1901, Mines Department, MD 1, 01/1419, ANZ-W.

⁵⁵¹ E.K. Cooper to James McGowan, 12 August 1901, Mines Department, MD 1, 01/1419, ANZ-W.

By September, Cooper's attempt to interest the government in subsidizing the extension of the Moanataiari tunnel through his ground had become public knowledge.⁵⁵² On 14 October, he told McGowan that he had refrained from writing again because he knew he was busy, but two days previously he had received a cable from London asking when he would leave. He would leave within 20 days, and argued that a promise of £5,000 would assist him to raise capital. 'I think you will agree with me that The Moanataiari low level extended to Punga Flat would be a permanent blessing'. He would visit McGowan before leaving from Wellington.⁵⁵³ He was told that his request would be considered by parliament, but the Goldfields and Mines Committee resolved to support Walker's rival scheme.⁵⁵⁴

By the time of Coutts' next report, March 1902, the mine was under partial protection, having for some time been worked by tributers pending Cooper's return from England with further capital. Work was principally restricted to one part of the Golden Age reef, and 'a little gold' was 'occasionally seen' in Fox's leader. 'Although the prospects at times are encouraging, yet sufficient payable ore has not been obtained to compensate the mine for the work accomplished'. An average of nine men had broken out 25 tons, producing 94oz 10dwt, a return of £258 12s 3d.⁵⁵⁵ Upon his return, Cooper told McGowan in June 'I want to have a chat to you about the Thames and the feeling in London',⁵⁵⁶ which presumably happened but was not recorded.

During the following year most mining was done by tributers, mostly in the same portion of the Golden Age reef, 'with a fair amount of success'. In Fox's and other leaders, 'at times a little picked stone is obtained, but nothing that may be termed a rich chute of ore'.⁵⁵⁷ In the 12 months to

⁵⁵² *Thames Star*, 5 September 1901, p. 2.

⁵⁵³ E.K. Cooper to James McGowan, 14 October 1901, Mines Department, MD 1, 01/1419, ANZ-W.

⁵⁵⁴ James McGowan to E.K. Cooper, 19 October 1901; memorandum of 24 October 1901, Mines Department, MD 1, 01/1419, ANZ-W.

⁵⁵⁵ James Coutts to Under-Secretary, Mines Department, 13 March 1902, *AJHR*, 1902, C-3, p. 46.

⁵⁵⁶ E.K. Cooper to James McGowan, 3 June 1902, Mines Department, MD 1, 04/251, ANZ-W.

⁵⁵⁷ James Coutts to Under-Secretary, Mines Department, 21 March 1903, *AJHR*, 1903, C-3, p. 93.

March 1904 only tributing was done, mainly on the Golden Age reef, from which 300 tons plus 35lb of picked stone produced 364oz 11dwt, worth £937 1s.⁵⁵⁸ Over the next 11 months 11 tributers found nothing of a ‘really payable character’, obtaining 90oz 16dwt, valued at £255 12s 4d, from 51 loads and 51lb of picked stone.⁵⁵⁹ In total, between 1901 and 1904 from 2,693 tons tributers obtained 2,430oz, valued at £6,117.⁵⁶⁰

In January 1905, Sellon, who had been managing the Fame and Fortune plus the Jubilee for nearly three years but would soon resign because of ‘some slight friction’ with the directors,⁵⁶¹ informed the warden that during the last five years the Fame and Fortune had spent at least £10,000, and at least £40,000 had been spent by the previous company, ‘comprising practically the same Shareholders’, but no dividends had been paid. As its capital was ‘now utterly exhausted’, absolute protection was sought. During the past two years an average of 12 wages men and tributers were employed. At the request of the London directors, Cooper had sent a ‘very full and detailed report’, and it was likely that they would soon be able to raise substantial capital.⁵⁶² As this did not occur, by early the following year it had become part of Henry Hopper Adams’ group of mines,⁵⁶³ and was worked as the Thames Company, Cooper’s plan to prospect it from the Moanataiari tunnel being taken up. ‘This ground has always been considered to be worth prospecting at the low levels, but water has hitherto prevented this being done’.⁵⁶⁴ The new company worked it until 1911, but did ‘little work on the claim, its efforts being almost wholly devoted to testing the Nonpareil Claim from the Moanataiari tunnel’; the ground then lay idle until 1932.⁵⁶⁵

⁵⁵⁸ James Coutts to Under-Secretary, Mines Department, 14 March 1904, *AJHR*, 1904, C-3, p. 48.

⁵⁵⁹ James Coutts to Under-Secretary, Mines Department, 18 February 1905, *AJHR*, 1905, C-3, p. 39.

⁵⁶⁰ Downey, p. 126.

⁵⁶¹ *Thames Star*, 14 July 1905, p. 2, 19 October 1907, p. 2, 17 March 1909, p. 2.

⁵⁶² Thames Warden’s Court, Mining Applications 1905, 13/1905, BACL 14350/50, ANZ-A.

⁵⁶³ See paper on his life.

⁵⁶⁴ R.S. Bush to Under-Secretary, Mines Department, 22 May 1906, *AJHR*, 1906, C-3, p. 89.

⁵⁶⁵ Downey, p. 126.

WHAREKIRAUPUNGA⁵⁶⁶

In 1902, when Cooper described his experiences as a miner, he did not name any mines apart from his Wharekiraupunga property:

He was for some years prospecting in the Ohinemuri district with varying success, and, after experiencing the usual vicissitudes of a miner's life, was at last fortunate enough to become proprietor of the splendid property known as the "Royal Standard," which he succeeded in floating on the London market.⁵⁶⁷

In January 1897 he described his first visit to it:

"Nearly two years ago some friends of mine, who had long known of this property, pegged it off before the boom started in New Zealand, and after a lot of fighting in the Warden's Court, extending over nearly a year, the ground with the principal water rights of the field were granted them. Previous to my leaving for England in August 1895, I went over the property, and was literally astounded at the value of it. It seemed to have all the elements of success – large reefs, showing good prospects in the dish by careless pounding; giant kauri trees scattered about the property, and a splendid water power traversing it, which could be dammed and picked up at the fork of two creeks for a song; big backs on the reefs, with but a few hundred feet of driving – in fact, I would see nothing but advantages and easy mining in front of me, and it did not take me long to agree to find some necessary preliminary cash, and to leave for England to place this property on the market, little thinking that obstacles would place themselves in the Warden's Court through disputes as to the legal pegging, &c, of the property. I left for England in August 1895, thinking to receive the lease and other necessary documents a month after my arrival. In lieu of this, I had to wait nearly twelve months, but as I knew what I was waiting for, I showed patience."

"Then you have a very high opinion of the property?"

"Certainly. I have never seen a property that Dame Nature has been so generous to before. The best of timber for all building purposes, including the water-race, on the ground; a grand water-right, so easily utilized, and big reefs, carrying so much free gold encased in some of the finest country rock I ever saw."...

"Are there any roads close to this property, Mr Cooper?"

"No, if there were any I should have no interest in the property. It is owing to its isolated position it was overlooked. There are

⁵⁶⁶ For a description of the geology of this area, see Bell and Fraser, pp. 97-98.

⁵⁶⁷ *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 2, p. 475.

nothing but tracks made by Maoris, gum diggers, and wild cattle, but a road can be easily constructed from the east coast beach, only 4 1/2 miles distant. It is, as it were, a straight run from the battery site to the beach, down a spur, which dies away to nothing on the flat close to the seashore.”⁵⁶⁸

In August 1895, when Cooper left for London to float this property, a mining correspondent described this ‘place of a hundred pungas’ as being ‘four or five miles’ from the sea. ‘To get to it one way, the Wharekeiraupunga stream has to be crossed eight times. It can also be reached by way of Parakiwai – but in that case you may have to cross the Hikutaia river nineteen times!’ The first and only claim worked to date was registered in 1888, worked for three years, but ‘owing to the difficulties encountered in raising money to go on with some of the men went gum-digging’ and the ground was forfeited, later to be twice taken up and abandoned. The correspondent stated that the first party had obtained assay results of ‘from 3 to 28 ounces to the ton. I stand as your authority for this statement, as I myself packed some of the stuff’.⁵⁶⁹

Although some prospecting had taken place from 1893 onwards, not till the boom of 1895 were ‘a considerable number’ of claims pegged.⁵⁷⁰ Cooper went to London to float the adjoining Tavistock as well.⁵⁷¹ A London correspondent warned in November that he would not ‘find the present moment propitious for flotations of any description’.⁵⁷² Nevertheless, in the following May he did succeed in floating the Tavistock,⁵⁷³ and in September, assisted by Francis Hodge, an experienced mine manager,⁵⁷⁴ he floated almost all the claims as the Royal Standard.⁵⁷⁵ ‘Some difficulty was experienced in getting the Board of Trade to consent to the use of the word

⁵⁶⁸ Special Commissioner, ‘Interview with Mr E. Kersey Cooper’, *British Australasian*, 4 February 1897, p. 242.

⁵⁶⁹ Special Correspondent, *Hauraki Tribune*, n.d., reprinted in *Thames Advertiser*, 10 August 1895, p. 3.

⁵⁷⁰ Downey, p. 234.

⁵⁷¹ ‘Obadiah’, ‘Shares and Mining’, *Observer*, 19 October 1895, p. 16.

⁵⁷² London Correspondent [writing on 30 November 1895], *Auckland Star*, 4 January 1896, p. 2.

⁵⁷³ ‘Obadiah’, ‘Shares and Mining’, *Observer*, 23 May 1896, p. 7.

⁵⁷⁴ See *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 2, p. 486.

⁵⁷⁵ *Auckland Star*, 12 September 1896, p. 5; *British Australasian*, 28 January 1897, p. 155; Downey, p. 234.

Royal in naming the property, it being against usage', but approval was forthcoming eventually.⁵⁷⁶ Describing the property as 'very valuable', Hodge looked 'forward to see this property rival the Waihi; this, I feel persuaded will be the result with proper management and ample working capital'. Three mining engineers (one being John Guest Ralph, who had worked with Cooper in the Jubilee) and one metallurgist all praised the ground, predicting that a 40-stamp mill would produce a net profit of 'over £38,000 per annum'.⁵⁷⁷

Having gone to London in late 1895 for the 'express purpose' of floating this property, Cooper had achieved his goal despite a depressed market for New Zealand mines.⁵⁷⁸ The 100-acre property was described in 1897 as having 'the main Wharekeraupunga Creek, a branch of the Parakawai River, which empties close to the Whangamata Harbour', running through it.

On each side of the creek are cliffs, and enormous lodes of quartz are outcropping all over the property. The Royal Standard reefs stand up straight on both banks, showing a width of 30ft to 40ft. On the hangingwall side there is 30ft of solid quartz, while on the footwall there is a lot more quartz showing, but interlaced with seams of andesite. The gold is very fine, and the ore is just suitable for the cyanide process. In the footwall portion sulphides can be seen freely in the seams of quartz.⁵⁷⁹

Floated by the Discoverers' Finance Company, as usual the board included impressive names, whatever their knowledge of mining: the chairman was the Earl of Dunmore, and the other directors were John H. Gretton, Colonel Augustus Le Messurier, John McDonald, and Colonel F.G. Stewart, all of London.⁵⁸⁰ Gretton, a businessman, was a Conservative member of the House of Commons from 1895-1943, and after his retirement became the first Baron Gretton.⁵⁸¹ Le Messurier, 'late chief engineer and secretary to the Government of the Punjab', had been in the Royal

⁵⁷⁶ *Auckland Star*, 12 September 1896, p. 5.

⁵⁷⁷ *British Australasian*, 3 December 1896, p. 2057.

⁵⁷⁸ Cartoon, *Observer*, 17 August 1895, p. 7; *Thames Advertiser*, 15 January 1897, p. 4.

⁵⁷⁹ *New Zealand Graphic*, 6 February 1896, p. 157.

⁵⁸⁰ *British Australasian*, 3 December 1897, p. 2057, 4 February 1897, pp. 240, 248-250; London Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 23 January 1897, p. 27.

⁵⁸¹ Wikipedia.

Engineers in India and written several books about his explorations in the Middle East, Afghanistan, and India, especially the bird life in the latter.⁵⁸² Cooper assured them their mine 'would rival the famous Waihi mine, which he thought had some disadvantages that did not attach to the Royal Standard'.⁵⁸³

When 60,000 shares were offered to the public, over 31,000 were allotted immediately; New Zealanders applied for nearly 4,000. 'Experts' were cited as expecting more reefs to be discovered, and 'the fact that the New Zealand vendors take the whole of their interest in shares is one of the most favourable features' of the undertaking. The nominal capital was £200,000, with £50,000 working capital.⁵⁸⁴

In late December 1896, Cooper prepared to return to assume the management of the mines.⁵⁸⁵ A 'brilliant' farewell dinner, attended by 'about forty gentlemen', was given because of 'their warm satisfaction with the property they have acquired, and with Mr Kersey Cooper's action in the matter; and secondly, to their gratification at the very prosperous prospects which the new enterprise appears to possess'. The Earl of Dunmore stated that in New Zealand, Cooper's adopted country, 'he had earned the respect and confidence of all with whom he had been associated, either in business or otherwise'. He 'had been equally successful since his arrival in England, in winning the esteem and trust' of investors, and those present were 'indebted' to him for bringing this property to England, 'which, from all accounts, was one of the finest in New Zealand'. Dunmore 'regretted that as he had never, himself, seen the mine, he was not in a position to give any information about it from personal experience, but their guest would be able to supply any deficiencies on his own part in this respect'. After his health was drunk, along with success to the mine,

Mr Cooper briefly, but with much feeling, acknowledged the compliment which had been paid to him, and expressed his hope, as well as his conviction, that all who were concerned with the Royal Standard Company would be in every way satisfied with

⁵⁸² *British Australasian and New Zealand Mail*, 21 January 1897, p. 116; Google has details of his books *Kandahar in 1879*, *From London to Bokhara and a Ride Through Persia*, and *Game, Shore and Water-Birds of India*, all still in print.

⁵⁸³ *Thames Advertiser*, 18 January 1897, p. 2.

⁵⁸⁴ *British Australasian*, 3 December 1896, p. 2057.

⁵⁸⁵ London Correspondent [writing on 26 December 1896], *Thames Star*, 5 February 1897, p. 2.

the results. Speaking from sixteen years experience in New Zealand, he had no hesitation in saying that in his opinion the Royal Standard property was the finest property on which he had ever yet set his foot. Before his departure from New Zealand, he was simply besieged by people who were anxious that he would take up their properties, but he had refused to have anything to do with those about which he knew nothing. The Royal Standard he knew well, and he felt that he could conscientiously recommend it. He was satisfied that nothing but the worst possible management could make the Royal Standard mine anything but a dividend-paying property. Mr Kersey Cooper added that he had followed the fortunes of the Waihi property from its infancy and personally knew it well. He honestly believed that the Royal Standard would rival that famous mine which he thought had some disadvantages that did not attach to the Royal Standard.

Another speaker stressed that the New Zealand vendors, by not asked the purchasers for any cash, had indicated their confidence in their mine.⁵⁸⁶ Another report noted that this dinner had been attended by ‘several of the leading members of the Stock Exchange, bankers, and other gentlemen particularly interested in New Zealand’. Hodge estimated the annual net profit at a very precise £38,610, adding, ‘I am looking forward to see this property rival the Waihi; this I feel persuaded will be the result with proper management and ample working capital’. He anticipated the 40-head battery and cyanide plant could be erected in eight months.⁵⁸⁷

Before leaving London, when asked whether it was ‘a dividend-paying property’, Cooper replied: ‘Nothing but a thieving staff in the battery and the worst of management outside can prevent it being so’. He anticipated importing coal from the nearby Whangamata harbour to power the ‘500 head of stamps’ he anticipated would be needed once the large reefs were properly opened. ‘After the power generated by the water rights became taxed to its full capacity, we should use coal to generate electricity on the beach and transmit the power to the battery’.⁵⁸⁸

⁵⁸⁶ London Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 23 January 1897, p. 27.

⁵⁸⁷ London Correspondent [writing on 26 December 1896], *Thames Star*, 5 February 1897, p. 2.

⁵⁸⁸ Special Commissioner, ‘Interview with Mr E. Kersey Cooper’, *British Australasian*, 4 February 1897, p. 242.

Ralph was appointed manager, a 'very lucrative' post.⁵⁸⁹ A director, Le Messurier, was leaving England in January to make a 'personal inspection' to enable him to advise the board on the best arrangements for treating the ore.⁵⁹⁰ Also in January, at a company meeting Dunmore's report indicated the directors' knowledge of both the geology and the geography to be slight, for the distances given were quite incorrect: 'As the crow flies, it is about six miles from the celebrated Waihi Mine, which is producing such remarkable results for its shareholders, and about three miles from the Waitekauri, also a well-known dividend-paying mine'.

