

MINERS' WORKING LIVES IN GENERAL AND AT TE AROHA IN PARTICULAR

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Abstract: *The prospects of obtaining prosperity tempted miners to work for years in harsh conditions and often for little reward. Miners had a good reputation for being hard workers and, especially in the early days before companies controlled the fields, for being rugged individualists, restlessly rushing to new discoveries and improvident whenever they had any money. Quartz miners, unlike alluvial ones, were more likely to be settled, living with their families in mining settlements.*

Many quartz miners did not follow this occupation for all of their lives. Examples are given of amateurs seeking riches but not really knowing how to mine profitably. In Hauraki, miners had to cope with heavy bush and rugged topography, with all the dangers this implied. Working underground required a range of skills, and was intrinsically dangerous, unhealthy, and exhausting. Accidents – especially when using explosives – could be fatal. Money to assist injured miners was raised by their mates in pre-social security days.. Miners had to cope with wet mines, acidic water, gas, and even heat, all of which could be mitigated but not avoided; to minimize the number of accidents, good timbering was insisted upon by mining inspectors. All miners had to endure monotonous work, enlivened by practical jokes.

Miners reliant on their own efforts rather than being on a company payroll often struggled financially. Some tributed in mines owned by others, a system open to exploitation by both sides. Increasingly, owners preferred contractors to wage workers, and some of the more skilled workers preferred contracts, including taking up non-mining contracts when mining was in recession. Partnerships were common in small mines, but as some partners did not abide by the terms of the contract, did not keep adequate records, or adhere to mining regulations, resort to the warden's court was common to settle disputes. Despite such conflicts, there was a solidarity amongst miners because of the conditions of their work.

Mining was not for everyone, as some quickly discovered after experiencing the dangerous conditions. And as companies took over, much of the 'romance' of mining faded.

THE LURE OF GOLD

One man who participated in the Victorian gold rushes wrote that goldfields had ‘a most bewitching influence upon fallen humanity. The very name begets a spasmodic affection of the limbs, which want to be off’.¹ Geoffrey Blainey referred to the first Australian rushes in words that were equally relevant to later decades and indeed to under-developed countries today:

Gold had a magnetism which the welfare state has dulled. To win gold was the only honest chance millions of people had of bettering themselves, of gaining independence, of storing money for old age or sickness, of teaching their children to read or write.... Now across the globe was a gigantic lottery in which all had a chance and the strong-armed labourer the highest chance. Gold was the magic formula in an age without football pools or state lotteries or social services.²

One observer of mining and miners wrote that this occupation required ‘immense faith, hope and charity. To be a good miner you must be an enthusiast’.³

EULOGIES

For persevering despite harsh conditions, constant hazards, and uncertain rewards, miners gained a reputation for being men of fine mettle. The *Waikato Times*, the mouthpiece of an agricultural not a mining district, wrote in 1886 that ‘as a class the miners are the most persevering of all men notwithstanding the hardships they have to contend with’.⁴ Edward Wakefield described them as ‘really the flower of the working-men of the colony, only men of good physique and equally good *morale* being equal to the demands of a mining life’.⁵ They were ‘men of powerful physique and great intelligence, their work involving no slight responsibility and

¹ James Bonwick, *Notes of a Gold Digger and Gold Diggers’ Guide* (Melbourne, 1942; originally published 1852), p. 1.

² Geoffrey Blainey, *The Rush That Never Ended: A history of Australian mining* (Melbourne, 1964), p. 38.

³ Raymond Radclyffe, *Wealth and Wild Cats: Travels and researches in the gold-fields of Western Australia and New Zealand* (London, 1898), p. 18.

⁴ Editorial, *Waikato Times*, 2 March 1886, p. 2.

⁵ Edward Wakefield, *New Zealand After Fifty Years* (London, 1889), p. 160.

technical skill, as well as much nerve and endurance'. The finest were Cornishmen, 'upright and straightforward in all their dealings, and, though singularly independent and self-reliant, courteous and of unlimited hospitality in their homely way'.⁶ Irish miners had 'great physical strength' but were 'chiefly employed in sheer labor not requiring much mental capacity'.⁷ Referring in particular to alluvial miners, he considered miners were

governed voluntarily in all their ways by unwritten laws, or what may be called a powerful public opinion or tacit code of honor, which, in fact, is much more strictly observed among them than the conventional rules of society are elsewhere. For this reason, though the gold-fields are in external appearance the wildest parts of the colony and their inhabitants and their dwellings the roughest, life and property are safer here than anywhere else, crime is almost unknown, and there is more civility and real good manners than in the urban communities. It is a maxim that every digger is a gentleman, and it is quite a startling experience to find men whose looks are enough to frighten anybody at first sight, polite, considerate, and simple-minded [in a positive sense], and in numberless instances very well read and highly cultivated.⁸

At Te Aroha, miners had, in general, an excellent reputation. John Ilott, editor of the *Te Aroha News* for most of the 1880s, stated in 1888 that he had never lived on a goldfield until settling in Te Aroha five years previously. Since then, he had had much contact with miners, and 'a more intelligent, open-hearted, courteous, and self-reliant class of men he had never met with at Home or abroad'.⁹ Christopher James Parr, son of Reuben, an early Thames miner,¹⁰ recalled them as 'the most generous and kind-hearted people of those early times'.¹¹ One of the children of George

⁶ Wakefield, p. 163.