From reports which have been made on this district, it looks as though our mine is in the same auriferous belt upon which the Waihi is situated, which is probably the same as we possess. At any rate, the experts who have seen it are very sanguine that the Royal Standard Gold Mine will be as remunerative as any mine in the colony. I need not point out what a satisfactory result that will be.

As proof of the 'great value of the property', the New Zealand vendors 'agreed to take the whole of their interest in fully-paid shares, and some of their friends actually subscribed for a considerable number of the shares'. After providing details of how the mine could be worked economically, Dunmore reported that Le Messurier, 'a man of great experience both as an engineer and administrator, and a well-known traveller' had been requested by the Waihi Consolidated Company, of which he was a director, to visit their property. Accordingly, Le Messurier was asked 'to make the arrangements necessary' for this mine as well. 'And although we believe that we have at hand one of the best mining managers to be found in New Zealand, we thought it would be more advantageous to the interests of the company' that the management not be determined finally until Le Messurier had reported. Four days after Le Messurier left for New Zealand, Cooper also departed. Cooper, who 'came over from New Zealand on purpose to place this property', had 'great experience in mining' there, and would provide Le Messurier with 'every possible information in his power' and recommend how to obtain the best results. Dunmore hoped that by the next time he addressed the shareholders the latter would have received 'a substantial dividend', and concluded by quoting a letter from 'our

⁵⁸⁹ *Thames Star*, 14 January 1897, p. 2.

⁵⁹⁰ *British Australasian*, 21 January 1897, p. 116.

representative' about the work being undertaken which showed prospects to be 'undoubtedly good', as illustrated by high assay values.⁵⁹¹ Hodge gave 'the expense for the mining and milling of the ore at 25s per ton. We think we can do it for 20s, but even for 25s you have here for one ton £16 of gold, which is more than 4oz, and £13 for silver. That is £29, and when you deduct 25s it gives a profit of £27 15s. I think under these circumstances we ought to be very pleased with what has been done'.⁵⁹²

By January 1897 the working capital had been fully subscribed.⁵⁹³ In the middle of that month Edwin John Clendon, the company's attorney, received instructions to 'appoint a mine manager and engage a staff of from 25 to 30 miners to at once proceed with the systematic development of the property'. He immediately instructed Ralph 'to proceed with the work. Instructions were also received to push on as quickly as possible all works in connection with opening up the reefs, erection of a battery, and construction of water races, etc'. Ralph had 'already made arrangements that a large staff of miners, sawyers and labourers be engaged'.⁵⁹⁴ In early March it was reported that a sample from No. 2 reef 'when assayed at the Bank of New Zealand yielded at the rate of £16 per ton'. The reporter wisely added that it remained 'for the battery to prove the practical value of the ore body when tons are treated'. A 40-head battery would be erected 'with as much speed as possible'.⁵⁹⁵

In mid-March, Cooper was interviewed immediately upon his return to Thames:

He had come out from London to meet Colonel Le Messurier ... who left a couple of days before he did, but whom he had since learned had gone on to Coolgardie before coming to Auckland. When the colonel arrived here he would appoint a local Board of Advice and arrange all matters locally in connection with the mine. It was intended to erect an up to date plant, and [an] air compressor and rock drills had been ordered in London. A forty stamper battery would be put up as soon as possible.⁵⁹⁶

⁵⁹¹ *British Australasian*, 28 January 1897, p. 155.

⁵⁹² London Correspondent [writing on 29 January 1897], *Auckland Star*, 15 March 1897, p. 2.

⁵⁹³ *Thames Star*, 14 January 1897, p. 2.

⁵⁹⁴ *New Zealand Graphic*, 23 January 1897, p. 91.

⁵⁹⁵ *New Zealand Graphic*, 6 March 1897, p. 157.

⁵⁹⁶ *Auckland Star*, 12 March 1897, p. 3.

Also in mid-March, Clendon cabled that the mine was 'looking well' and that Le Messurier was expected shortly.⁵⁹⁷ Late that month, when questioned by a Thames reporter,

Mr Cooper said that he was very sanguine if this mine turning out one of very great importance, but he would not at present express himself definitely or until the present development now underway had advanced in order to ascertain the extent and magnitude of the lode. "We are carrying on very extensive works," says Mr Cooper, "and if the lode opens up at depth as well as it does on the surface, I don't see why there should not be a good future before the company."⁵⁹⁸

After Le Messurier's visit in mid-April, it was reported that the mine was looking 'splendid', with 'a large number of men' making 'good progress' in 'all departments'.⁵⁹⁹ One report stated that 179 men were employed. 'The rough formation of a water-race, a quarter of a mile long', was almost completed; during its construction several reefs had been cut. Half the distance of the tramway formation was completed, several acres had been cleared for the battery site, and preparations were being made for the plant's foundations. 'The manager's residence, assay and other general offices, near the battery site', were being erected. Assay of No. 1 reef, 'an immense body of stone', in the Bank of New Zealand in Thames had produced a return of £22 a ton.⁶⁰⁰ Le Messurier had instructed that the battery should be increased to 80 stampers, and by late May the formation of the tramway was completed, with the steel rails to be laid soon. 'It is understood that scrip in the Royal Standard will be issued about the middle of next month'.⁶⁰¹ A report published at the beginning of June stated that a fourth reef had been struck, showing 'visible gold'.⁶⁰²

Later in June, Wilson reported that a 'large amount of prospecting' had been done, reefs were being opened up, and a tramway was being constructed 'to a point on a creek where machinery can be landed'. A 40-

⁵⁹⁷ *British Australasian*, 18 March 1897, p. 500.

⁵⁹⁸ 'Interview with Mr Kersey Cooper', *Thames Star*, 26 March 1897, p. 4.

⁵⁹⁹ *Auckland Star*, 17 April 1897, p. 3; *British Australasian*, 6 May 1897, p. 817.

⁶⁰⁰ *New Zealand Graphic*, 24 April 1897, p. 508.

⁶⁰¹ *New Zealand Graphic*, 29 May 1897, p. 666.

⁶⁰² *British Australasian*, 3 June 1897, p. 995.

stamper battery would be erected near the mine, and the 'ample water-power adjacent' meant the company could 'treat quartz of low grade. The mill is to be fitted with all the latest appliances in gold-saving'. Ralph provided elaborate details of the developments that would provide 'crushing material for years to come before sinking is resorted to'. A reef and the level being driven on it were named after Le Messurier.⁶⁰³ Ralph cut 'a splendid body of stone' from which he expected 'a long run on highly payable ore', and there were good prospects elsewhere. Men constructing the tramway over four miles long from the harbour landing had encountered 'great difficulties' because of 'very precipitous rocks' with extremely hard crusts 'towering up perfectly straight for 200 ft'; rails were being sent from England. The battery was 'to be erected without delay'. Ralph complained of 'great difficulties in conveying supplies', as the council showed 'no interest whatever in opening up this district. The Royal Standard Company have for some considerable time employed upwards of two hundred men, which surely entitles them to something in the matter of roads'.⁶⁰⁴

Bush referred to the district 'flourishing in a most remarkable way' during the year, 'the country around for miles' being 'all taken up. This is entirely owing to the splendid find made by the Royal Standard Gold-mining Company, and to the energetic manner in which they have pushed on their various works'. For months, it had employed 180 men; it had excavated for 80 stamps, although only 40 would be erected at first. 'It is expected that shortly after Christmas this mine will be in full working-order'.⁶⁰⁵

Early in July, Thomas Darcy O'Toole, now a mining agent,⁶⁰⁶ described as 'one of the discoverers and vendors' of the property and associated with Ralph for five years, visited it. He informed the *British Australasian* that 'its prospects were splendid'. Work was progressing on four reefs, and when tunnelling for the water race discovered the richest reef of all, 'the assays having gone as high as £30 per ton. But from all the reefs and leaders that

⁶⁰³ George Wilson to Minister of Mines, 29 June 1897, *AJHR*, 1897, C-3, p. 93; *New Zealand Herald*, 19 December 1898, p. 6.

⁶⁰⁴ George Wilson to Minister of Mines, 29 June 1897, *AJHR*, 1897, C-3, p. 94.

⁶⁰⁵ R.S. Bush to Under-Secretary, Mines Department, 7 July 1897, *AJHR*, 1897, C-3A, p. 5.

⁶⁰⁶ See Marriage Certificate of Thomas Darcy O'Toole, 1896/3450, BDM; *Auckland Star*, 12 December 1895, p. 5, Paeroa Warden's Court, 18 February 1896, p. 2; *Ohinemuri Gazette*, Warden's Court, 17 October 1896, p. 4, 14 May 1898 p. 3; *Observer*, photograph, 7 November 1896, p. 18, advertisement, 13 February 1897, p. 6.

we have cut on the ground we have got prospects in the dish, proving, of course, that they are all gold bearing. The assays have ranged from 30s up to £30, and the very lowest possible battery returns from any of these four proved reefs would be £5 per ton', at a cost of £1 5s 'at the outside'. Once the cyanide plant and 40-head battery were completed tenders would be called for another 40 head. There was more than sufficient water supply and mining timber, meaning 'we shall be able to work the mine cheaper than any other mine in the district. We think that this mine is going to rival the Waihi; in fact, there is no doubt about it'. They expected to ore to average 2oz to the ton with the value 'about £3 5s to £3 10s per oz. The Royal Standard is one of the highest grade mines on the field'. He concluded his eulogy by commenting that 'nearly every mining property has got its enemies, or the people who are running it have, but I have not come across anyone yet who has had a bad word to say for the Royal Standard'.⁶⁰⁷

Two days later, Ralph provided full details of all the encouraging developments in the low level crosscut, Le Messurier level, no. 2 crosscut, intermediate crosscut, and No. 1 reef. Because of very wet weather excavations for the battery were delayed, but the tramway to the coast only required bridges and rails while the one from the Le Messurier level was 'progressing well. On all three works I have reduced hands, allowing of course to have the work ready when required. I am preparing to build the necessary quartz hoppers, and will have all ready in ample time'.⁶⁰⁸ One month later the directors received a telegram: 'Cut Le Messurier Reef, low level tunnel; splendid body stone; prospects well. The tunnel is now in 180ft'.⁶⁰⁹ Driving continued on several levels, with 'encouraging prospects' in the reefs struck, but no ore had been extracted. J.R. Robinson was in charge of the assays offices, 'now in full swing' and being used 'for experimental purposes as well as assaying'. Five tons were sent to the Thames School of Mines to be treated by cyanide.⁶¹⁰

⁶⁰⁷ Special Commissioner, 'Gold Mining in New Zealand', *British Australasian*, 16 September 1897, p. 1660.

⁶⁰⁸ Report by J.G. Ralph, 7 July 1897, printed in *British Australasian*, 19 August 1897, p. 1512.

⁶⁰⁹ *British Australasian*, 12 August 1897, p. 1468.

⁶¹⁰ *Auckland Star*, 2 September 1897, p. 7.

Just before leaving for London later in August, Cooper acquired options over the Sceptre and Fiery Cross claims, to be floated in London.⁶¹¹ Upon arrival in England, he informed a reporter that he was ‘more than pleased by the way the mine is opening up. The shows are better than my favourable opinions I formed in the first place ever anticipated’.⁶¹²

Curiously, a Thames newspaper reported that the company commenced work on 16 January 1898:

To commemorate the event, the local brass band at the fateful hour rolled up to the managerial residence, and gave an open air performance of marches, solos, etc. The band is under the guidance of Mr Wharatini, late of the Rotorua Native Band. After the musical portion of the programme, some forty natives, male and female, gave several musical and love hakas in the native style, and ringing cheers for the performers brought a most enjoyable evening to a close. The *Waihi Miner*'s correspondent, from whose particulars we abridge the above particulars, adds:- “I may say that since the holidays things have been under full steam at the Royal Standard. The different levels are fully manned; a large staff of men are also engaged preparing for plate laying; and teams of horses are to be seen drawing timber into position.” The writer concludes by stating at altogether Wharekeraupunga is at present “one of the busiest spots in the Ohinemuri district.” We are glad to hear it. We recollect that Mr Kersey Cooper, a Long time ago, attacked the London Moneybags with the after-dinner assurance that the Royal Standard would prove a “second Waihi,” only more so; therefore it is clear that the Standard has indeed a high standard to attain, and will have to continue under “full steam” to reach it.⁶¹³

In February, F.P. Hobson, of the Discoverers’ Finance Corporation, of London, arrived to inspect.⁶¹⁴ Although the company raised an additional £10,000 working capital, expected to advance developing the mine sufficiently to justify erecting a battery and starting crushing,⁶¹⁵ the English investors were coming to believe that Cooper had over-boomed the

⁶¹¹ *Auckland Star*, 3 June 1897, p. 2, 28 June 1897, p. 4, 9 August 1897, p. 5, 2 September 1897, p. 7; *New Zealand Graphic*, 10 July 1897, p. 86; *Thames Advertiser*, 10 August 1897, p. 4.

⁶¹² *British Australasian*, 28 October 1897, p. 1926.

⁶¹³ *Thames Star*, 1 February 1898, p. 2.

⁶¹⁴ *New Zealand Graphic*, 5 March 1898, p. 281.

⁶¹⁵ *British Australasian*, 11 August 1898, p. 1567.

property. At the beginning of April the directors ordered all development work to cease and told the miners to determine whether valuable ore really existed.⁶¹⁶ By the end of the month, work was restricted to two shifts in one tunnel, and at the beginning of May all work ceased.⁶¹⁷ Early that month, Wilson reported the latest developments:

A large amount of money has been expended in laying the tramway, preparations for the foundation of the battery, the construction of a water-race, the manager's house, and necessary buildings, but the manager, who recently arrived from Home, has recommended the directors to stop all works for the present.⁶¹⁸

T. Pascoe, who arrived from England in February to replace Ralph as manager,⁶¹⁹ 'after thoroughly inspecting the mine and works in progress ... entirely altered the scheme of operations'. All work on erecting the battery and constructing water races and tramways was suspended, 'and the whole staff of men has been concentrated about the mine, with the object of thoroughly developing it, and determining whether the erection of a battery would be in the best interests of the shareholders'.⁶²⁰ By May the mine had been closed, and Pascoe communicated with the directors 'as to further work on the property'.⁶²¹ The mine was placed under protection. For the past 15 months, 60 men had been 'regularly employed'; the deepest shaft was 50 feet, and the longest adit 'about' 300 feet, and a total of 685 feet had been driven on several reefs. 'The work done to date can be described as prospecting, making surface tramways, water-race, and excavation for machine-site. There is no machinery on the ground, nor has any ore been crushed, with the exception of small test parcels at the Thames School of Mines'.⁶²² According to the *Thames Advertiser*, £25,000 had been spent and 300 men employed, mostly on tramway construction and other works but

⁶¹⁶ *Thames Advertiser*, 8 April 1898, p. 4.

⁶¹⁷ *Thames Advertiser*, 30 April 1898, p. 4, 2 May 1898, p. 3.

⁶¹⁸ George Wilson to Minister of Mines, 12 May 1898, *AJHR*, 1898, C-3, p. 70.

⁶¹⁹ *Thames Star*, 21 January 1898, p. 3; *New Zealand Herald*, 19 December 1898, p. 6.

⁶²⁰ *New Zealand Graphic*, 16 April 1898, p. 473.

⁶²¹ *New Zealand Graphic*, 7 May 1898, p. 574.

⁶²² Report by T. Pascoe, printed in George Wilson to Minister of Mines, 12 May 1898, *AJHR*, 1898, C-3, p. 70.

doing little mining. By late May only two men were still employed, and the manager had left.⁶²³

Late in the year, the company's general meeting was 'particularly lively'. The directors reported that the prospects contained in the initial report by Hodge had not been realized. Hodge had 'not only reported favourably, but at the same time subscribed for a considerable number of shares'. Soon after the company's formation, Le Messurier had visited and judged, by the returns from other mines, that the ore would be valued at £3 per ton, not £4 as Hodge predicted. Ralph and Clendon favourably reported on developments from February 1897 to January 1898, with assays showing values of from £5 to over £9, but Pascoe's subsequent 'exhaustive examination' failed to find 'any large quantity of payable ore'. As the quartz in the hopper assayed at only 4s 6d per ton, and apart from 'some rich patches here and there', the ore opened up 'contained only a small percentage of gold and silver', it should have been evident to Ralph that the unprofitable development work was not justifiable. The correct way to develop the mine would have been to sink 'a shaft at the junction of the two arms of the creek where payable ore was originally discovered, and where there was a possibility of a continuation of the rich deposits found at the surface'. Of the £18,442 spent, £14,975 went in wages.

'After careful consideration', the directors had decided to form a new company, which might amalgamate with another, profitable, company. In opening the meeting, the chairman was 'glad' that Cooper was present and noted that he 'had had a very large interest in the company', which 'was very little less than it was at the beginning'. Dunmore stressed that all reports, from a variety of sources, had been 'most satisfactory', and once Ralph had 'got everything in readiness to crush' Pascoe was sent out; his report that 'no part of the levels' showed payable ore 'took them entirely aback, after all the reports they had received'. After Dunmore moved the adoption of his report, Cooper was the first to speak:

The directors, in the face of being continually told by me that to ensure success the working capital must be fully £50,000, actually went to allotment on a subscription of about £33,000, which subscription should be investigated, and then allowed the subscription of working capital to be reduced by £10,000, which they consented to allow the promoters to take. Had the promoters a large sum of cash to pay the vendors, this step might have been

⁶²³ *Thames Advertiser*, 23 May 1898, p. 2.

necessary, but as the purchase consideration was only 75,000 fully-paid-up shares, the directors' action cannot be justified, particularly when one considers that two directors of the promoting company sat on the Royal Standard Board, and gave to themselves the advantages they received. (Hear, hear.) The expenditure had been most shamefully misdirected on the mine. The very places where the gold was found in the main reef and showing in the quartz have been absolutely neglected, and the greater part of the money actually spent upon the property has been sunk in surface works, building houses, and a tramway.

Hodge was 'a capable mine manager', with 'great experience' in New Zealand. 'His ability has been confirmed by the large number of dividends he has been the means of earning', and he had supported his opinion of the mine by investing £3,750.

I formed such a high opinion of the property after seeing it, that my interest of 18,050 shares stand me in about 5s a share. Before the contract was concluded with the Discoverers' Finance Corporation, I actually cabled over £1000 to New Zealand for 1000 shares in the mine. Against these opinions we are asked to receive as pure gospel a report of an unknown man, furnished by the Discoverers' Finance Corporation, who discredits all that has been said of the mine, and who has a dividend-paying mine up his sleeve for amalgamation, and the shareholders are invited to participate in a little game called the confidence trick, and to sign a proxy giving the directors full and unbounded powers to do as they please. I cannot see my way to offer any satisfactory solution to the difficulties in front of us, and think the only hope we have is to ask the Official Receiver for his help. He may be able to collect the overdue calls, and to find someone who will purchase the property as a business proposition.

After the chairman replied (his remarks were not recorded), Cooper added, in justice to Hodge, that the reefs the latter had considered to be good had been 'neglected. Beyond a little scratching, there had been nothing done on them. On the top of the hill to the south of the creek' Cooper 'had seen big dabs of gold. Instead of wasting a lot of money, the crosscut should have been driven up to the reef. As to sinking shafts on top of hills', as Pascoe suggested, 'only children did that'. Later, in seconding a motion that Hodge make another report, he added that 'he had only parted with 1950 shares, and not one of them sent on the market. They were sold to his friends'. After the directors' report was adopted, reconstruction of the company was approved and a committee of investigation appointed. In

answer to Cooper, Dunmore said that ‘the dividend-paying property referred to by Mr Pascoe, was the Waiotahi’. When Cooper claimed the proposal for reconstruction had not been ‘carried by shares’, Dunmore responded that the directors had won through using proxy shares and that 40,000 shares held in New Zealand had been unrepresented.⁶²⁴

Two geologists, writing in 1912, noted the construction of ‘an expensive tramway about eight miles long’ to the Otahu Inlet plus ‘many houses’ and ‘extensive excavations for a water-race and battery-site’ but ‘comparatively little crosscutting of drifting on reefs’ despite the property being ‘but a prospecting proposition in its initial stage’. Many thousands of pounds were ‘squandered’, mostly above ground.⁶²⁵ John Francis Downey, writing in 1935, noted that it was ‘disastrous’ to spend money on a tramway and water races ‘before anything like sufficient work was done on the reefs to show one way or the other if the outlay was warranted’.⁶²⁶ After the company ceased operations, ‘very little work’ was done, and the claims were sold to Hodge in 1899.⁶²⁷ Early in 1901 the property was under protection while he sought English capital. Although Hodge was ‘sanguine’ it would prove ‘valuable’,⁶²⁸ no English capital was forthcoming, and ‘nothing of any consequence’ was ever done.⁶²⁹

Cooper had been equally sanguine, but his insistence that Wharekiraupunga was better than Waihi had been disproved comprehensively. Later geological surveys revealed that values were generally low and the auriferous area small, the veins not extending ‘far in any direction, occurring more as small floating lenses of quartz than anything else’.⁶³⁰

FINANCIAL STRUGGLES

⁶²⁴ *New Zealand Herald*, 19 December 1898, p. 6.

⁶²⁵ Bell and Fraser, p. 97.

⁶²⁶ Downey, p. 234.

⁶²⁷ James Coutts to Under-Secretary, Mines Department, 8 February 1901, *AJHR*, 1901, C-3, p. 56; Downey, p. 234.

⁶²⁸ James Coutts to Under-Secretary, Mines Department, 8 February 1901, *AJHR*, 1901, C-3, p. 56.

⁶²⁹ Downey, p. 234.

⁶³⁰ Downey, pp. 234-235.

According to Thames rumour, Cooper ‘came from a Rich English Home’ and had rich friends.⁶³¹ Even if this was true, financing his mines was a constant struggle, requiring regular appeals to English investors for assistance. His first trip to England was in late 1887, when he took up to 500 tons of quartz from Waitekauri, Owharoa, and Karangahake.⁶³² He did not want to float companies, for ‘to get the money you want privately subscribed, and to do away with all the costly machinery required to run a company, is, in my opinion, by far the best and safest way of wooing success’.⁶³³ He successfully induced ‘friends’ to provide £30,000 to work his Waitekauri and Thames properties, but after November 1890 had ‘run behind £4000’, he told the minister in the following July. ‘I leave shortly for England to see my shareholders who are getting so discontented with the varied obstructions that have been put in my way – that they write – “We don’t feel inclined to send any more good money after bad” ’.⁶³⁴

In June 1892, Cooper’s creditors agreed to his request to have six months to go to England because he was confident of getting ‘not only 20s in the £ for his creditors, but also additional capital’.⁶³⁵ But in October he had to declare himself bankrupt, blaming the Jubilee on this outcome by explaining its financial and mining difficulties from its very beginning at the end of 1887:

I took out a quantity of quartz from the Jubilee swamp, about 10 tons, and shipped it to England, and then with the necessary plans and reports I proceeded to England. Mr E.M. Corbett gave me an estimate for a 10 stamper battery and a plant necessary to treat the Jubilee ore, which included a considerable amount of other machinery necessary to the plant. His estimate was £1000. After the ore I shipped had been treated, my friends agreed to furnish the £1000 for the battery, together with £300 for incidental expenses, and that with the £900 they had previously furnished for preliminary expenses totalled up to £2,200, for which sum I gave my friends half the mine. After my return to New Zealand I found Mr Corbett was not able to commence to

⁶³¹ A.F. Sawyer, *Handwritten Recollections*, n.d. [1940s], W.G. Hammond Papers, MS 134, folder 34a, Library of the Auckland Institute and War Memorial Museum.

⁶³² *Waikato Times*, 22 September 1887, p. 2.

⁶³³ *Te Aroha News*, 29 September 1888, p. 2.

⁶³⁴ E.K. Cooper to Minister of Mines, 8 July 1891, Mines Department, MD 1, 91/566, ANZ-W.

⁶³⁵ Thames Correspondent, *Auckland Star*, 23 June 1892, p. 3.

erect the plant for a few months, and through illness I was not able to attend properly to the mine. Eventually the battery was finished and a water race which cost considerably over £3,000, instead of the amount estimated. My partners then refused to pay any more money, and when the battery was started to crush the dirt in that part of the mine known as the swamp, the results were disastrous, and I was obliged to stop. Afterwards I employed the men prospecting, and I went to considerable expense opening up a block on Butler's reef and other work. I obtained some good stone, ten tons of which I sent Home, and obtained a very satisfactory price. I then constructed a tramway connecting the battery and mine, 75 chains. Afterwards I started crushing 400 tons of ore I had got out, and had been informed that it would go an ounce to the ton, but the battery only gave two pennyweights. After considerable work on Butler's reef, which resulted in the reef becoming small and poor, I gave up work here it being a great loss.⁶³⁶

He had been forced to abandon work

as the men refused to do more until their wages were paid, a thing which he was unable to do. The last payment of wages he had to make up by giving his watch and chain as security for £50, which were lent to him. As the men were pressing for payment he had no other course open than to file his petition. He attributed all his difficulties to the Jubilee mine. Had the estimates in connection with the battery and the reports on the property been anywhere near what was stated, he did not think his friends would have forsaken him. By selling interests in the Fame and Fortune mine he had been enabled to pay his way until now, but these shares were no longer saleable, and a refusal on the part of some of the shareholders to pay any more calls has brought things to a deadlock, and as a local shareholder he has been called upon to meet all demands made upon the syndicate. He had paid £3317 10s in calls in the Fame and Fortune mine.⁶³⁷

His unsecured debts amounted to £793 5s 7d, and, depending on what was received from the sale of property held as securities, his total assets might be £5,355.⁶³⁸ At the first meeting of his creditors, Cooper told questioners 'that if he could get time to go to England he was thoroughly

⁶³⁶ *Thames Advertiser*, 12 October 1892, p. 2.

⁶³⁷ *Ohinemuri Gazette*, 15 October 1892, p. 8.

⁶³⁸ *Thames Advertiser*, 12 October 1892, p. 2; *Auckland Weekly News*, 15 October 1892, p. 20.

convinced that he could obtain money both to pay 20s in the £ and to develop the properties. He was quite satisfied that he could redeem his estate, if only given time, although, of course, he could not give any absolute guarantee'. He owed 'about £350' in wages and contracts in the Jubilee. 'If the opportunity were given him, his estate would really be worth 20s in the £. After some discussion', his creditors unanimously agreed to suspend proceedings for six months to allow him 'to go to England for the purpose of obtaining money to meet his liabilities by means of floating the Jubilee mine', on condition that the secured creditors consented and the warden granted six months' protection.⁶³⁹

Both these conditions were met, but as negotiations took a long time not till the following May could he cable that within 14 days he would send sufficient money to pay the wages owing.⁶⁴⁰ As the money was not sent as promised, in July the Thames firm that had provided machinery along with two others owed money had their claims recognized by the Supreme Court; Cooper was still 'unable to raise the capital' as hoped.⁶⁴¹ He had hopes of floating the Jubilee, but to do this his creditors were asked 'to give a month or six weeks' further time' to allow the flotation which would mean everyone would be paid in full.⁶⁴² Two extra months were allowed, during which time extra creditors were registered.⁶⁴³ Late in July a cable announced the formation of the Fame and Fortune Company,⁶⁴⁴ but not till the beginning of September did he remit sufficient funds to pay his wages men and the money due to the council for water used in the this battery.⁶⁴⁵

His bankruptcy was closed in April 1894, and five months later he was discharged, having paid 10s in the £ 'and the remaining 10s in shares in a syndicate'.⁶⁴⁶ There was no opposition, the assignee commenting that Cooper 'had done his best to pay his debts'.⁶⁴⁷ In December he was able to

⁶³⁹ *Thames Advertiser*, 18 October 1892, p. 2; *Ohinemuri Gazette*, 22 October 1892, p. 7.

⁶⁴⁰ *Thames Advertiser*, 6 May 1893, p. 2.

⁶⁴¹ Supreme Court, *Thames Advertiser*, 26 July 1893, p. 3.

⁶⁴² *Thames Star*, 16 June 1893, p. 2.

⁶⁴³ *Thames Advertiser*, 26 July 1893, p. 3.

⁶⁴⁴ *Thames Star*, 28 July 1893, p. 2.

⁶⁴⁵ *Thames Advertiser*, 7 September 1893, p. 2.

⁶⁴⁶ Supreme Court, Bankruptcy Register 1884-1927, folio 31, BBAE 11029/1a, ANZ-A; advertisement, *Observer*, 28 April 1894, p. 14; *Thames Advertiser*, 30 August 1894, p. 3; Supreme Court, *New Zealand Herald*, 25 September 1894, p. 3.

⁶⁴⁷ Supreme Court, *Auckland Star*, 24 September 1894, p. 4.

repay a debt to the Bank of New Zealand incurred in February 1892.⁶⁴⁸ The following March, the Bank of New South Wales' inspector noted that his special account was £3,291 4s 1d. 'We hold Debentures of NZ Jubilee Syndicate for £3250 repayable 31/12/96', and that with a new company floated the bank hoped to avoid any loss. A later note, undated, recorded that the debentures had been paid in London.⁶⁴⁹ Four months later, he had a very small account in the Bank of New Zealand, which when closed in mid-1897 was noted as being a small credit account.⁶⁵⁰ He had gone to England in August 1895 to float his Wharekiraupunga property in particular.⁶⁵¹ On his departure, the *Thames Star* wrote that he had 'the good wishes of everyone who knows him. He has fought a long uphill fight and there is not a soul on the field who would envy him of any of the good fortune he so richly deserves, and which we have reason to believe he will soon be blessed with'.⁶⁵² When he returned, in March 1897, the *Observer* commented that he 'deserved an ovation' because he had 'accomplished wonders in the way of obtaining British capital for goldfields development'.⁶⁵³ He told an Auckland journalist that in London the mining market had been

in an unsettled state, but a feeling existed that a boom was ahead in New Zealand properties, and that it would be our turn next. However, investors were anxious to see returns from mines they had put their money in. They wanted properties in which the reefs carried payable ore. The public had been very hard hit over Africa and West Australia, and this had made them "shy" for the past 18 months. If Aucklanders could give properties that would produce returns, there would be plenty of English capital available to develop our mines.⁶⁵⁴

⁶⁴⁸ *Mercantile and Bankruptcy Gazette*, 6 December 1894, p. 568.

⁶⁴⁹ Bank of New South Wales, Inspector's Half-Yearly Report, 4 March 1895, Thames, Special A List Accounts, p. 245, Acc. no. 102, box 4, Westpac Archives, Wellington.

⁶⁵⁰ Bank of New Zealand, Paeroa Branch, Half-Yearly Balance Book, 30 September 1895, Statement of Accounts; 30 September 1897, Accounts Closed, Bank of New Zealand Archives, Wellington.

⁶⁵¹ *Thames Advertiser*, 7 August 1895, p. 2; cartoon, *Observer*, 17 August 1895, p. 7.

⁶⁵² *Thames Star*, 7 August 1895, p. 2.

⁶⁵³ *Thames Advertiser*, 13 March 1897, p. 2; *Observer*, 20 March 1897, p. 3.

⁶⁵⁴ *Auckland Star*, 12 March 1897, p. 3.

At the beginning of August he returned to England (and visited British Columbia, presumably to inspect mining prospects).⁶⁵⁵ Late that year he complained that the protection granted him while he sought capital was ‘not long enough to give him confidence that his effort will allow of completion in the time granted of what he has undertaken’.⁶⁵⁶

In May 1900 Cooper complained to the minister that he had ‘invested every farthing of his own money and a great deal of his personal friends’ money’,⁶⁵⁷ and four months later claimed to have ‘lost every shilling I had in the world by sticking to mining in New Zealand’.⁶⁵⁸ In September 1901 he told the arbitration court that he had ‘experienced difficulty in raising money’ in England for the past 20 years, ‘and he anticipated more difficulty still’.⁶⁵⁹ Two months later, he returned to England once again to raise more capital, with the blessing of the *Thames Star*:

Thames residents will remember that Mr Cooper has been most successful in his efforts to obtain additional capital, and at times under the most adverse conditions. That being the case, we have considerable confidence that Mr Cooper will not fail in his mission and that when he reaches England it will not be very long before he succeeds in obtaining further capital.

He was seeking funds for his Thames and Waitekauri mines only, for the time was ‘not yet opportune to deal with other properties’, as ‘many of the strong financial combinations’ were ‘inclined to be chary of New Zealand ventures’. Should the London market change its attitude, he would ‘endeavour to assist in the development of many promising claims in this and other districts’. The newspaper wished him ‘a pleasant voyage, and a successful sojourn at Home. It would be a good thing for the district if we had more men of his stamp amongst us’.⁶⁶⁰ The *Observer* asked ‘If the goldfields have not been saved again, now that Kersey Cooper’ was ‘going Home for more money?’⁶⁶¹ Shortly before he returned in the following April,

⁶⁵⁵ *Thames Advertiser*, 23 July 1897, p. 2, 10 August 1897, p. 3.