⁷ Wakefield, p. 164.

⁸ Wakefield, p. 167.

⁹ *Te Aroha News*, 14 April 1888, p. 2.

¹⁰ See A.F. Sawyer, *Recollections* (n.d. [1940s]), W.G. Hammond Papers, folder 34a, MS 134, Library of the Auckland Institute and War Memorial Museum; *Te Aroha News*, 30 December 1925, p. 1; *Observer*, 16 January 1926, p. 5.

¹¹ Sir James Parr, 'Two Hemispheres: My Life' (typescript, 1934), p. 16, in possession of Christopher Parr, Remuera.

O'Halloran, licensee of the Hot Springs Hotel during the Te Aroha rush of 1880,¹² recorded his mother's recollections of the first miners:

Several hungry miners sat down daily SANS coat & SANS collar but with [polite?] language & respect. They were from all parts of the world, a good many rough & uncultured with little or no education, but I have heard it was a pleasing & [unreadable word] memory of my Mother how she went amongst them without hearing a single word that offended her ear.¹³

THE EARLY DIGGERS

In early 1883 the *Waikato Times* wrote that there was 'almost an entire absence' at Waiorongomai of 'the old stamp of miners characteristic of the early days of the Australian and New Zealand "diggings" '.¹⁴ These characteristics were detailed in prize-winning essays written in 1869 'on the subject of the settlement of the gold-mining population in New Zealand'.¹⁵ The first, by Robert Eyton, who later came to no good,¹⁶ included an assessment of their character:

In order justly to appreciate the character of diggers generally, a glance at the peculiarities and prejudices commonly attributed to them will be needful; and we must duly weigh the truth of the rumours which assign to this class an unconquerable love of change and excitement, together with a reckless hardihood, and, in nine cases out of ten, isolation from all social ties. True as steel to his mates, the digger's sympathies are reported to go no further; all the world beside is to him fair game. As for any feeling of patriotism towards the country from which he draws his wealth, that is thought to be a rare thing indeed. Sensational public meetings, disturbances with the Government or anybody else, Fenianism, fighting, are supposed to constitute his delights. Let a new gold field be discovered in some other part of the world, and he will forthwith transfer his dauntless energies, his rough good-nature, and his craving for adventure, to the new spot. He is supposed to regard all other classes as outer barbarians;

¹² See paper on his life.

¹³ Note on unpublished reminiscences of George Stewart O'Halloran, n.d., on back of p. 122 (= 'quarto 80'), MS 1345-2, Alexander Turnbull Library.

¹⁴ *Waikato Times*, 20 February 1883, p. 3.

¹⁵ *AJHR*, 1869, D-6.

¹⁶ See *Daily Southern Cross*, 19 April 1872, p. 3; *Grey River Argus*, 25 April 1872, p. 2.

tradesmen as necessary evils, permitted to dwell among the tents of the diggers on sufferance only; capitalists, who seek to invest upon the field, as a prey sent by a kind Providence for his (the digger's) especial advantage; all Government officials as a kind of bugbear, whom he is bound to obstruct as far as possible in the execution of their duty, and to grumble at invariably. Such is the type of character commonly attributed to the alluvial diggers.

Now, although the above picture, together with the tales so frequently spread of the digger's failings for bucketfuls of champagne, and generally his capacity for "spreeing away" indefinitely large sums in infinitesimally small times, must be accepted with very considerable modifications, and by no means as literally true, we may nevertheless argue, from their common reception, that they contain at all events a considerable element of truth.

In the early days of California and Australia, the sketch was probably a very much nearer approach to actual fact than it is today, when past experience has enabled Governments to bring the gold fields effectually under the rule of law. When, however, the sudden fluctuations which take place in the population of existing fields are considered, and we recall the rush from Otago to the West Coast three years, and the flocking thence to Queensland in February, 1868, and again to Auckland [i.e., Thames] last year, it must be admitted that the restless spirit of the digger cannot be easily bound down to any given locality. That a proportion of these people, by no means inconsiderable, are of a totally different character, and acquire local ties which give them an interest in some particular gold field, is undeniable. But, broadly speaking, I cannot see how alluvial diggers can be regarded as other than a migratory population, who, when a field begins to show signs of exhaustion, as far as the easily obtained surface gold is concerned, or when another field, which on the principle *omne ignotum pro magnifico* promises larger returns, is reported to have been discovered elsewhere, prefer moving away to attempting the development of any other industry which their present field may offer of a more permanent though less exciting nature.¹⁷

At Thames, co-operation between miners and capitalists meant companies had been 'most successfully established, and proved for the manifest advantage of both'. Alluvial miners, by comparison, were generally

¹⁷ Robert H. Eyton, Essay No. 1, 'Essays on the Subject of the Settlement of the Gold-Mining Population in New Zealand', *AJHR*, 1869, D-6, pp. 3-4.