⁶⁵⁶ *Thames Advertiser*, 3 January 1898, p. 4.

⁶⁵⁷ E.K. Cooper to James McGowan, 3 May 1900, Mines Department, MD 1, 01/80, ANZ-W.

⁶⁵⁸ E.K. Cooper to James McGowan, 11 September 1900, Mines Department, MD 1, 01/80, ANZ-W.

⁶⁵⁹ *Auckland Weekly News*, 26 September 1901, p. 37.

⁶⁶⁰ *Thames Star*, 29 October 1901, p. 3.

⁶⁶¹ *Observer*, 2 November 1901, p. 20.

it was rumoured that as his visit had ‘resulted fairly well’ there was ‘a chance of additional capital being secured for some of the mines with which he is associated’.⁶⁶² Upon arrival, he proclaimed that his visit had ‘resulted satisfactorily’, which was how he interpreted providing ‘every prospect of further capital being expended in development work, etc’.⁶⁶³ He opened a new account with the Bank of New Zealand after returning which by September was a ‘fair’ credit account.⁶⁶⁴

In August 1904, when inadequate capital allied with inadequate output required another attempt to obtain more financial assistance, the *Observer* anticipated his return from England ‘with more money for goldfields development. Never say die’.⁶⁶⁵ A Thames newspaper understood he would be ‘fortified with additional capital to carry on operations at Thames and elsewhere’.⁶⁶⁶ Upon returning in the following month he told questioners that there was no market in England for New Zealand mines, investors being interested only in other countries. He was reported to have made ‘satisfactory arrangements’ to develop his mines, but when asked ‘was a little reticent. “I want to have a good look around”, said he’, announcing that he would visit Waitekauri.⁶⁶⁷ As the *Observer* noted, he had returned ‘with very modified expectations for the investment of foreign capital on our goldfields in the immediate future’.⁶⁶⁸ In December, after visiting Waitekauri, he announced his ninth trip to England, being ‘sanguine of good results. All that is wanted is honest managers and honest directors’. He had great hopes for ‘Waitekauri and the district generally’, commenting that the boom of the 1890s ‘did more to poison the minds of the English speculators against investment than anything else could have done, but now the honest man is going to have an innings, and the “sharper” must take a back seat’.⁶⁶⁹ He returned in December 1905,⁶⁷⁰ the last time before

⁶⁶² *Thames Star*, 25 March 1902, p. 4.

⁶⁶³ *Thames Star*, 24 April 1902, p. 4.

⁶⁶⁴ Bank of New Zealand, Paeroa Branch, Half-Yearly Balance Book, 30 September 1902, Accounts Opened, Bank of New Zealand Archives, Wellington.

⁶⁶⁵ *Observer*, 20 August 1904, p. 7.

⁶⁶⁶ Editorial, *Thames Star*, 18 August 1904, p. 2.

⁶⁶⁷ *Thames Star*, 15 September 1904, p. 2.

⁶⁶⁸ *Observer*, 12 November 1904, p. 4.

⁶⁶⁹ *Ohinemuri Gazette*, 12 December 1904, p. 2.

⁶⁷⁰ *Thames Star*, 27 December 1905, p. 2.

settling England permanently; he did not claim to have obtained any capital.

CONFLICT WITH THOMAS HENRY RUSSELL

Thomas Henry Russell⁶⁷¹ was the son of Thomas Russell, one of the leading entrepreneurs in colonial New Zealand. With his father, he acquired mines in the Waihi district from 1887 onwards, believing ‘that a company with large capital resources could carry out the experiments costly in money and time that would produce high yields of gold and silver from the refractory reefs there’. His father successfully floated the Waihi Gold Mining Company in London, with a capital of £100,000 and both English and Auckland directors; after cyanide treatment was introduced it became one of the great gold mines of the world.⁶⁷² In addition, T.H. Russell acquired property in nearby fields. In 1890 he purchased the Waitekauri mine and battery, the former being an unprofitable investment.⁶⁷³ In February 1892, Robert Worth and his party sold their ‘New Find’ at Komata to him for £4,000.⁶⁷⁴ Two years later, he acquired the Golden Cross, at the headwaters of the Waitekauri Valley.⁶⁷⁵ In 1895, he floated the Waitekauri Company in England to develop the Waitekauri, Komata, and Golden Cross mines as one unit.⁶⁷⁶

In March 1895, Cooper sought the forfeiture for non-working of the Waitekauri Licensed Holding by the Komata Company, claiming Russell was merely holding it ‘in order that he might benefit himself by eventually selling it to capitalists’, and arguing that the protection granted was illegal. When Russell gave evidence of ‘considerable expenditure on the Waitekauri battery’, Cooper ‘protested against any consideration being given’ to this because it was treating Komata ore solely. If such consideration was given, ‘they might move a battery to the Thames and still claim consideration for

⁶⁷¹ See paper on Billy Nicholl.

⁶⁷² McAra, pp. 46, 48-49, 75; R.C.J. Stone, *Makers of Fortune: A colonial business community and its fall* (Auckland, 1973), p. 190.

⁶⁷³ Bell and Fraser, p. 9.

⁶⁷⁴ *Thames Advertiser*, 5 February 1892, p. 2.

⁶⁷⁵ H.A. Gordon to Minister of Mines, 24 July 1894, *AJHR*, 1894, C-3, p. 43.

⁶⁷⁶ For details, see H.A. Gordon to Minister of Mines, 24 July 1895, *AJHR*, 1895, C-3, p. 60; Bell and Fraser, pp. 9, 12-13, 108.

it in manning ground at Waitekauri'.⁶⁷⁷ The *Observer* headlined its long report 'Our Mining Laws. A Remarkable Action. How Companies are Promoted. "Gridironing" in Mining. How Mining Leases May be Held for Speculative Purposes'. The case excited 'considerable interest, the attendance of those concerned in mining being large during the whole of the day'. Cooper's counsel, Theo Cooper, stressed that during six and a half years the mine had been protected for three and a half years, the warden being unaware of previous periods of protection. Whilst under Russell's control 'the workings had been allowed to fall into decay, the timbers had rotted or had been removed, and the mine had been practically abandoned. And yet, all these years it had been shepherded by those who wished to use it as an asset in forming a company with the aid of English capital'. The shepherding was done by 'a kind of mock tribute', whereby 'two men were placed upon the ground. But instead of the usual way with tributes, by which the men paid for the use of the ground, these men were paid 15 [shillings] per week each for fossicking on the ground, and though they were called tributers, they were allowed to retain all the gold they got in addition'. For two months the mine was entirely unworked, even though protection had not been obtained, and at other times there were 'occasional absences of substantial duration'. In their evidence, the tributers confirmed the truth of these claims, as did a surveyor and mining engineer along with Ralph, who deposed that nothing apart from surface work was done since 1892. Russell explained all the expenditure on the mine and battery, and argued that the tributers did 'legitimate mining'. Some mine managers explained that little work would be required to repair the mine. When one manager was asked what the effect would be of a successful prosecution, 'the Court laughed', and the warden, Henry Eyre Kenny, 'said while he could not admit this evidence there was no doubt the effect would be most disastrous to the whole district'. There was much legal argument about which Act applied to the plaintiff, but Kenny decided that only one period of protection, in 1894, could be attacked, shortly after stating, 'The question of protection cannot enter into the case'. Russell's counsel hoped Kenny 'would not forfeit the ground, but would consider that the case would be met by the infliction of a fine'. Kenny continued to be unsympathetic to Cooper's case, despite the latter trying to prove the ground was being held for speculative purposes.⁶⁷⁸

⁶⁷⁷ Warden's Court, *Thames Advertiser*, 28 March 1895, p. 3.

⁶⁷⁸ *Observer*, 6 April 1895, p. 4.

After adjourning the case to consider ‘many interesting legal points’,⁶⁷⁹ although he agreed the two miners were not genuine tributers Kenny in a long and detailed judgment rejected most of Theo Cooper’s argument because the company had failed to fulfill the conditions of its license on only 31 days over five months, and did not order its forfeiture. ‘Justice, in my opinion, will be sufficiently vindicated by the imposition of a small fine’, a mere £1 11s, and costs, £10 1s.⁶⁸⁰ The ‘immense mass of evidence produced’ by Cooper ‘to prove continuous neglect’ was ruled irrelevant because he ‘could not lay a specific charge’ and then asked the court ‘to forfeit for a great number of acts of neglect not charged at all’. Kenny also noted

that much capital had been made by the complainant out of the fact that the defendant had obtained two protections under circumstances which, it was alleged, made them *ultra vires*. One of these protections, however, had been granted after the complaint was laid, and could therefore by no possibility be imported into the case, whilst evidence of the other was irrelevant on the general principle

he was applying. After rejecting other arguments, he stated that ‘no one in their senses could consider the thirty one days’ neglect by the company to be an offence which ought to involve nothing less than the forfeiture’.⁶⁸¹ Cooper appealed against this decision, seeking forfeiture, but, being in London, his appeal did not proceed.⁶⁸² The *Thames Advertiser* commented that Cooper had ‘a great many sympathisers in his attempt to curb the operations of a party which seems to be mopping up more than its share of the up-country plums’.⁶⁸³

In August 1895 the *Observer* wondered whether it was ‘really safe for those two mining big guns, Russell and Kersey Cooper, to travel in company Home with a big mine each to float under their arms’.⁶⁸⁴ The following month it cited a passenger on their ship telling a friend that ‘the pair were as friendly as bees in a honey-pot on the passage’, and commented: ‘Shaken

⁶⁷⁹ *Auckland Weekly News*, 27 April 1895, p. 35.

⁶⁸⁰ *Thames Advertiser*, 22 April 1895, p. 2.

⁶⁸¹ *Auckland Weekly News*, 27 April 1895, p. 35.

⁶⁸² Supreme Court, *New Zealand Herald*, 12 December 1895, p. 3; Auckland High Court, Appeals, BBAE 5528/2, no. 36, ANZ-A.

⁶⁸³ *Thames Advertiser*, 22 April 1895, p. 2.

⁶⁸⁴ *Observer*, 17 August 1895, p. 3, ‘Mining Magnates on Tour’ (cartoon), p. 7.

hands, eh? Well, having mining properties to float, perhaps it is as well that they should forget their little feud while they are in London'.⁶⁸⁵ It would be a temporary end to hostilities, for in December 1903 it was reported that Cooper had been 'measuring swords with his old adversary, Thomas Russell, in London, lately. It is more equal territory for Kersey in the Old Country'.⁶⁸⁶ Details of this continued squabble, apparently with Russell's father, have not been traced; Thomas Russell would die in the following year.⁶⁸⁷

VIEWS ON THE MINING INDUSTRY

In January 1897, an English journalist asked Cooper whether he looked 'hopefully' on the New Zealand industry:

"I feel satisfied there will be many good payable mines found, but it won't do to lose sight of care, economy and good management at the mines – and on this side the directors and secretary will require to know more about the business they undertake on behalf of the shareholders than the generality of them do, and particularly in curtailing office and incidental expenses, never forgetting that all the money they spend and are paid has to be earned at the mine before the shareholders, who have found the money, will get anything. I look upon the present system of qualifying directors with one or two hundred shares as fatal to any enterprise. I would make the qualification large enough to disperse all the guinea-pigs and ensure obtaining good careful business men, who would treat mining as a legitimate business, instead of a careless gamble."⁶⁸⁸

In October, after returning to England after another visit to New Zealand, he was asked about the labour clauses:

"The labour clauses were invented to frighten the investor and please the working man. They are very harmless, and are neutralised by protection for non-working, which is procurable at the different warden's courts."

⁶⁸⁵ *Observer*, 21 September 1895, p. 3.

⁶⁸⁶ *Observer*, 12 December 1903, p. 6.

⁶⁸⁷ Stone, p. 190.

⁶⁸⁸ Special Commissioner, 'Interview with Mr E. Kersey Cooper', *British Australasian*, 4 February 1897, p. 243.

“Then you don’t consider the tenure of New Zealand mine-holdings bad?”

“Certainly not as it is understood in New Zealand.”...

“What do you think of the proposal of the New Zealand Government to purchase the Cassel Gold Extracting Company’s rights to claim a royalty from those using cyanide in New Zealand?”

“Who has a better right to correct an error than those who make it? The patent never should have been granted. It virtually granted a right to a corporation to prevent low grade propositions being worked. The public do not mine for amusement. They invest money in mining with a view of making good interest on the money invested, and I look upon the present attitude of the Government as a very good indication that they endorse my ideas, and are anxious to encourage the mining industry.... Just fancy having to pay 10 per cent of the gold and silver extraction to a company which has done nothing to earn it, and to have to abide by restrictions imposed in the contract granting the right to use cyanide which are childish in their audacity. Yes, the New Zealand Government’s action will increase considerably the dividends to be paid by the mines.⁶⁸⁹

Late that year, when having difficulty raising capital in London, he was uncertain how to proceed.

I am very fond of New Zealand, and I am quite satisfied there are a lot of payable mines there, but a good mine like a good business can be wrecked by bad and reckless management. The directors in England as a body knowing little or nothing about the business they undertake to direct, so that it falls upon the managers of the mines to furnish the necessary knowledge to secure a success.⁶⁹⁰

In mid-1898, he wrote to the London *Financial Times* about the New Zealand industry. In addition to commenting on government policy, he attacked ‘that curse of all goldfields, “the travelling mining expert,” who just stops long enough in a country to leave it without knowing anything of it, or what is produced in it’. Amongst other factors ‘that militate against the mining industry in general’, he emphasized ‘costly management, or, rather, mismanagement’.

⁶⁸⁹ *British Australasian*, 28 October 1897, p. 1926.

⁶⁹⁰ London Correspondent, *Auckland Star*, 30 December 1897, p. 3.

Think of the quantity of directors each mine is called upon to support, most of whom know little or nothing about the mining business, and attend as few of the company's meetings as possible whilst the item "directors' fees" is with all companies a serious matter. The sooner a determined stand is taken by the great body of shareholders in mining companies to have their interest carefully and economically managed, and to be advised regularly of what is going on in mines so soon as the news is received, the quicker the cloud of depression hanging over mining will disappear.⁶⁹¹

He was referring to his own difficulties with English directors in addition to making a general point.

'Enquirer' wrote to the *Financial Times* criticizing the 'present deplorable condition' of the New Zealand mining market, a 'striking contrast' to what had been expected during the boom of 1895. In addition to blaming the government's policies, he argued that successful mining required payable quartz, a 'successful and economical method of extraction', and 'good management and a sufficient working capital', and called for scientific testing of ore to find the right process.⁶⁹² Cooper, then living in Brighton, replied that incompetent directors were 'answerable for the greater part of the losses incurred by the shareholders'. Directors should satisfy themselves about the value of the property, appoint capable managers, and provide adequate working capital: 'failing this is a form of deceit which has brought many mining enterprises to ruin'. Instead of proving the ore reserves, 'firstly costly buildings and a battery are generally erected; then if the company wants to know anything about its ore reserves a reconstruction is required'. Difficulties in treating the ore could 'be overcome if the values are present to pay for the treatment'. As methods had improved, 'many New Zealand properties will pay to work that could not be looked at a few years ago', citing the Martha reef at Waihi as an example. New Zealand had plenty of competent men able to treat ore. He agreed with 'Enquirer' that 'it was a disgrace and an outrage and an abuse of confidence which should be met by dismissal' for investors not to receive reliable reports: 'Unless the shareholders make a firm stand, insist upon

⁶⁹¹ *Financial Times*, n.d., reprinted in *Thames Advertiser*, 25 August 1898, p. 1.

⁶⁹² Letter from 'Enquirer', *Financial Times*, n.d., reprinted in *Thames Star*, 31 August 1898, p. 2.

their rightful position being acknowledged, wasteful management and an utter disregard to their interests will exist'.⁶⁹³

'Enquirer' considered Cooper's reply 'able', but argued that most of New Zealand's 'patchy and uncertain reefs' would not be successfully treated and that 'the technical talent' in the colony resembled 'the Spanish fleet n being of least use when most wanted'.⁶⁹⁴ Cooper replied at length:

I admit that for regular returns and regular dividends it is less satisfactory to mine a patchy reef than one that carries good values and is uniform in character, but for the chance of making a fortune give me a patchy reef, such as the reefs the Thames goldfields possess. The chances are bigger both ways, I will agree, but there is a charm about specimen stones worth from 1oz of gold to perhaps 4 or 5oz to the pound of stone that I don't even think "Inquirer" could resist.