‘too clannish and jealous of outsiders as to take so wide a view of his own interest’.¹⁸

Frederick Wollaston Hutton, a geologist who later became a professor at Canterbury University College,¹⁹ in the second essay agreed with this picture of the early diggers:

The roving and improvident disposition, deeply ingrained in the character of the true “gold digger,” is one not easily overcome. He is naturally fond of change, and considers himself as belonging to no country in particular, but is ready, at a moment’s notice, to follow gold wherever it may lead him, from Africa or British North America to the Fijis or China, deterred neither by heat nor by cold, by distance nor by savages. These are habits not taken up hastily, and therefore as easily abandoned, but are the growth of years, and from the constant association of large bodies of men, all deeply imbued with the same ideas, are thoroughly incorporated into the system.²⁰

Hutton noted that miners who joined the Waikato militia failed to take up the opportunity to become farmers. ‘Very few ever attempted to cultivate their land, most of them sold it for a few shillings an acre, and went off gold digging again’.²¹ (He ignored the difficulties created by Waikato’s swamps for potential farmers.) He also argued that the gender balance on the early goldfields was fundamentally important:

The constant herding together of large bodies of men is the most important cause of a careless disposition, while the all but total absence of women on a gold field takes off one of the strongest and most natural checks on dissipation and recklessness. I look upon the influence of large towns composed almost entirely of one sex, and all following one occupation, as of the greatest weight in forming the character of the miner.²²

His solution to the unsettled life of the alluvial gold digger was to turn him into a quartz miner, which would enable him to ‘still retain a dash of

¹⁸ Eyton, p. 4.

¹⁹ See *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 3 (Christchurch, 1903), p. 166, and paper on the ‘Waitoa Find’.

²⁰ F.W. Hutton, Essay No. 2, *AJHR*, 1869, D-6, p. 14.

²¹ Hutton, p. 14.

²² Hutton, pp. 14-15.

his darling speculation, while at the same time it will collect the men into small towns, containing, consequently, a larger proportion of women'. This, in turn, would 'gradually tend to induce them to marry and settle down, and in time will turn them or their sons into farmers'.²³

The third essayist, journalist Edward Thomas Gillon,²⁴ agreed that their heterogeneous occupational backgrounds meant many miners had unsettled and often transitory careers in this industry:

Miners for gold, unlike miners for other metals, are not, as a rule, men who have from youth been brought up to the occupation. The number of those who have been so trained is very small indeed, and the great mass of the gold-mining population is like an army – made up from recruits drawn from all grades in society, from all trades, and from almost all professions and occupations. These men have usually to serve a long and severe apprenticeship to the work of digging; but however long that apprenticeship may be, few diggers regard digging as their settled occupation. The professional man who abandons his profession, the tradesman who abandons his craft, or the husbandman who abandons his cultivation of the soil, for the miner's pick and shovel, does not do it with a deliberate intention of devoting the remainder of life to the new pursuit. Digging is too uncertain a pursuit, and a digger's life one of too great hardship, to induce any one to follow it as an occupation; but, paradoxically though it may seem, it is this very uncertainty which constitutes the great attraction. In the sense that every French soldier under the Empire was said to carry a marshal's baton in his knapsack, every claim may be said to have a fortune in it, and few as the great prizes of digging are, it is the *chance* of obtaining sudden competence or wealth – the possibility of obtaining at once stroke, what many years of ordinary labour in a regular vocation would scarcely yield, which induces men to give up those regular pursuits and adopt the digger's life for a time. Year after year they toil patiently, often making less than they could make much easier in other ways, but still toiling patiently on, in the hope that each new claim will be the lucky one which will enable them to give up digging, by rendering them able to support themselves comfortably, without returning to the occupation they had abandoned. Hope lies at the bottom of each hole sunk, as at the bottom of Pandora's box. The uncertainty of his occupation naturally reacts on the digger, and makes him rather an uncertain being. The hope which induces him to toil on month after month, when barely making what, in his peculiar

²³ Hutton, p. 15.

²⁴ See *Observer*, 8 January 1881, p. 160; *Auckland Star*, 22 May 1875, p. 3; *Wanganui Chronicle*, 26 July 1877, p. 2; *Colonist*, 20 April 1896, p. 2, 15 September 1896, p. 3.

vocabulary, is termed “tucker,” renders him ever ready to accept, in their entirety, the almost invariably highly coloured and greatly exaggerated reports regarding new discoveries. Having been comparatively unsuccessful where he is, he readily believes that the discovery of a new field is the opportunity which he has so long waited for, and so, without much reflection, the old claim is abandoned and off he goes with the rush to the new field.²⁵

TE AROHA MINERS

Like most other Hauraki fields, after the initial rush Te Aroha had a much more settled mining population. Accordingly, a large gender imbalance and a dissolute all-male population did not exist, although some characteristics of the early miners remained. Many became miners hoping to make a quick fortune but soon abandoned this temporary occupation when their sanguine hopes were not achieved, or joined another rush to the latest find, but were willing for a while at least to put up with harsh working conditions because of this hope. Most of those who had chosen mining as their occupation came from other Hauraki fields, to which they returned when prospects waned. Only during the rush were the more traditional types of behaviour common; as one visitor commented in early 1881, when the rush was fading, Te Aroha reminded him of Thames in 1867. ‘The same kind of men were at both places; with the same careless, good-humoured appearance, taking what joys lay in their way, and careless of the morrow’.²⁶ This carelessness soon faded once the excitement of the rush was replaced by the mundane reality of living in a permanent settlement and needing steady work other than the chimera of mining.