He recalled that the rich patches at Thames, especially the Caledonian, were found within ten acres.

I consider these results speak volumes for the Thames goldfield, when one considers the reefs have been hardly sampled. The great secret of mining is to work. Let the mining companies expend their money in labor well directed; if they do this on properties known to contain good reefs, patches will be forthcoming which will pay big dividends and put the shares up to big prices. Next to employing labor to explore the reefs, economy must be considered in every detail, and then with a trustworthy and capable manager – living on the mine, and not 50 or 100 miles away from it – and just as few capable directors as the law will allow, there will be many good paying mines in New Zealand yet.

He urged shareholders 'to look after their interests. The majority of directors never given them an anxious thought, but devote their sole attention to fees, and, if occasion offers, make use of information from the mine for their own benefit'.⁶⁹⁵

⁶⁹³ Letter from E.K. Cooper, *Financial Times*, n.d., reprinted in *Thames Star*, 31 August 1898, p. 2.

⁶⁹⁴ Letter from 'Enquirer', *Financial Times*, n.d., reprinted in *Thames Star*, 31 August 1898, p. 2, and extract in *Auckland Star*, 30 August 1898, p. 3.

⁶⁹⁵ Letter from E.K. Cooper, *Financial Times*, n.d., reprinted in *Thames Star*, 31 August 1898, p. 2.

To Samuel Cochrane Macky, a mining agent and legal manager,⁶⁹⁶ reading Cooper's letters to the London financial papers was 'a treat', for he hit 'the right nail on the head when he says that our English companies are ruined by costly mismanagement in London'. He noted Cooper's suggestion that 'in small companies the number of directors should be reduced to three', who 'should not get more than £100 per annum each', and considered Cooper had shown that New Zealand's mining laws were not at fault. Anyone who took up ground 'for bona fide working instead of for speculative purpose must agree with him as to our labour conditions. The publication of Mr Cooper's letter should do us good in England if shareholders take his advice'.⁶⁹⁷ James Renshaw thought the Thames public should thank him 'for the very plucky manner in which he takes up cudgels on behalf of the mining industry'. Although Cooper was generally correct in his 'straight out utterances', Renshaw disagreed with his reviving the gold duty issue and casting 'an unnecessary slur upon the mine managers and others interested in mining, who so well take their share of work in the different local bodies'.⁶⁹⁸

The *Observer* noted that Cooper had been 'writing strongly in some of the London financial papers' in defence of New Zealand mining, commented on his letters, and responded to these papers' criticism of the industry:

They don't judge it by the annual gold yield, or even by the mines that are on gold. They base their criticisms upon the alleged mines which were worked off in boom time on the London speculator, and which proved to be reefless altogether, or, so far as prospecting went, barren of gold. But, as Mr Cooper has been pointing out, very logically, the auriferous resources of the colony ought not to be condemned because the "wild-cat" holdings don't produce gold. And he is right. Some of the properties taken over by the Home people from Auckland vendors ought never to have been touched except as prospecting areas. Gold-bearing reefs were never known to exist in them, reefs have not been found in some of them to this day, but this does not prove that we do not possess goldfields – and even payable goldfields.⁶⁹⁹

⁶⁹⁶ See *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 2, p. 465; *Auckland Weekly News*, 5 November 1914, p. 21.

⁶⁹⁷ Letter from S. Cochrane Macky, *Auckland Star*, 23 August 1898, p. 2.

⁶⁹⁸ Letter from James Renshaw, *Thames Star*, 3 September 1898, p. 1.

⁶⁹⁹ *Observer*, 10 September 1898, p. 2.

In April 1900, Cooper wrote another ‘strong letter’ to the *Mining Journal* urging the overhaul of ‘the whole conditions of mining’:

Mine managers must be paid only reasonable amounts, and long terms of engagement should be done away with. To have the management of more than one mine, unless under the same ownership, does not work evenly. Mine reports should be available to shareholders during office hours. The expenses of management must be kept down, keeping in mind the fact is that the miner wins the ore. The appalling waste of money in New Zealand since the last mining boom defied description. New Zealand wants bona fide prospecting, and the bogus experts sent somewhere else.⁷⁰⁰

WANTING A MINE MANAGER’S CERTIFICATE

In July 1889, having urged William Fraser, a former warden who had become a Member of Parliament,⁷⁰¹ to assist practical miners obtain mine manager’s certificates, Cooper informed the press that Fraser had obtained the extension of the time required to apply and that examination papers would ‘be revised, so that any really practical miner will be able to pass’.⁷⁰² Cooper claimed that ‘our paternal Government, with its old women’s notions, seek to hunt the greater part of our practical men out of the country, and hope by such action to fill their places with nice smooth-faced boys who have been trained to pass examinations by likely an examiner who has never been in a mine’.⁷⁰³ Edward Roberts Edwards, a genuine mining expert,⁷⁰⁴ praised Cooper for his ‘prompt action’ but feared it was not enough and urged mine managers to resist having to study at least some of the topics being examined, which seemed more applicable to coal mining.⁷⁰⁵

⁷⁰⁰ London Correspondent [writing on 27 April 1900], *Auckland Star*, 6 June 1900, p. 5.

⁷⁰¹ See paper on Harry Kenrick.

⁷⁰² William Fraser to E.K. Cooper, n.d. (telegram), printed in letter from E.K. Cooper, *Thames Star*, 31 July 1889, p. 2.

⁷⁰³ Letter from E.K. Cooper, *Thames Star*, 31 July 1889, p. 2.

⁷⁰⁴ See Marriage Certificate of Edward Roberts Edwards, 1867/4603, BDM; advertisement, *Thames Star*, 24 July 1880, p. 4; advertisement, *New Zealand Herald*, 24 February 1883, p. 8; E.R. Edwards, ‘The Gold and Silver Ores’, *Thames Advertiser*, 8 March 1888, p. 3, 30 March 1888, p. 2; *Observer*, 19 September 1896, p. 20.

⁷⁰⁵ Letter from E.R. Edwards, *Thames Advertiser*, 1 August 1889, p. 2.

In January 1891, Cooper sent some suggestions to the Mines Department about the new mining bill. 'One of the most important is certificates for mine managers', for the Thames managers had not passed exams, 'neither are they capable of doing so'. They had a 'monopoly' in managing this field because of being in charge of a mine when the Act passed 'or were friends of the Mining Inspector', which was unfair to many capable men.⁷⁰⁶ Six months later, he mentioned to Seddon, the Minister of Mines, that he did not have a mine manager's certificate, which would put him in a 'false position if an accident happened at either of my mines'. By not having one he would 'be subjected to the same treatment as the poor wretch at the Huntly coal mines', a reference to a recent fatality, 'and ruined not only financially but otherwise'. He alleged that the mining inspector at Thames gave certificates to his incompetent friends.⁷⁰⁷ In applying for a certificate in February 1899 he explained to Cadman that 'to conform with the mining regulations' he had 'for years' employed a man holding a certificate,

but however I fix it my people at home look upon me as the manager and would not find any money for any other manager. God forbid anything should separate me from my old faithful servant but life is uncertain and Willetts is not enjoying the best of health. There is no one knows the Fame and Fortune mine like Henry Willetts and myself, and if anything happened to him I should without holding a certificate be in a fix. – outside of my New Zealand experience which includes a long term of working underground I have mined in England, North Wales, Canada and the United States without disgracing myself in any way, and I think I am entitled to a 1st class mine managers certificate. I have never had a man killed or seriously injured whilst I have been in charge of a mine and I think you will find by reference I have worked up to the mining regulations and all my returns to the Government have been creditably made out and rendered punctually. I ought to have had one given me when the first batch were granted 15 or 16 years ago – as I had been in charge of the manganese mines 2 years and was in charge of a mine at Te Aroha at the time. Now a lot of Boys from the school of mines and young men from different parts of the world without any experience of practical mine management can sneer at me, and

⁷⁰⁶ E.K. Cooper to Mines Department, 26 January 1891, Mines Department, MD 1, 91/773, ANZ-W.

⁷⁰⁷ E.K. Cooper to R.J. Seddon (Minister of Mines), 8 July 1891, Mines Department, MD 1, 91/566, ANZ-W.

say oh! Cooper what does he know he has not even a mine manager's certificate. Now I would like before you leave office as a gracious act and as an acknowledgement as it were that you have buried the hatchet which never should have been in evidence – I was drawn into a false position and I have regretted it ever since.⁷⁰⁸

The under-secretary responded that, as the period during which service certificates could be issued without an examination had lapsed, there was 'no power to comply with your request'.⁷⁰⁹ After this rejection became public knowledge,⁷¹⁰ Cooper was highly indignant, arguing that he had provided 'ample and just reasons' why he was entitled to one but by being mentioned in the *Mines Record* it 'assumed the form of ridicule and has passed through the papers of New Zealand and Australia by design'.⁷¹¹ He was assured that the result of his application, like all others', was published in the normal way.⁷¹²

On 24 April Cooper informed the new minister, James McGowan, that he 'was now in the fix I pointed out to the late minister Mr Cadman when applying to him for a certificate ... (my sin was going home to get more money to work the mining industry of the Colony, and consequently did not get a warrant and then a certificate)'. As Willetts had left, he had no certificated manager in the *Fame and Fortune*.

Am I expected to fill Willett's place by a certificated mine manager who happens to be out of work – teach him all about the mine and try and alter him into a business man – it won't pay me or my co-partners to do so – before Willetts had his certificate granted him I tried several certificated men – but found them dismal failures who would Bankrupt any gold field in the world if they had charge of it (names on application). I am not saying there are no good certificated mine managers in New Zealand but any I would employ are set fast elsewhere....

⁷⁰⁸ E.K. Cooper to A.J. Cadman (Minister of Mines), 27 February 1899, Mines Department, MD 1, 01/80, ANZ-W.

⁷⁰⁹ Under-Secretary, Mines Department, to E.K. Cooper, 10 March 1899, Mines Department, MD 1, 01/80, ANZ-W.

⁷¹⁰ For example, *Ohinemuri Gazette*, 3 May 1899, p. 3.

⁷¹¹ E.K. Cooper to Minister of Mines, 7 October 1899, Mines Department, MD 1, 01/80, ANZ-W.

⁷¹² Under-Secretary, Mines Department, to E.K. Cooper, 17 October 1899, Mines Department, MD 1, 01/80, ANZ-W.

My afternoon shift boss J.H. Cooper (no relation) is at present in charge under me he has spent several years in the Big Mount Morgan mine and in this country has been principally in charge of Rock-drills. As far as I can see he is a practical man with a lot of go in him – he is attending the School of Mines with a view to a certificate in due course – but that does not meet the case – will you devise the necessary relief.⁷¹³

McGowan was informed by the under-secretary that giving certificates was solely for the Board of Examiners to decide'.⁷¹⁴ On 30 April his afternoon shift boss reported that in his absence the mining inspector's assistant had been looking for him '& saying that if a certificated man was not appointed at once he would take action accordingly'. Spoken to, the assistant explained that he had received a letter 'informing him that our mine was without a certificated manager consequently his hand forced. So I have done the only (to my view) thing possible' by temporarily appointing William Connon⁷¹⁵ 'to walk through the mine every day about crib time' until Cooper returned.⁷¹⁶

After his return, Cooper wrote again to McGowan, on 3 May, explaining that he had been at Waitekauri seeking a certificated man to found the one he wanted 'won't let the drink alone'. Although the mining inspector knew of his situation and that he was seeking a replacement to Willetts, his assistant threatened a fine of '£50 and £5 for every day' without a certificated manager, and insisted on a daily inspection by one (as well as disputing his battery returns). 'Now how many mines get a daily inspection does your Thames Examiner Mr [Thomas Aitken] Dunlop inspect all his mines every day! He could not'. He charged the government with granting one man 'a second class certificate as a reward for killing 3 men and ruining the Jubilee mine' and another a first class one 'for using a lot of English Capital' in the Alburnia 'and further damning the Country'.⁷¹⁷ Two days later he appointed Connon, who had a second-class manager's

⁷¹³ E.K. Cooper to James McGowan (Minister of Mines), 24 April 1900, Mines Department, MD 1, 01/80, ANZ-W.

⁷¹⁴ Under-Secretary, Mines Department, to James McGowan, 27 April 1900, Mines Department, MD 1, 01/80, ANZ-W.

⁷¹⁵ See *Thames Star*, 6 August 1896, p. 2, 9 December 1898, p. 2, advertisement, 7 April 1899, p. 2, 15 December 1905, p. 2.

⁷¹⁶ J.H. Cooper to E.K. Cooper, 30 April 1900, Mines Department, MD 1, 01/80, ANZ-W.

⁷¹⁷ E.K. Cooper to James McGowan, 3 May 1900, Mines Department, MD 1, 01/80, ANZ-W.

certificate, as manager.⁷¹⁸ Early in June he was ‘informed by wire, that question of granting him certificate as Mine Mgr, is for Bd of Examiners, not for Minister to decide’.⁷¹⁹

In September, Cooper reminded McGowan of his letter of 3 May because Connon ‘would ruin a Bank’.

I believe he is one of the honest ones but he has no head and has no idea of administration brought up in the school of picked stone and general genial country &c &c the leading features in the era between the Caledonian days and the big-reef era.

I had hoped to have seen some legislation this session that would have stemmed the tide by which practical men’s utility would have been recognized and an effort made to keep them in the country – as the Mining department is determined I shall not have a right to legally manage my affairs and those of my associates will you increase the number of men who can be managed by a non-certificated mine-manager or will you grant 2nd class certificates

to two men he named who were ‘both capable honest miners’. Unless McGowan could ‘see your way to meet the case’ he would have to tell his associates ‘their only alternatives [were] to reduce their claim down to an area which can be held by 12 miners or cut their loss’.⁷²⁰ Once again he was told that the Board of Examiners alone could grant certificates.⁷²¹

In January 1901 he yet again applied for a certificate:

I feel sure it is not the Government’s wish or that of the Board of Examiners to disqualify me from getting a living – I submit that it is not my fault that I did not apply for a mine-manager’s certificate when the Government gave the mine-managers their last chance to obtain a certificate other than by examination – as I was absent in England seeking fresh capital to further develop New-Zealand mines – during the 20 years I have been in New-Zealand I have almost continuously been in charge of mines and have worked a good deal under ground. I have not had any

⁷¹⁸ E.K. Cooper to James McGowan, 5 May 1900, Mines Department, MD 1, 01/80, ANZ-W.

⁷¹⁹ Memorandum by C.E. Matthews, 7 June 1900, Mines Department, MD 1, 01/80, ANZ-W.

⁷²⁰ E.K. Cooper to James McGowan, 11 September 1900, Mines Department, MD 1, 01/80, ANZ-W.

⁷²¹ Under-Secretary, Mines Department, to E.K. Cooper, 19 September 1900, Mines Department, MD 1, 01/80, ANZ-W.

serious accidents in any mine whilst in charge of it – I found the Gold in the Union G M Co at Waihi which enabled Mr Thos. Russell to float the Waihi G M C and started the ball rolling soon after at Waitekauri and have put up with enough hardships and worry to sink a Battleship – and I hope the Board of Examiners will see the hardship of my position and extend their helpful hands towards me. The Hon Minister of Mines had kindly consented to allow me to refer the Board of Examiners to him.⁷²²

McGowan provided a memorandum to his department: ‘I think Mr Cooper is in a most unfortunate position circumstances appear to have been unfavourable I consider him a qualified man and if the Board can grant his request it would be a relief to the applicant’.⁷²³ The chairman of the board of examiners responded that the matter would be resolved at its next meeting;⁷²⁴ it was not resolved in Cooper’s favour, but his declining involvement in active mining made further applications pointless.

VIEWS ON GOVERNMENT POLICY FOR THE MINING INDUSTRY

Cooper regularly argued that the government should support the industry. In 1887 he publicly backed James Mackay, standing for the Coromandel seat,⁷²⁵ because he promised to assist mining. In 1891 he sent several suggestions for the new mining bill, including ‘compensation for permanent work done on a mining lease in the event of it being forfeited’.⁷²⁶ Upon receiving a copy of the new Mining Act in January 1896, when he was in London, he told Cadman that the provision for ‘a Colonial register for Foreign Companies will cause a lot of trouble’, for companies would need to hold shareholders’ meetings to change the articles of association.