MINERS’ LIVES IN HAURAKI²⁷

Miners and their lives were particularly romanticized in retrospect, with both the men and the conditions of the present seen as softer than those of the past. For example, Ernest Gladhill D’Esterre, a journalist who,

²⁵ E.T. Gillon, Essay No. 3, *AJHR*, 1869, D-6, p. 21.

²⁶ ‘XYZ’, ‘To Te Aroha by Waikato and Back by Thames’, *Auckland Weekly News*, 5 March 1881, p. 11.

²⁷ For sketches of aspects of miners’ lives, see *New Zealand Graphic*, 21 September 1895, pp. 348-349, 7 December 1895, p. 716, 25 January 1896, p. 100, 28 March 1896, p. 342, 18 April 1896, p. 7.

in his youth, mined in the South Island,²⁸ and in the 1930s was involved with company flotation at Te Aroha,²⁹ described Waiorongomai as ‘a stern, hard school. The pioneers found great hardship in that wild country, faced it with jest on their lips, and vast hope in their brave hearts’.³⁰ ‘Obadiah’, a mining columnist, in 1892 lamented the passing of the self-reliant miner.

In the old days, when a digger was a law unto himself, when he was less molly-coddled with all sorts of laws and absurd legislation than he is at present, he was a more independent being than now. He seldom called on Mister Government for assistance, was always willing to help others, religiously kept Saturday afternoon holiday, and washed his shirt on Sunday.... Rumour sent him to all sorts of outlandish places, with a month’s tucker ... for prospecting.³¹

Early Thames miners were recalled as ‘sturdy, independent ... battlers’.³² By the end of the nineteenth century, it was claimed that miners were ‘in the hands of the big companies, and with few exceptions the old blue bloused, bluff and independent digger’ had disappeared.³³

As there were few large companies at Te Aroha, none of which lasted for long, the independent battlers of yore should have survived there. Attempts to discover their experiences of, and attitudes to, mining are handicapped by the fact that no letters or diaries written by prospectors or miners working in this district have survived apart from some letters written by John Squirrell,³⁴ who was not a typical miner. The following extracts from letters written in Thames during 1869 and 1870 by John Palmer Seccombe, one of the many who temporarily adopted the life of a gold miner, to his future wife in Bega, New South Wales, were typical of the frustrating experiences of a party of amateurs testing new ground:

20 May 1869: I have an idea we will all return to Australia near Spring especially if our claims turn out well or bad, but if they

²⁸ *New Zealand Herald*, 18 August 1954, p. 10.

²⁹ See paper on company flotation in the 1930s.

³⁰ Ernest D’Esterre, ‘Hope and Despair: The Quest for Gold: Waiorongomai Valley: A Struggle with Nature’, *New Zealand Herald*, 21 August 1937, p. 10.

³¹ ‘Obadiah’, ‘Shares and Mining’, *Observer*, 3 December 1892, p. 15.

³² *Observer*, 10 September 1904, p. 17.

³³ *Ohinemuri Gazette*, n.d., cited in *Observer*, 15 April 1899, p. 4.

³⁴ See paper on his life.

keep neither one thing or another one does not like to leave them. It pays you better for a claim to be no good than to raise false hopes. Wish I had never come to the country.

7 June 1869: The Point in View claim [near their Flagstaff claim] has gone into a company with an adjoining claim and it is greatly benefited. Both of them are worth more than twice as much as they ever were. An awfully exciting place is this. One week you fancy your fortune is sure - the next that you are ruined. Wish it were all over and we were happy in some cottage.

I have just put my foot in the frying pan - have to keep it under the table for want of room. It would amuse you to see this place. A little box 12 x 8 I built myself in a fortnight but it is a palace to a tent in wet weather. Tom and Will [his brother] have a better one although this answers the purpose just as well....

We are getting on very slowly with our work here. More haste the less speed.

9 June 1869: I wish I was finding plenty of gold as you wish - it would not be long before I made tracks for Bega but it is all the other way - it is nothing but spend and no returns. It was not my fault that I came here. In fact I didn't want to come near the place but when I came and saw some that had done well thought I was going to do the same but see no hopes of doing anything but losing everything. How many hundreds of times have I wished that we never left Poole?

12 July 1869: We have had some awfully cold days.... I generally sit by the fire at every meal. When we are at work I don't feel it considering we are 200ft down from the open air.

There has been some splendid gold struck about 150 yards from our claim. The Point in View have had another rise - it is going to be a rich claim yet. Some fine rich specimens taken out on Saturday. I am wishing for it too much here to get it. Our turn may come some day. To finish up my ill luck I think we are going to have a law suit over part of this claim. If we ever do get good gold here our fortunes are made as we hold three shares, and a quarter of one was sold the other day in a claim close to us for £1200. Am afraid there is no such luck for the wicked.

We are having awfully miserable, wet, cold weather. Have just had to light the fire and warm my feet although I have only been up an hour and now it is 1 o'clock. You must think I am very lazy but you must remember I have to be up nearly all night last week, this week and next week too. We have come to a big rock and we have to blast our way through it which is no fun although it makes a noise.