I know if anything is laid fairly before you – you always give your assistance and I hope you will give such instructions as will prevent any scandal arising out of this new piece of legislation – I

⁷²² E.K. Cooper to Secretary, Board of Examiners, 21 January 1901, Mines Department, MD 1, 01/80, ANZ-W.

⁷²³ Memorandum by James McGowan, n.d., Mines Department, MD 1, 01/80, ANZ-W.

⁷²⁴ Memorandum by James Hector (Chairman, Board of Examiners), 25 March 1901, Mines Department, MD 1, 01/80, ANZ-W.

⁷²⁵ *Thames Advertiser*, 27 August 1887, p. 2.

⁷²⁶ E.K. Cooper to Mines Department, 26 January 1891, Mines Department, MD 1, 91/773, ANZ-W.

quite agree with the desirability of step, all I ask is for time to move. The mining market is so sensitive at present we want nothing to occur to jeopardize the New Zealand interests.⁷²⁷

The following year he answered an English journalist's question about mining regulations:

“They are a great deal easier than they were when I first went on to the goldfields. We have two good friends to our goldfields in the Premier, Mr Seddon, and the Minister of Mines, Mr Cadman. They are both practical business men, not above listening and speaking to the miners, and will give attention to any application for Government assistance – either for the construction of road tracks or for development works in a new district – consideration, where their practical knowledge tells them the country will be benefited by the expenditure sought. I strongly feel that the New Zealand Government should award the expenditure of large sums of capital with the freehold of the property after a substantial sum of money per acre had been expended. This would give an incentive to capitalists to expend money and go into more elaborate prospecting.”⁷²⁸

At the end of the year, when still in London, he told an *Auckland Star* correspondent that the protection granted for mines while owners sought more capital was too brief. ‘What would be the use of anyone attempting to procure capital now offering in a New Zealand mining venture? Absolutely nil! But, if one year’s protection to start with was granted’, owners would have time to negotiate while mining revived and investors became interested once more. The government’s purchase of the rights to use cyanide was ‘a good move’, but ‘it would be better to abolish the gold duty altogether and further to establish some means to enable’ English investors ‘to get a true and unbiased report of all mining properties offered for sale’.⁷²⁹

In 1898, he responded to an article on mining in the *Financial Times*:

⁷²⁷ E.K. Cooper to A.J. Cadman, 23 January 1896, Mines Department, MD 1, 1898/219, ANZ-W.

⁷²⁸ Special Commissioner, ‘Interview with Mr E. Kersey Cooper’, *British Australasian*, 4 February 1897, pp. 242-243.

⁷²⁹ London Correspondent, *Auckland Star*, 30 December 1897, p. 3.

I was reminded how deplorable it is to see the shortsightedness displayed by the New Zealand Government in connection with its mining laws; but unfortunately, this grievance is not the only one in connection with mining generally that is working against so important an industry. Some years ago, whilst in New Zealand, I led a crusade against the export gold duty, a monstrous tax on the industry.

Seddon 'was with me in my contentions, but it was the local governing bodies, who receive the goldfields revenue, that killed my petition, which was largely signed by miners, as well as by merchants and mining men in Auckland'. The duty in the South Island was abolished because an 'agitation' for its removal was not opposed by the local bodies. He considered 'too much politics' was involved in New Zealand mining, and recommended companies to forbid 'any manager or person connected with an English company to hold any position in the local governing bodies' or be involved in politics. The annual tax of 1s per cent on trading companies was 'actually invited by the directors of companies, owing to the absurd clauses contained in the ordinary articles of association'. The five per cent duty on imported mining machinery was 'a small matter, seeing there are so many people in New Zealand capable of manufacturing machinery'. He applauded the government for charging 'merely a nominal royalty' for the use of the cyanide process in place of the 'exorbitant charge' imposed by the Cassel Gold Extracting Company. 'Protection for non-working is always available by applying to the warden. During my experience of 18 years mining, under many wardens in New Zealand, I have never once known reasonable protection refused', and the law was implemented in a way that prevented 'the country being locked up by speculators, without doing any work on their holdings'.⁷³⁰

In 1900, in a 'lengthy' letter to the London *Mining Journal*, Cooper was much more critical of government policy and administration, as an extract indicated:

There are three kinds of mining leaseholders, and by their very existence the mining regulations prove beyond a question the law is partially administered. There is one who works his mine in a *bona fide* way, another who conducts his operations with a pen

⁷³⁰ Editorial, *Thames Star*, 24 August 1898, p. 2; letter from E.K. Cooper, *Financial Times*, reprinted in *Thames Advertiser*, 25 August 1898, p. 1, and *Auckland Weekly News*, 26 August 1898, p. 47.

and ink or typewriter, and lastly the plausible romancer, who, with the assistance of his solicitor, manages to hold on to large acreages (which are always for sale) by securing protection for non-working for as many and as long periods as ingenuity and resource and invention enables him to deceive the warden. Of these three species number one is the only real benefactor; it is he who does the prospecting, the development, and good work on the goldfields, and employs labour, and is a good citizen. The other two kinds are simply incubuses – the drones in the industrial hive and their nefarious ways should be discouraged in every possible way. Protection for non-working must be done away with, and the minimum quantity of men to be employed on a leasehold must be so fixed that the labour covenants can be kept. Anomalies should not be allowed to excess. Just fancy, tributers' returns of gold won have to be made to the Government in retorted gold, whilst gold won by wages men have to be returned in both retorted and melted gold.⁷³¹

A London correspondent summarized 'another long letter': 'The mining regulations are unworkable, and the constant changes in the legislation cause nothing but distrust, anxiety, and more work for the lawyers. He is not satisfied with the Government, mine managers, or Warden's discretionary power'.⁷³² The following year, he told the arbitration court that

shareholders got two things in return for their expenditure – gold and development work. They had a market for their gold, but none for their development work, whilst the title to the ground was of such a shaky nature that failure to work their lease, or to observe the labour conditions, render the mine liable to forfeiture.⁷³³

From 1899 to 1901, Cooper was involved in a controversy resulting from a misreporting of his working of the Fame and Fortune. Bush's annual report, completed at the beginning of July 1899, stated Cooper had formed an English syndicate to take over the property and had taken out 2,325 tons to produce a return of 30oz, worth £81. The new battery had never been used because before being 'quite completed it was found that the ore

⁷³¹ Letter from E.K. Cooper, *Mining Journal*, n.d., reprinted in *Thames Star*, 21 September 1900, p. 2.

⁷³² London Correspondent, *Auckland Star*, 17 September 1900, p. 5.

⁷³³ *Thames Star*, 21 September 1901, p. 1.

discovered was not sufficiently remunerative to warrant the company continuing operations, and the mine was closed down'. As Cooper remained 'confident' that payable ore existed, he was 'determined to leave nothing undone to prove that such is the case. The old battery is being renovated for the purpose of treating trial crushings from different parts of the mine'.⁷³⁴ The correct tonnage crushed was 225.⁷³⁵

After a summary of Bush's report was published in the *New Zealand Mines Record*,⁷³⁶ Cooper protested to Cadman, then Minister of Mines, that this information would 'go out into the world as the Gospel truth breathed by the Hon. A.J. Cadman'. Noting the prefaced comment that the wardens' reports were 'of value to investors' he commented: 'quite so!! And if all the information given is on a par with that which is under review investors who are deceived by the N.Z. Mines Record will have a very strong case against the New Zealand Government'. The paragraph was 'wrong in every particular, to begin with I did not form a syndicate but took over this property for the old shareholders' because of Hauraki Golden Age Mines 'failing to carry out their contract', as he had explained to departmental officials.

Once in possession of the property I started to repair the old Battery (which had become a total wreck under the management of a New Zealand School of Mines student) unwater the mine and repair the main levels which had been allowed to close, after this I send down to the Battery all the ore I found in the Hopper and paddocked by the late manager for treatment; this I was assured by the mine Boss (first class certificated mine manager) was worth at least half an ounce to the load.

The first return, at the end of March, from 225 loads produced 30oz 16dwt retorted gold and 30oz 1dwt melted gold; no value was given.

I saw the Mining Inspector yesterday and he showed me a copy of his return made to the Mines Department which agrees with the one I gave him in the ordinary way of business and with my Government Battery Book and all my other records such as my Bank Book, carter's account &c - There is but one conclusion to come to and it is this, it is a malicious paragraph attempting to

⁷³⁴ R.S. Bush to Under-Secretary, Mines Department, 3 July 1899, *AJHR*, 1899, C-3A, p. 4.

⁷³⁵ James Coutts to Under-Secretary, Mines Department, 29 April 1899, *AJHR*, 1899, C-3A, p. 47.

⁷³⁶ *New Zealand Mines Record*, 16 September 1899, p. 43.

injure my character. No sane man would put through a Battery 2,325 ... tons of quartz that would not yield more than £81.... As to the new Battery of 40 stampers “before it was quite completed” it will take £2000 ... to complete as there is nothing in front of the stampers but a short table and it is not connected with the water mains - To read between the lines there is but one conclusion to come to and that is the Government has been hoaxed by some one who has a point to work, but this does not do away with the Government’s responsibility and I shall be glad to hear from you as to what recompense you are prepared to make me before further moving in the matter – had this been the first time the Mines Record had stabbed me in the Back I would not have thought so much about it, but it is not so,

for in April it had ridiculed his application for a mine manager’s certificate.⁷³⁷ Patrick Galvin, editor of the *Mines Record*, shown this letter, responded that

There can be no possible bias on my part, as I have only met Mr Cooper once, about 2 years ago. He then made what I considered an excellent suggestion as to working plans of gold mines being deposited at the Warden’s Offices, or with the Department as was done in California and Colorado. I brought the suggestion under the notice of the Department, and it has been given effect to.⁷³⁸

Consequently, the under-secretary expressed Cadman’s regret that he considered the report to be malicious, assuring him this was not so, just a condensed abstract of the warden’s annual report, printed in the *Mines Record*

in the ordinary course without any intention of either injuring you or exhibiting personal feelings in the matter.

The fact is that the statements in the report of the Warden were incorrect, and unfortunately the incorrect abstract was published therefrom. This the Minister regrets and your letter has been forwarded to the Warden for such explanation as he may be able to afford.⁷³⁹

⁷³⁷ E.K. Cooper to Minister of Mines, 7 October 1899, Mines Department, MD 1, 01/80, ANZ-W.

⁷³⁸ Memorandum by Patrick Galvin (editor, *New Zealand Mines Record*), 10 October 1899, Mines Department, MD 1, 01/80, ANZ-W.

⁷³⁹ Under-Secretary, Mines Department, to E.K. Cooper, 17 October 1899, Mines Department, MD 1, 01/80, ANZ-W.

On the same day, Bush was asked to ‘take an early opportunity of seeing Mr Cooper and affording him such explanation as you are able to’.⁷⁴⁰ At the end of the month, Cooper prompted Cadman that he had not received a copy of Bush’s explanation: ‘Your early attention to this will oblige’.⁷⁴¹ He was told that Bush would ‘see you and personally explain the error’; Bush considered this clerical error should be clarified in the *Record*, and the mining inspector explained how the differences in the figures occurred.⁷⁴²

One month later, on 2 December, the *Mining Journal* of London published a response to the *Mines Record* report by its Thames correspondent:

The reading of this paragraph leaves one to surmise that it had been published for the purpose of making Mr Cooper appear not only ridiculous, but unreliable to his co-partners in the property he is supervising.

If the matter referred to contained only one mistake it could very readily be put down as a typographical error. However, that is not so, for the opening part of the paragraph is misleading and uncalled for, whilst the figures and values submitted tend to show Mr Cooper’s partners that he is misleading them. I would ask the question of any practical individual: Would not Mr Cooper be considered insane to treat 2325 tons of ore for such a paltry yield as 30 ounces of gold? Why, long before 500 tons of the ore had “been dealt with any ordinary individual would have ascertained and determined, there and then, that the ore would not pay for filling into drays, leave alone carting and crushing of the material.”

In publishing the paragraph in question the Department of Mines has stepped into the groove of negligence. This government journal, which is under the direct supervision of the Hon. the Minister of Mines, is supposed to go forward into the world breathing the sentiments and advice of the Mines Department for the guidance of investors and others interested in the mining

⁷⁴⁰ Under-Secretary, Mines Department, to R.S. Bush, 17 October 1899, Mines Department, MD 1, 01/80, ANZ-W.

⁷⁴¹ E.K. Cooper to Minister of Mines, 30 October 1899, Mines Department, MD 1, 01/80, ANZ-W.

⁷⁴² Under-Secretary, Mines Department, to E.K. Cooper, 3 November 1899; R.S. Bush to Under-Secretary, Mines Department, 3 November 1899; James Coutts to Under-Secretary, Mines Department, 10 November 1899, Mines Department, MD 1, 01/80, ANZ-W.

industry of the colony. In fact, the journal has for one of its objects the protection of the outside investor from the claws of the “wild cat” promoters. If the general reading of the journal is on a par with that submitted, and dealing with Mr Cooper and his mine, then its authority as a guide to investors stands upon a very shady basis. With the object of ascertaining the facts and also having a chat about other matters, I called upon Mr Cooper at his mine. Here I met the gentleman togged in his suit of mining clothes, and just about to enter his mine on his usual round of daily inspection.... When I broached the matter of the paragraph Mr Cooper became impetuous, and made use of strong words in condemnation of the *Mines Record*, and declared the journal unreliable in every sense of the word.

When asked about his disputing the claim that he had obtained only 30oz from 2325 tons, Cooper replied

“Certainly I do. In the first place, I never formed any syndicate in London, but simply came out here, took back the property of the original shareholders from the late Hauraki Golden Age Mines, on account of that company failing to carry out their contract. How such a report could get into the *Mines Record* I fail to understand.... The moment my attention was called to the paragraph I immediately made it my business to call upon the Mining Inspector at the Thames, who could offer me no explanation, and there and then showed to me the copy of his return made to the Mines Department, which quite agrees with the return I furnished to him.

Cooper mentioned his first letter to the Minister and ‘went into detail about the matter’, which was summarized:

I got possession of the battery and outside plant on January 24 of this year, and it was not till February 14 did I get the consent of the Warden to transfer the mine into the name into the name of the trustee, Mr William Vincent [an insignificant Thames miner],⁷⁴³ after which I had to overhaul the battery, unwater the mine, and repair the main levels before I could get a fair start. There was a quantity of ore lying in the hoppers, reserved by the late company for treatment. Before being able to use the hoppers, I had to get rid of this ore. This I put through the battery. Up to March 31 I had disposed of 225 tons for a yield of 30oz 1dwt of melted gold, which I sold to the Bank of New Zealand for £77 7s

⁷⁴³ See Warden’s Court, *Thames Star*, 6 February 1900, p. 2.

6d. When submitting my returns to the Mining Inspector, I gave no values to either that gentleman or any of the newspapers.

His return to 30 September showed that he had then treated 'the balance of the ore I found reserved' for treatment: 144 loads, which yielded 31oz 10dwt, sold for £82 16s 4d.

"Now, the only ore I have won and treated since I took possession of the property is 419 loads, which yielded 485oz 9dwt, and was sold to the Bank of New Zealand for £1311 7s 11d."

Your correspondent asked Mr Cooper: "How do you account for the paragraph in question?" Mr Cooper replied: "I have an idea the Government have been hoaxed by some person, and probably that individual contributed that paragraph. There have been several people trying to get an option over the property lately, it may be one of them."

"Don't you think, Mr Cooper, that the Government should exercise more care regarding the matter sent forward into the world, especially about mining in New Zealand?"

"I certainly do," Mr Cooper replied. "Why, the paragraph is very damaging to me, and I shall not rest satisfied until I am thoroughly clear as to who framed or furnished the report."⁷⁴⁴

In November, the March the *Mines Record*, 'as far as possible to rectify any inconvenience' possibly caused to the mine's owners the corrected returns, as provided to the mining inspector, were 'afforded the same publicity as was given to the incorrect statement'.⁷⁴⁵ The following March, in a ten-page letter accompanied by copies of all the correspondence, Cooper complained to the new Minister, McGowan, about this 'so called explanation':

It is no explanation for the false figures given – neither does it explain away how the same matter crept into the Warden's report of the 3rd July 1899, addressed to the Under-Secretary of Mines – if these gentlemen wished they could soon clear the matter up. The Warden has no intention to "personally explain the error" he need only drop me a line asking me to call round and see him – if he had a good explanation to make, and is just, he would know how to come across me – you will see the Warden

⁷⁴⁴ Thames Correspondent, *Mining Journal* (London), 2 December 1899, press cutting in Mines Department, MD 1, 01/80, ANZ-W; reprinted in *Thames Star*, 20 January 1900, p. 4.