15 July 1869: Made fifty pounds by investing a shilling ten days ago but what good is it. It won't last more than six weeks for wages alone. What Will and I have invested hundreds in has not given any returns but all the other way - have to pay for carrying it on.... Wish I was well out of it, as soon as I can sell out to a little advantage I am off to you and Bega....

You would not imagine how awfully busy I am. I do a man's work in the claim and manage it besides attending to other claims and lots of other work and all for nothing as yet. If there is not a better show by the end of October there will be a general smash.

24 July 1869: People that see me now so busy, occupied for twenty hours sometimes in succession would hardly imagine that a few long months ago I led such an easy, lazy life, but such is life.

26 July 1869: There has been tremendous excitement caused by a claim striking rich gold in our neighbourhood. Claims are more valuable now than they were a month ago....

We are about forming one of the claims into a company for more convenient working of it.... We are trying hard to get something here. Day and night the whole twenty-four hours hammering away to test the ground. By November we will know whether there is to be anything or not. Of course we may get something any day. I thought last night I said enough about gold but it is no use talking - can think of nothing else.

14 September 1869: I fancy I have grown ten years older these last few weary months, wish they were at an end. Everything is going worse and worse and am afraid they are not going to improve very soon. The Success which we thought was going to redeem all our losses stands a fair chance of being as bad or worse than the rest and this beastly [Flagstaff] claim. Enough money spent on it to start you and I in a moderate way and nothing but rock, rock, rock. I am disgusted with the sight of it....

I have a cheek and arm large enough for four. One of the men gave me a gentle tap with a hammer. Not such little ones as you have seen but one you could hardly lift.

17 September 1869: The best news I can tell you is our rock is getting softer. Perhaps it may be like it often has been before - a lull before a storm - next week as hard as ever again. Although I trust not. I hope you will not be annoyed with me talking so much about the claim but really I am beginning to think so much about it that I can think or talk of nothing else. We are two hundred and forty feet in and nothing for our pains. Got one hundred and eighty more to get to our boundary - expect to do a stroke in the end (sent to the mad house).

7 November 1869: Been on the night shift so have no time to write and now there is nothing new except we have rock as hard or harder than ever in the horrible claim. The three months' work we started at seven months ago is going to take us a year by all appearances. I have made up my mind to say no more about the claims until I can send you good news which we trust may be sooner than we expect.

12 December 1869: A month over the year and no sign of a change. How much longer is the present state of affairs to last? ... I am still here and cannot see how I am to get away until we get to our boundary. If the rock does not improve it will take three or four months yet. If we only get a good reef it will be some consolation. The chances are getting less the farther we go. I feel like Job's comforter this evening. Would like to see other people as miserable as myself.... I do not think many would think my prospect good - for tonight to sit up until twelve o'clock and then go to work till light in the morning.... You see we take it in turns to work at night. We had six men until latterly. We only had eight hours each then, now we have only four so we work longer....

What an awful sleepy head I am. It's a good job I have an object in view or I would shirk some of this night work. It's eleven - I must prepare to go down.

15 December 1869: Sunday night I went to work at 12 o'clock, knocked off at eight in the morning, went to sleep at nine, slept until three, went to work at five, knocked off again at four the next morning. I never saw so few changes for it's nothing but work and sleep.

26 December 1869: The only piece of good news - I fully believe we are through the rock at last. The day we knocked off it came quite a change from any we have had before in fact there is every appearance that we are close to a reef. What would I not give if it was so - a rich one! If we do not strike something in three or four months we will have to give up many of our shares. I shall never forget what a lot of muffs [incompetents or amiable fools]³⁵ we have been, afraid we have lost our only chance not selling when we could have made three times our money.

23 January 1870: The farther we go into the beastly rock the harder and closer grained it becomes. I am awfully sick and tired of it. We are getting so very slow. A stranger could hardly tell we move at all seeing the work that is done in a week.

³⁵ Jonathon Green, *The Cassell Dictionary of Slang* (London, 1998), p. 812.

29 January 1870: We have left the Thames at last - I hope for ever if we can sell some of our interest there.... A week ago we had no idea of leaving Flagstaff in such a hurry. Last Wednesday morning father came down and proposed Whangarei. We thought we might lose three or six months more there for nothing so we have given it up which I am not sorry for especially if we meet sooner through it and I cannot but think we shall.³⁶

Seccombe soon returned to Australia, married his 'dearest Nellie', and never went goldmining again. Whereas his letters may give an excessively gloomy picture, the following example of the Heroic Pioneer may be excessively positive. Although set in the South Island, the description of driving in search of a reef is applicable to Hauraki:

From time to time encouraging signs are met with and the work proceeds with a new hope. Then these fade and an air of gloom and disappointment forces itself upon the weary men and they plod homewards discouraged. But this is the weakness of the body manifesting itself, not that of the spirit, for next morning both are early astir and marching with sprightly step back to the scene of their labours. A night's sound sleep promotes a remarkable change in the outlook of a weary man.

On and on they fight their way, now heartened, now dejected, but always in the hope that ultimately they will succeed. As the weeks pass by, they find themselves thirty, forty, fifty, sixty feet from the mouth of the tunnel, which is now diminishing in size when viewed from the working face. As yet they have had no great encouragement, but still they keep on. They are determined to tap the centre of the spur, and they make rough calculations as to how much further they must proceed. A distance of eighty feet has now been won. Another ten and they should strike a vein if such exists. Excitement now grips them and they apply themselves even more diligently than before, borne up by the hope that even yet something rich may reward their efforts. These ten feet are cut and still no good fortune has resulted. Nevertheless they will continue their quest. From now onwards, however, they are men who are fighting a losing fight. Only dogged determination not to give up, but to go down with their colours flying, now supports them.

The matter is discussed on the homeward journey and viewed from all angles, and they determine to proceed for another ten feet, just to make sure that they have not underestimated the

³⁶ *The Letters of John Palmer Seccombe*, ed. Ellen J. Sides (Sydney, 1974), pp. 30-33, 36-38, 40-41, 46-49, 54-56, 58-59.

magnitude of their task. If, after this, no success is attained, they will abandon the attempt and try elsewhere. Thus the work continues, and although occasionally there is encouragement, both can not but feel that the effort had failed and so, on reaching the hundred-foot mark without meeting success, they decide to admit defeat. No complaints are made. They have failed, but are not disheartened and with only slightly diminished ardour, turn their attention elsewhere.³⁷

MOVING FROM FIELD TO FIELD

Rushing to new fields was common. On the West Coast in the 1860s, many left good mines to go to new finds,³⁸ thereby abandoning the certainty for the possibility. With the rapid rise and often equally rapid decline of many fields, some miners were forced to be migratory. In 1899, it was reported that Reefton had ‘turned out a hard frost to the Thames miners who influxed there some time ago’ and were now ‘trying all they know to get back again’.³⁹ Moving from field to field, and sometimes from country to country, had a serious impact on their families. For instance, Harriet McLean, wife of William, a miner who for a time was the tramway manager at Waiorongomai,⁴⁰ wrote to the council in mid-1887 ‘expressing regret that she had been unable to pay her rates, and stating that her husband had left for Kimberley over a year ago, she had received no support from him since he left, and had only the milk of four cows wherewith to support a family of 7 children’, six of them aged under 12. The council exempted her from paying rates ‘on the ground of poverty’.⁴¹

Miners also moved freely within the same goldfield, going to wherever work was to be found. Thomas Kirker,⁴² for example, in the first four months of 1888 worked with a mate in the Success at Waiorongomai for 33 days, then spent a week mining at the Maratoto field, then worked in the Success for ten days on his own until his mate rejoined him, and then was

³⁷ Arthur Beasley, *Pioneering Days, or, Reminiscences of a Pioneer: Tales of early New Zealand* (London, 1933), pp. 88-89.

³⁸ Philip Ross May, *The West Coast Gold Rushes*, rev. ed. (Christchurch, 1967), p. 280.

³⁹ *Observer*, 1 April 1899, p. 3.

⁴⁰ See paper on the Piako County tramway at Waiorongomai.

⁴¹ Piako County Council, *Te Aroha News*, 18 June 1887, p. 2.

⁴² See *Te Aroha News*, 13 March 1886, p. 3, 25 April 1888, p. 2, 2 June 1888, p. 2, 23 October 1889, p. 2.

employed to mine in another claim.⁴³ One month later, he tendered unsuccessfully to continue a drive in yet another claim.⁴⁴

WHAT NON-MINERS THOUGHT OF MINING IN HAURAKI

One journalist considered that Hauraki possessed ‘a climate second to none in the British Empire for salubrity. The conditions of a miner’s life in comparison with other bush occupations is as a feather-bed to bare boards’.⁴⁵ Many more closely involved with mining would not have agreed. Like bushmen, some miners had to live in the hills near their mine during the week, suffering both from isolation but being ‘a prey to the insatiable hordes of mosquitoes that infest the bush’.⁴⁶ The earliest bush huts, known as whare, were constructed of ponga and thatched with nikau leaves.⁴⁷

Some visitors described conditions in Hauraki mines; for example, an 1897 visit to the Jubilee Company’s mine at Waitekauri:

After climbing - you have to do a mighty lot of climbing in those parts it you want to see anything - a good distance we came to the low level drive, which was then in 100 feet. Still more climbing and we got to the battery, and later on saw more levels. We donned suits of dungaree, and, after being armed with a candle, started off to “do” the drives. Have you ever been in a drive, gentle reader? Possibly not; well, don’t let your curiosity lead you into trying the journey, and rest assured that ignorance is bliss compared to the folly of the wisdom gained by experience. At the mouth you light up the candle you were previously armed with, and the party moves off in single file, where the stranger knows not. After groping along in the uncertain light of the candles, barking our shins against tram rails, falling off the walking plank running down the centre of the tramline into nine inches of muddy water, tumbling up against the damp walls, and burning our hands with the naked light, we got to the end, and found two

⁴³ *Te Aroha News*, 25 April 1888, p. 2.

⁴⁴ *Te Aroha News*, 2 June 1888, p. 2.

⁴⁵ ‘A Tramp, Esq.’, ‘Casual Ramblings’, *Auckland Weekly News*, 26 September 1896, p. 38.

⁴⁶ *Waikato Times*, 31 January 1882, p. 3.