⁷⁴⁵ *New Zealand Mines Record*, 16 November 1899, p. 159.

avoids putting anything in writing – both he and the Under-Secretary are both fencing with me, if they are not morally responsible for the injustice they have done me they are legally, and men holding such important positions should not foster malice. Stabbing a man in the back is such a contemptible thing to do – if they are innocent, why don't they trot out the culprit. I need not point out to you that a mistake such as is under review cannot possibly take place only by design – The mining regulations have particularly warned against anything of the sort – The Mining Inspector has to depend on the Battery Manager or owner for his returns which must be a correct copy of the Battery Book. So to cut it short, if the returns published by the Government don't tally with the Battery Books there is some trickery going on and instead of the Government servants throwing obstacles in my way they would if they were honorable representatives of the Government assist me in every way to clear up this stigma – The Mining Inspector has shown me a copy of his return made to the Mines department it agreed with the return (less value of gold) I made him, now it would not require a Sherlock Holmes to find out the person who furnished the returns and paragraphs and if the Warden's and Under-Secretary's hands are clean why don't they clear the matter up – no one knows better than yourself how I have been persecuted since I have been on the Thames Gold-Fields by one and another – they have not given me the life of a dog, and their slanderous tongues are always at work and why because I have clean hands and all New Zealand can't dirty them – I only ask for fair play and no favour which I trust you will see I get.⁷⁴⁶

In response, McGowan failed 'to see good ground for the feeling and heat displayed towards the Dept of Mines or any of its officers'. Quite clearly a clerical error had made the total thousands instead of hundreds; 'That you should blame any officers of this Dept for intentionally injuring you or having any feeling either way, is an injustice to them'. As for his claims of being persecuted, 'I have nothing to say beyond expressing my sympathy for any one who receives unfair treatment'. He was sure there were no improper actions by any officials, 'and from my own knowledge of them I am convinced you are labouring under some inconceivable delusion'. The November paragraph had resolved the matter.⁷⁴⁷

⁷⁴⁶ E.K. Cooper to James McGowan (Minister of Mines), 1 March 1900, Mines Department, MD 1, 01/80, ANZ-W.

⁷⁴⁷ James McGowan to E.K. Cooper, 7 March 1900, Mines Department, MD 1, 01/80, ANZ-W.

In May 1900, in mentioning the financial struggles of himself and his partners to develop the Fame and Fortune he complained to McGowan that he could not 'look after his own money or that which his friends entrusted to him – in fact the Government has built by legislation a wall between ourselves and our money'.⁷⁴⁸ The following January he repeated that of 'late legislation has built up a barrier between me and my calling'.⁷⁴⁹

INVOLVEMENT WITH LOCAL GOVERNMENT

In August 1884 Cooper announced that he was standing for a vacant seat for the Te Aroha riding of the county council.⁷⁵⁰ At his first meeting, at Waiorongomai, which attracted 'a good attendance', he explained his position on a variety of issues (mining has been covered earlier):

Mr Cooper said he had not purposed coming forward as a candidate for the vacant seat, but his friends insisted on his doing so, and in consenting, he did so on the understanding that he would not ask anyone for his vote. Through mismanagement in various ways, our mines and district generally had got into discredit, and it would be necessary for them all to pull together to set things right again. The labourer was worthy of his hire, and coercion should not be allowed. As regards the Piako County Council they appeared to be in a regular mess, considerable disunion amongst themselves, with no means at their disposal, in fact almost bankrupt, whilst the work they had taken in hand was still unfinished, incomplete, and had to go to the pawnshop. He read the report of the last meeting of the Council at Cambridge. He really did not see how the Council were going to get out of their trouble, they must borrow, for he did not see how they could increase their revenue.... He would advocate the payment of all wages monthly and punctually. He would urge Government to hasten the completion of the line from Morrinsville to Te Aroha. They must have a really good road formed connecting the two townships.

In reply to questions, he 'did not think there would be any advantage' paying wages fortnightly instead of monthly.

⁷⁴⁸ E.K. Cooper to James McGowan, 3 May 1900, Mines Department, MD 1, 01/80, ANZ-W.

⁷⁴⁹ E.K. Cooper to Secretary, Board of Examiners, 21 January 1901, Mines Department, MD 1, 01/80, ANZ-W.

⁷⁵⁰ *Waikato Times*, 21 August 1884, p. 3.

Did not think the Council had the means to make a direct road to Waiorongomai from Waitoa, and hardly thought it would be any advantage. Did not think anything would be gained by separation from the rest of the county, unless by the formation of Waiorongomai and Te Aroha into a borough, which he would not object to.⁷⁵¹

At his second meeting, held at Te Aroha, he repeated that he had ‘no intention of coming forward as a candidate’ until ‘pressed to do so. In at last consenting, I did so on the understanding that I would not *solicit* anybody’s vote. Having come forward at the eleventh hour I have not had time to prepare any plan of scheme for future action’ if elected. After stating that he wanted to increase the council’s revenue, he devoted most of his speech to improving the working of the tramway.⁷⁵²

The election did not create much excitement, the *Te Aroha News* noting that ‘a few placards, “Who reduced the wages but not the crushing? Vote for Cooper,” were to be seen about’.⁷⁵³ The reference was to Josiah Clifton Firth and his Battery Company.⁷⁵⁴ Cooper won, with 91 votes to Denis Murphy’s 68,⁷⁵⁵ a third candidate receiving only 13.⁷⁵⁶ Immediately afterwards, three men, including Murphy and Thomas Gavin,⁷⁵⁷ petitioned Kenrick to declare Cooper’s election invalid because some men holding miners’ rights had been refused a vote.⁷⁵⁸ When this petition was heard, Cooper was not represented by legal counsel.⁷⁵⁹ Kenrick’s decision was unexpected: ‘No appointment of Returning Officer for Te Aroha Riding proved – Held there had been no Election – therefore prayer of Petition could not be granted’.⁷⁶⁰ Not only was Cooper’s election invalid, this ruling meant that all members elected in the past three years had not been elected

⁷⁵¹ *Te Aroha News*, 23 August 1884, p. 2.

⁷⁵² *Te Aroha News*, 30 August 1884, p. 2.

⁷⁵³ *Te Aroha News*, 30 August 1884, p. 2.

⁷⁵⁴ See paper on this company.

⁷⁵⁵ See paper on his life.

⁷⁵⁶ *Waikato Times*, 26 August 1884, p. 2.

⁷⁵⁷ See paper on his life.

⁷⁵⁸ *Te Aroha News*, 30 August 1884, p. 2.

⁷⁵⁹ *Te Aroha News*, 13 September 1884, p. 2.

⁷⁶⁰ Te Aroha Magistrate’s Court, Criminal Record Book 1881-1896, 66/1884, BCDG 11550/1a, ANZ-A.

according to the Act.⁷⁶¹ Kenrick argued that the returning officer had been wrongly appointed, the election had not taken place within the time specified, and all those holding miners' rights should have been able to vote, a judgment giving 'much dissatisfaction', for it could mean all council proceedings for the past three years were invalid.⁷⁶² It also meant that the Thames Borough Council found itself in the same embarrassing situation.⁷⁶³

In another meeting, in late September, Cooper stated that all men holding miners' rights should be entitled to vote.⁷⁶⁴ His letter opposing the lease of the tramway and detailing his criticisms of Adams' management of it commenced by quoting William Cowper:

"Slaves fight for what were better cast away,"
 The chain that binds them, and a tyrant's sway;
 But they that fight for freedom, undertake
 The noblest cause mankind can have at stake,
 Religion, virtue, truth, whate'er we call a blessing,
 Freedom is the pledge of all.
 O Liberty! The prisoner's pleasing dream,
 * * * * *
 Place me where winter breathes his keenest air,
 And I will sing, if liberty be there.

After criticizing how Adams had constructed and was managing the tramway, as covered earlier, he argued that he had too much power:

However ambitious a man is he should control and regulate that ambition, when it inflicts injury on an important community like ours. To be raised from obscurity at a bound and become a battery manager, a controller of the goldfields' tramway, a dictator of how the mines are to be managed, a member of the licensing committee, a member of the school committee, a most active mover in the election for a councillor for the district, is too much joy; such distinctions heaped on any one, as it were, momentarily, is enough to make a man form a false opinion of his own capabilities.

⁷⁶¹ *Waikato Times*, 11 September 1884, p. 2, Te Aroha Correspondent, 13 September 1884, p. 3.

⁷⁶² Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 11 September 1884, p. 3, 13 September 1884, p. 3.

⁷⁶³ Thames Correspondent, *New Zealand Herald*, 10 September 1884, p. 5.

⁷⁶⁴ *Te Aroha News*, 27 September 1884, p. 2.

He concluded by hoping ‘that we shall not see any of that bad taste displayed at the coming election that was too apparent at the late one’. When it was over,

it should be over, and no attempt at boycotting people who voted according to their own convictions, but not on Mr Adams’ ticket. An hotel to be told it will suffer, a storekeeper to be told you will get no more orders, a steamboat company to be told you will get no more freights from a certain party, is disgraceful; it is not only an outrage on the people’s liberty, but a disgrace to the century we live in. Let one and all stick up for their rights of liberty, and the Despot will have the worst of it in the long run.⁷⁶⁵

When a new election was called for early October, a returning officer was appointed correctly.⁷⁶⁶ At the beginning of that month, Cooper announced he had discovered new evidence to prove the legality of his election, repudiated Kenrick’s ruling, protested at the by-election, and declared that he would attend the next council meeting as a duly elected member.⁷⁶⁷ As he intended to take his seat then, he withdrew his nomination; being too late to have the election cancelled, he asked his friends not to vote, and many abstained, although he did obtain ten votes to Murphy’s 109.⁷⁶⁸ Kenrick then ruled the by-election was illegal because, not being held within the prescribed time, Cooper held his seat with ‘as good a claim’ as the other members, ‘though none were legally elected. There were no means of unseating them now’, and therefore Cooper ‘must be regarded as a member’.⁷⁶⁹ Despite this ruling, Cooper was dissuaded from taking his seat, and the expected ‘scene’ was avoided.⁷⁷⁰

In November 1890, shortly after his conflict with the Thames County Council over roads and charging for water, Cooper topped the poll for the Waiotahi Riding, obtaining 33 votes.⁷⁷¹ At the next council meeting he was nominated as chairman, but received no votes apart from the mover and

⁷⁶⁵ Letter from E.K. Cooper, *Te Aroha News*, 27 September 1884, pp. 2, 7.

⁷⁶⁶ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 20 September 1884, p. 2.

⁷⁶⁷ *Waikato Times*, 2 October 1884, p. 2.

⁷⁶⁸ *Te Aroha News*, 4 October 1884, p. 2; *Waikato Times*, 4 October 1884, p. 2.

⁷⁶⁹ *Waikato Times*, 16 October 1884, p. 2.

⁷⁷⁰ *Te Aroha News*, 25 October 1884, p. 2; *Waikato Times*, 25 October 1884, p. 2.

⁷⁷¹ *Thames Star*, 13 November 1890, p. 2.

seconder.⁷⁷² His work as a councillor has not been traced in detail. He remained critical of its work: in the following January he claimed it diverted 'the revenue of the water race to the risk of bringing mining virtually to a standstill by neglecting to keep the water race in proper repair - by this means some £1000 is diverted on jobbery account'.⁷⁷³ Appointed as the council's representative on the Hospital Trustees, he was forced to resign in July 1891 because of 'his business not allowing him to attend regularly'.⁷⁷⁴ He resigned in the following February,⁷⁷⁵ not solely because of pressure of work; there were conflicts with other councillors. The *Observer* noted that he had been 'showing up the members' of the council 'as petty tyrants who mercilessly sue outsiders for monies due while they themselves are in arrears'.⁷⁷⁶

COOPER AND HIS WORKERS

One journalist visiting Waiorongomai in 1883 thanked Cooper for 'the great assistance afforded me in my mining investigations', and commented that he appeared 'to be a most popular friend of the workers in the various reefs'.⁷⁷⁷ In 1890, the *Observer* described him as 'a generous employer of labour' and 'a friend and brother to those under him'.⁷⁷⁸ Five years later, the Fame and Fortune miners presented him with a 'very handsome scarf pin made of Thames gold. The gift was accompanied by a very kindly expression of the regard felt' for him, many of the men having worked for him 'ever since he started working the mine'.⁷⁷⁹ This token of the 'friendly feeling' between Cooper and the miners was prompted by the news that he was going to England to raise capital.⁷⁸⁰ The Jubilee miners presented him with

⁷⁷² *Thames Star*, 26 November 1890, p. 2.

⁷⁷³ E.K. Cooper to Mines Department, 26 January 1891, Mines Department, MD 1, 91/773, ANZ-W.

⁷⁷⁴ *Thames Advertiser*, 7 July 1891, p. 2.

⁷⁷⁵ *Thames Advertiser*, 22 February 1892, p. 2.

⁷⁷⁶ *Observer*, 5 March 1892, p. 6.

⁷⁷⁷ Own Correspondent, 'From Christchurch to Te Aroha', *Lyttleton Times*, 24 October 1883, p. 5.

⁷⁷⁸ *Observer*, 28 June 1890, p. 18.

⁷⁷⁹ *Thames Advertiser*, 8 August 1895, p. 2.

⁷⁸⁰ *Auckland Weekly News*, 17 August 1895, p. 8.

‘a very handsome pendant’.⁷⁸¹ Another five years later, a Paeroa newspaper described him as ‘the popular mine manager’.⁷⁸² When he retired from active mining early in 1903 and prepared to depart for England,⁷⁸³ the Jubilee miners presented him with an illuminated address and a case of pipes ‘as a slight token of their esteem’. After the miner presenting these referred ‘to the cordial relations which had always existed between the men and their manager, he pointed out the loss the industry would sustain’ by Cooper’s departure. Two other miners also spoke of his ‘many admirable qualities’. The address was fulsome:

We, the undersigned employees of the Jubilee Gold Mining Company, Waitekauri, desire on the occasion of your departure to the Old Country, to express out keen regret at parting with you, perhaps for ever. In your capacity as general manager of the Jubilee mine we cannot express too warmly our sense of the humane and kindly treatment you have always extended to the workmen under your control. We have felt that whilst conserving the best interests of your company you studied those of its employees in such a manner as to draw from them spontaneous and hearty service. Nor are we unmindful in saying farewell of the great service you have rendered to mining on the peninsula by the vigour with which you have prosecuted works under your charge during the last decade, as well as by the resourcefulness of a ripe experience. On every ground we bid farewell to you in the sense of losing one whom we cannot hope to replace. Accept our sincerest good wishes both for yourself and wife, and the assurance that though our daily intercourse has been broken we shall follow the fortunes of you and yours with the profoundest regard and sympathy. Wishing you God-speed, we beg to remain, dear sir, your old employees and well-wishers.⁷⁸⁴

In November 1890, Cooper was elected treasurer of the committee supporting the Miners’ Union’s candidate for the Thames electorate.⁷⁸⁵ The following March, he rode through Thames in the miners’ day parade.⁷⁸⁶

Cooper’s involvement in sports would have increased his popularity in the community. At Te Aroha he was a handicapper in the Boxing Day sports

⁷⁸¹ *Thames Star*, 7 August 1895, p. 2.

⁷⁸² *Ohinemuri Gazette*, 5 December 1900, p. 2.

⁷⁸³ *Ohinemuri Gazette*, 9 February 1903, p. 2.

⁷⁸⁴ Paeroa Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 12 February 1903, p. 35.

⁷⁸⁵ *Thames Star*, 6 November 1890, p. 2.

⁷⁸⁶ *Thames Advertiser*, 10 March 1891, p. 2.

of 1883,⁷⁸⁷ and at Thames was elected a vice-president of the football club in April 1890.⁷⁸⁸ Eight months later, the Thames Amateur Gymnasium Club elected him to the same position, and in February the following year he became a vice-president of the regatta committee.⁷⁸⁹ In 1891 he was a steward for the Thames Jockey Club's Winter Meeting.⁷⁹⁰ According to one recollection, Cooper was 'a great Horseman', who raced other prominent riders, but became lame after falling off his horse at a culvert over Moanataiari Creek.⁷⁹¹ When Cooper later saw some of his former miners in London, 'he was a good sort to the Boys – showed them around London - & paid for their outings, etc'.⁷⁹²

Despite his apparent sympathy for miners and support for their union, when his own interests were concerned he behaved in a self-interested manner. After the strike at Waiorongomai at the beginning of 1884, one miner, Joseph Lynch,⁷⁹³ applied for a residence site license on the Wellington claim, at Quartzville, intending to obtain possession of the whare he occupied. Cooper told Kenrick that, during the strike, 'Lynch had a great deal to say and I as the Managing director of the Arizona Gold Mining Company' told the mine manager 'to get rid of him'.⁷⁹⁴ In 1890, there was a strike in his Jubilee because he was paying sixpence a day less than the rate laid down by the union; consequently, he let all work on contract.⁷⁹⁵ In April 1901 he attended a Conciliation Board sitting about miners' wages.⁷⁹⁶ When this issue was referred to the Arbitration Board, he gave evidence opposing the union's bid for an increase:

⁷⁸⁷ *Te Aroha News*, 15 December 1883, p. 2.