⁴⁷ For example, Ben Gwilliam, ‘A Journey from Waihi to Whangamata in 1897’, and a description of the Luck at Last mine at Wharekawa, copied by Elsie Graydon, p. 1, Elsie Graydon Papers, MS Papers 90-184-1, Alexander Turnbull Library; for photographs of a mining camp with a whare and a tent for a cookhouse, see *New Zealand Graphic*, 13 March 1897, p. 308.

men breaking down the solid rock through which they were driving, so solid that in many instances the men could only average about 12 inches a day. The smoke of the last shot fired had not yet cleared away, and it was some time before we could accustom our eyes to the murky surroundings. The air, too, was bad, and between it and the smoke the candles had a poor show to keep alight. To add to the men's discomfort the particular drive we were in was very wet, and, taking it altogether, we came to the conclusion that there were easier and more comfortable ways of earning the daily bread than mining....

On the following day ... we visited the Waitekauri mine.... Entering a "pass," armed with the inevitable candle only, we got into a stope, and had not gone very far when we had to crawl along on hands and knees. In some places the distance between the filling-in earth and the roof was just enough to squeeze through. You get used to it certainly, but crawling along in the bowels of the earth with tons of rock overhead isn't the most agreeable sightseeing to be found. Then we clambered down a pass by the aid of a ladder, set bolt upright, and came to a drive. Out again into the daylight, and so on through a whole series.⁴⁸

Miners were more adept at avoiding bumping into the walls and more blasé about the weight of rock above their heads, but having too little light and too much water was typical; bad air from gas was common, and from explosives was universal.

DANGERS

In all parts of the Te Aroha goldfield the steep hillsides created hazards. A freak accident occurred in December 1880 when William Dodd, a Te Aroha miner who would soon leave for Karangahake,⁴⁹ 'was wheeling a barrow of quartz from the lower drive of the Don'. Two visitors 'descending the spur loosened a boulder of five pounds, which rolled down with great rapidity and struck him on the top of the head, knocking him senseless'. As there was no local doctor, a chemist 'plastered up' the wound, which was 'of a somewhat serious nature, requiring him to be off work for a week'.⁵⁰ Early the following year, another miner described returning from a mine above

⁴⁸ 'An Excursion on the Gold-Fields: Through Waitekauri and Te Aroha', *New Zealand Herald*, 13 March 1897, Supplement, p. 1.

⁴⁹ See *Thames Advertiser*, Warden's Court, 10 August 1885, p. 3, Warden's Court, 21 September 1885, p. 3, 26 September 1885, p. 3.

⁵⁰ Own Reporter, 'Te Aroha Goldfield', *Thames Advertiser*, 23 December 1880, p. 3.

the township with a mate: ‘The night was a dark one, so dark, in fact, that witness and his mate had some trouble in finding their way down from the mine at 8 o’clock, his mate fell and brought up against a punga’.⁵¹ In 1895, a miner employed in the All Nations fell ‘when his foot caught the root of a tree’. In trying to prevent his load of heavy tools ‘falling down the hill to the creek, his ankle sustained a compound fracture and the sinews of the foot were strained and disarranged’.⁵²

Any workings that reached the surface were inherently dangerous. For example, in 1888 the mining inspector, George Wilson,⁵³ instructed a mine manager at Tui that the ‘winze near the track at the top of the spur ... must be securely fenced in or covered in a substantial manner without delay’.⁵⁴ Tramways to take trucks of ore from the mines were also dangerous, one man having a ‘somewhat serious’ accident when ‘running out a full truck’ to the shoot taking ore from the New Find to the tramway. At a sharp bend ‘the truck ran off the rails’, its velocity throwing it ‘right on its end’, pitching him ‘clean over the top on to the rough country beyond’. He received ‘only a few superficial bruises’.⁵⁵

WORKING UNDERGROUND

A quartz miner required many skills,⁵⁶ and the correct use and care of tools took time to learn. Bert McAra, mine manager at Tui in the late 1940s,⁵⁷ and later an mining inspector, listed the tools required:

Several sets of hand-steel, a scraper (consisting of a five-foot-long light steel rod with a spoon on one end and a button on the other) for clearing the hole of cuttings, a miner’s pick (single-pointed, with a hammer-head for sounding the ground to test its safety), a short-handled miner’s shovel, a wooden rod for tamping explosives into the holes, and explosives – dynamite, safety-fuse and detonators or “caps.” As quartz is one of the hardest rocks,

⁵¹ *Thames Advertiser*, 3 March 1881, p. 3.

⁵² *Te Aroha News*, 2 November 1895, p. 2.

⁵³ See paper on his life.

⁵⁴ George Wilson to C.A. Cornes, 9 May 1888, Te Aroha Warden’s Court, Letterbook 1883-1900, p. 271, BBAV 11534/1a, ANZ-A.

⁵⁵ *Te Aroha News*, 23 March 1889, p. 2.

⁵⁶ For more details, see paper on miners’ skills.