⁷⁸⁸ *Thames Advertiser*, 2 April 1890, p. 2.

⁷⁸⁹ *Thames Star*, 18 December 1890, p. 2; *Thames Advertiser*, 6 February 1891, p. 3.

⁷⁹⁰ *Thames Advertiser*, 16 May 1891, p. 2.

⁷⁹¹ A.F. Sawyer, Handwritten Recollections, n.d. [1940s], W.G. Hammond Papers, MS 134, folder 34a, Library of the Auckland Institute and War Memorial Museum.

⁷⁹² A.F. Sawyer, Handwritten Recollections, n.d. [1940s], W.G. Hammond Papers, MS 134, folder 34a, Library of the Auckland Institute and War Memorial Museum.

⁷⁹³ His career has not been traced.

⁷⁹⁴ E.K. Cooper to Harry Kenrick, 23 June 1884, attached to application by Joseph Lynch for residence site, Te Aroha Warden's Court, Mining Applications 1884, BBAV 11289/10a, ANZ-A [this letter mislaid, but photocopy made by David Bettison in the 1970s is held in the archives of the University of Waikato Library].

⁷⁹⁵ *Waikato Times*, 25 October 1890, p. 2.

⁷⁹⁶ *Thames Star*, 18 April 1901, p. 2.

He considered that the cost of living, or what a living wage meant, was simply a side issue, and that the main question had been overlooked in these proceedings, namely, the cost of producing the gold won. In other words, could gold be produced in New Zealand at a profit, taking into consideration all the existing circumstances associated with the industry? He maintained that no evidence had been adduced to show the industry could afford to pay higher wages, and that it was unfair to take a phenomenally rich mine, like the Waihi, and say struggling companies could pay the same rate of wages that the Waihi company could afford.⁷⁹⁷

He warned that ‘the greatest care should be exercised to save the mining industry from becoming wrecked, as it was now in a critical state’.⁷⁹⁸ ‘He had experienced difficulty in raising money at Home for the last 20 years, and he anticipated more difficulty still. Wages had a good deal to do with this’.⁷⁹⁹

FAMILY LIFE

The date of Cooper’s marriage to an Englishwoman has not been traced. In 1884, when a Mrs Cooper sang at a concert celebrating the opening of the Waiorongomai Public Hall, a correspondent wrote that her singing ‘never fails to afford genuine pleasure to the listeners’,⁸⁰⁰ but she was probably the wife of a local ‘doctor’.⁸⁰¹ Nellie Cooper, his wife, was not living with him in Thames in 1893.⁸⁰² In December 1896 a London correspondent met Cooper, ‘stouter than ever and ... in the very pink of condition’, and his wife,⁸⁰³ but she was not noted as being a new acquisition. She was living in New Zealand in mid-1897, when a Paeroa newspaper referred to Cooper and ‘his charming wife’ leaving for England shortly.⁸⁰⁴

⁷⁹⁷ *Thames Star*, 21 September 1901, p. 1.

⁷⁹⁸ *Thames Star*, 21 September 1901, p. 2.

⁷⁹⁹ *Auckland Weekly News*, 26 September 1901, p. 37.

⁸⁰⁰ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 11 November 1884, p. 2.

⁸⁰¹ See paper on health issues in the Te Aroha district.

⁸⁰² *Thames Electoral Roll, 1893*, p. 12.

⁸⁰³ London Correspondent [writing on 26 December 1896], *Thames Star*, 5 February 1897, p. 2.

⁸⁰⁴ *Ohinemuri Gazette*, n.d., cited in *Thames Advertiser*, 16 June 1897, p. 4.

Cooper returned in time to be listed in the 1899 electoral roll,⁸⁰⁵ but she returned later, in August a Thames newspaper reporting her imminent arrival. 'Mrs Cooper visited here a couple of years ago, when she made quite a number of friends, who will no doubt extend to her a hearty welcome'.⁸⁰⁶ She returned to England at an unrecorded date, for in November 1901 Cooper went Wellington to meet her upon her return. It had not been 'decided whether she will accompany him on his trip or not'.⁸⁰⁷ This trip was to England, and she returned there with him immediately after having arrived.⁸⁰⁸ She accompanied him on his return to New Zealand in 1902, but left again six months later.⁸⁰⁹ They both revisited New Zealand in 1904.⁸¹⁰ They had no children.

COOPER'S PERSONALITY

Although one reporter shown over one of his mines by Cooper described him as 'courteous and genial',⁸¹¹ many examples have been given of his combative nature; one letter to the Thames County Council was seen as 'characteristic' by the *Thames Advertiser*:

I see that at a meeting of your Council held last week it was decided to place me on the electorate roll, presuming the house belonging to the Fame and Fortune ground belongs to me. I am prepared to give evidence of this fact by producing my books any time that your honorable body can make it convenient to inspect them which I desire shall not be too late to prevent me being placed on the electorate roll for the County to enable me to exercise my knowledge at the coming election. The way your Council gave its sanction shows how necessary it is that the law should be somewhat revised in this particular. I anticipated the Council's willingness to allow me a voice in the coming elections and consequently paid £25 for the privilege. At the same time I contend that a syndicate employing 50 men and who by their expenditure alone have a large stake in the County should at

⁸⁰⁵ *Thames Electoral Roll, 1899*, p. 20.

⁸⁰⁶ *Thames Star*, 14 August 1899, p. 2; *Thames Advertiser*, 15 August 1899, p. 2.

⁸⁰⁷ *Thames Star*, 12 November 1901, p. 2.

⁸⁰⁸ *Thames Star*, 20 November 1901, p. 4.

⁸⁰⁹ *Thames Star*, 25 March 1902, p. 4, 26 September 1902, p. 4.

⁸¹⁰ *Thames Star*, 17 August 1904, p. 2, 6 September 1904, p. 2, 18 November 1904, p. 4.

⁸¹¹ Ohinemuri Correspondent, *Auckland Star*, 18 August 1892, p. 2.

least have a right accorded them that a person paying 2s 6d per annum rates is not denied.⁸¹²

Clearly Cooper was difficult to deal with, his determination to promote the interests of his mines and a sense of being hard done by dominating his behaviour. In May 1900, furious at being required to have a certificated mine manager in the Fame and Fortune, in responding to McGowan's sympathetic comment that he had 'not been fairly treated' at Thames he wrote 'it is and it always has been, coercion, coercion, coercion, as you will see when you read my book', the only mention of his intention to write one. 'I dare not get a home around me as I do not know the day I shall have to break it up. I have been defending the New Zealand mines in the home papers lately as you will see must I in self defence paint the other side of the picture'. After lamenting the financial cost to him and his friends, he added: 'If you only knew of the trickery that has been perpetuated to cheat us out of the Fame and Fortune mine it would be an eye opener to you – when that and other tales are told it will flatten out the mining investor'.⁸¹³ Four months later, after complaining that he had 'lost every shilling I had in the world by sticking to mining in New Zealand' he added that he was 'anxious to end my days in a friendly country' after first protecting his friends' financial interests. 'I want to leave the country but I want to leave it properly with my friends' interests carefully considered and the good character I brought from England in 1880 untarnished'.⁸¹⁴ He did indeed live out his final days in England.

There was no record of his involvement in any church, and a comment that 'the amount of scriptural lore' in an article apparently written by him cast doubt on his authorship⁸¹⁵ indicated that he was not a Christian. Certainly those he attacked in harsh terms would not have viewed his behaviour as those of a believer in a God of peace and love.

Although very free with enthusiastic descriptions of his mines and their prospects, when asked about others he responded: 'Experience has taught me not to venture to know beyond my business. I don't visit mines

⁸¹² Letter from E.K. Cooper, *Thames Advertiser*, 4 April 1890, p. 2.

⁸¹³ E.K. Cooper to James McGowan, 3 May 1900, Mines Department, MD 1, 01/80. ANZ-W.

⁸¹⁴ E.K. Cooper to James McGowan, 11 September 1900, Mines Department, MD 1, 01/80, ANZ-W.

⁸¹⁵ James Russell to J.W. Walker, 14 March 1887, Letterbook no. 33, p. 648, Jackson and Russell Papers, MS 360, Library of the Auckland Institute and War Memorial Museum.

unless I am paid to do so. As I sit on my horse and ride through the country and see what is going on I hear what people say and, for safety's sake, I keep my conclusions to myself. It is best'. After praising the prospectors of the Klondike, he described 'a really genuine prospector' as 'my ideal of a man – fearless, patient, kind to a fault, he lives as he dies, a true warrior'. Asked who benefit from 'his labours and the self-denial of a life-time', he answered: 'Men who would turn grey with fright if they were left out all night in a bush within earshot of a wild cat'.⁸¹⁶ One newspaper reporter, after interviewing him in London in a December fog, quoted him wanting 'to get away from the fog, and catch my train to Brighton. I cannot live in the winter, and I must keep fit for any emergency that may turn up'. He was immediately 'engulfed by the fog, but although before he had even gone two or three paces his visible self was obliterated, a London fog failed to blur the remembrance of his brisk personality'.⁸¹⁷

DEATH

In late 1905 Cooper was living in England, but visited New Zealand, including Te Aroha, early in 1906 before returning to England.⁸¹⁸ In January 1907, with his wife by his side, he died at Hastings, aged 63. He had been suffering for an unspecified time from a weak heart and bronchitis, but died from influenza, his final illness lasting three days.⁸¹⁹ That he left no will suggests that, like others who devoted their lives to mining,⁸²⁰ he had ended up with very little money, meaning his estate was so small that making a will was pointless.

Despite his former prominence, the *Te Aroha News* merely reported his death and noted his most recent visit to Te Aroha; it did not publish an obituary,⁸²¹ nor did any other New Zealand newspaper. However, in 1929, one J. McD, in writing of Thames 'Old Faces', recalled him living high up the Waiotahi Creek on his Fame and Fortune ground. He 'was popular with

⁸¹⁶ *British Australasian*, 28 October 1897, p. 1926.

⁸¹⁷ London Correspondent, *Auckland Star*, 30 December 1897, p. 3.

⁸¹⁸ *Auckland Weekly News*, 28 September 1905, p. 32; *Te Aroha News*, 27 April 1907, p. 2.

⁸¹⁹ Death Certificate of Edward Kersey Cooper, 26 January 1907, Register of Deaths 1907, Hastings District, no. 458, British BDM.

⁸²⁰ See, in particular, paper on Henry Hopper Adams.

⁸²¹ *Te Aroha News*, 27 April 1907, p. 2.

all and sundry. Hr lived a rather secluded life, but he believed in comfort, and built his dwelling accordingly'.⁸²²

CONCLUSION

Cooper was described, in August 1895, as a 'mining big gun'.⁸²³ He was proud to state in 1901, when giving the Arbitration Court his opinions on the state of the industry, that he had been 'instrumental in having £50,000 spent in the two mines of which he was manager', meaning the Jubilee and the Fame and Fortune.⁸²⁴ The question whether it had been spent wisely must have been asked by those who provided this money, for, like so many other 'sanguine' miners, Cooper's skills as a prophet of wealth were limited even if his skills at managing a mine were considerable. But payable gold could not be extracted from quartz that did not contain it, and no matter how many efforts he made to extract the maximum assistance from local and central governments, his sanguine. Often over-sanguine, his expectations were doomed to failure, to his own loss and to the detriment of many of those associated with him.

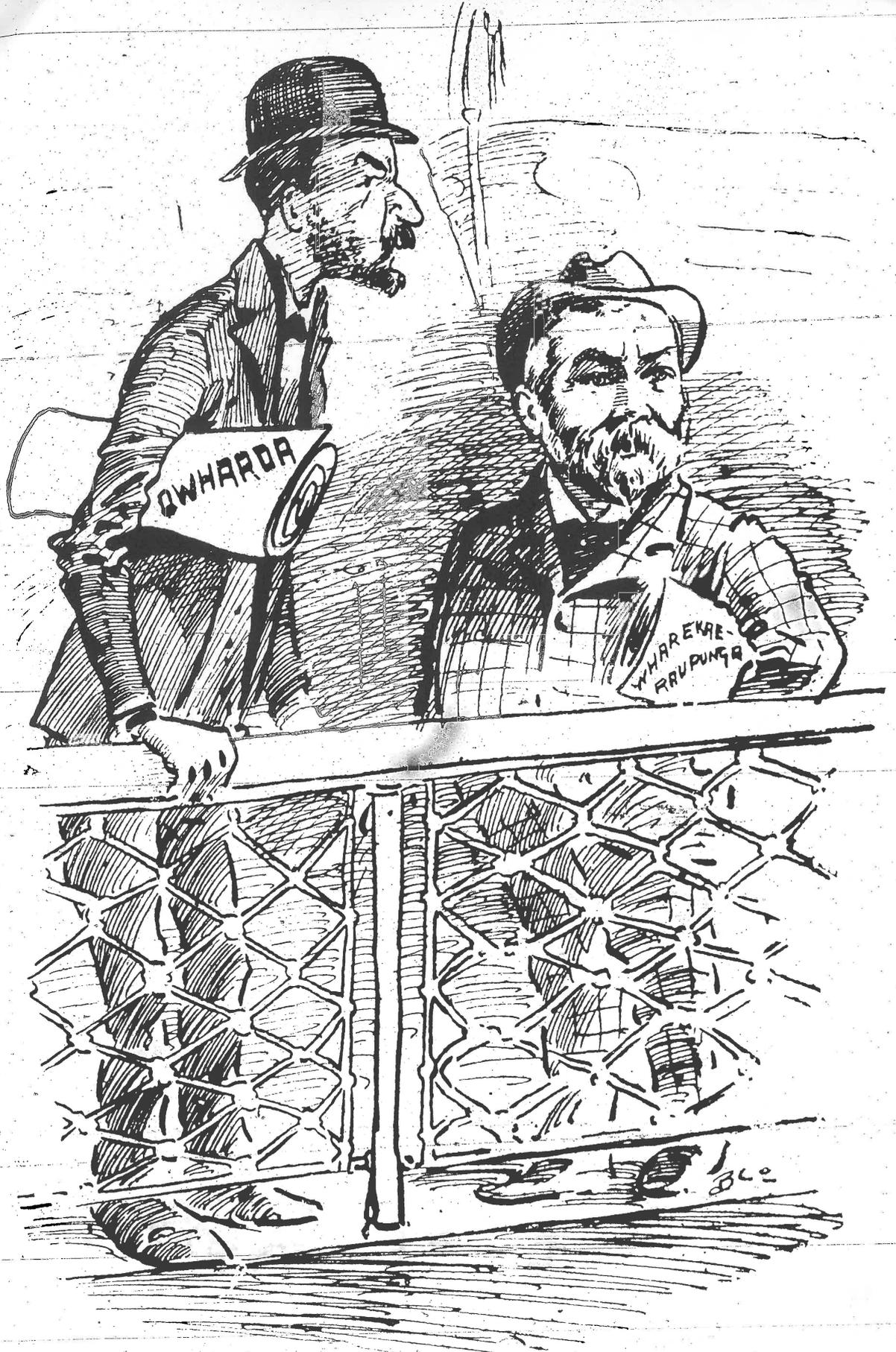
Appendix

Figure 1: 'Blo' [William Blomfield], 'Mining Magnates on Tour. Waihi Russell [Thomas Henry Russell] and Kersey Cooper, two of the sharpest Upper Thames mining experts, leave for the land of bullion to float off their "big guns." Gold in every inch of it', *Observer*, 17 August 1895, p. 7.

⁸²² J. McD, 'Old Faces', in 'The Man About Town', 'The Passing Show', *Auckland Star*, 13 September 1929, p. 6.

⁸²³ *Observer*, 17 August 1895, p. 16.

⁸²⁴ *Thames Star*, 21 September 1901, p. 1.



Mining Magnetes on Tour.

Waihi Russell and Kersey Cooper, two of the sharpest Upper Thames mining experts, leave for the land of buillion to float off their 'big guns.' Gold in every inch of it.