⁵⁷ See paper on the Auckland Smelting Company.

and will cut glass – it has a hardness of seven on the scale in which diamond, the hardest-known substance, is ten – the drill steels had to be carefully sharpened and tempered in order to drill through it.⁵⁸

In 1914, a miner described working underground, and although writing about a larger mine than any at Waiorongomai, the conditions he described at the face of the drive were the same as in any quartz mine:

The miners light their candles and make their way to the different chambers, stopes or rises.... Having had a short smoke, they start drilling holes for the insertion of gelignite, either with rockdrills, driven with compressed air or by hand with hammer and drill, turn about, one strikes, the other holding and turning the drill. When the holes are the right length explosive is inserted, fuse and cap attached. One man is told off to light the fuse and the miners having retired to a safe distance he lights it and runs. Then comes a roaring report, and you think the whole earth has come down on top of you. After the fumes of the gelignite have cleared away, back come the miners, and when the trucks have been filled ... [they are] taken to the surface. When all the quartz has been sent away timber is put in to hold up the ground.⁵⁹

A farmer who had mined at Coromandel in the late 1860s recalled that ‘sometimes the fuse would fail, and we then had to wait 20 minutes or so before we ventured to go back when we had to cut the shot out. This was rather dangerous work for sometimes the fuse had got damp and would take effect some time after being lit’.⁶⁰ Les Hill, son of John Samuel Hill, a tramway manager at Waiorongomai,⁶¹ recalled explosives being held in a magazine to be issued as required, and ‘carried in canisters, like cream cans, with a padlock on it’. Holes for explosives were ‘drilled by the hammer and tap method - tap and turn, tap and turn! Sometimes when a hole was deep the jumper method was used - the weight of the bar being enough to

⁵⁸ J.B. McAra, *Gold Mining at Waihi 1878-1952*, rev. ed. (Waihi, 1988), p. 60.

⁵⁹ James McAarty, ‘Day Shift on a Gold Mine’, *Auckland Weekly News*, 29 January 1914, p. 17.

⁶⁰ ‘Charles Abraham’s Travels to the Antipodes’ (typescript, transcribed by Joan Tidy, Taupo, 1991), p. 36 [held in the Library of the Auckland Institute and War Memorial Museum].

⁶¹ See paper on the Piako County tramway.

drive the hole. Perhaps two blasts a day could be got. The mullock was just driven out of the tunnel and dumped nearby'.⁶²

In 1909, a visitor to Murphy's Find, close to the Te Aroha domain,⁶³ described walking down the drive towards where 'miners could be dimly discerned in a little cloud of mist', the mist probably being a combination of their breath and quartz dust. He found three men, 'one turning a drill and the other two striking in turn to bore a hole for the charge'.⁶⁴ It was dim because they were working by candlelight: one early miner, Charles Abraham, recalled candles 'stuck onto the side of the drive with a lump of clay'.⁶⁵ The poor light must have been a strain on the eyes, just as the incessant hammering and periodic blasting must have damaged their hearing. When mining at Thames in the 1860s, Abraham found the work 'very hard, and for 2 or 3 weeks I could hardly open my hands from the constant jar of the pick striking the hard rock or quartz'.⁶⁶

When prospecting at Waiorongomai and mining at Tui in the 1960s, after the mine manager gave Eric Coppard⁶⁷ and his equally inexperienced fellow workers some brief instructions about how to drill they set to work:

We used the hand steel, which was virtually a cold chisel and a hammer, and this was an art that we learned.... If the hammer slipped, mind you - you didn't use a very big one, it was about an eight to ten pound hammer - but that was enough to rip your knuckles if you missed.... The trick, of course, was ... not to whack your mate's knuckles and his trick was not to drill a three-cornered hole, because it's so easy to actually make a three-cornered hole instead of perfectly circular. You tended to offset it a little bit and you got three distinct corners ... [and] you couldn't turn the drill steel - it would jam. We could drill about a foot in an hour.... Hammering it in, and then you'd have to clean it out, get the dust out, and we found the easiest way was to make a little spoon out of wire and beat the end into a little sort of depression, giving a spoon effect, and just sort of scrape it out.⁶⁸

⁶² Les Hill, interviewed by David Bettison, July 1975.

⁶³ See paper on Denis Murphy.

⁶⁴ *Te Aroha News*, 18 February 1909, p. 2.

⁶⁵ 'Charles Abraham's Travels', p. 36.

⁶⁶ 'Charles Abraham's Travels', p. 37

⁶⁷ See paper on prospectors' working lives.

⁶⁸ Interview with Eric Coppard, at Waihi, 4 August 1985, p. 21 of transcript.

All drilling, whether using a hammer or the early rock-drills, meant miners were soon covered in quartz dust, often causing miners' complaint, otherwise silicosis.⁶⁹ In the Eureka in 1882, softer stone meant blasting powder was used instead of dynamite,⁷⁰ and in 1898 'blasting gelatine' was used for the easier country being driven on in Aroha Gold Mines' low level.⁷¹ Septic cuts were common: 'something in the ore probably aggravated them', McAra believed.⁷² He described mining as 'traditionally hard work':

It is difficult today to appreciate how hard these men worked. Imagine swinging an eight-pound striking hammer all day long in the confined and poorly ventilated space of a seven-by-five-foot "dead end" tunnel, or perhaps crouching on a heap of broken rock turning the drill. Imagine loading the broken rock into trucks with a shovel, as fast as humanly possible in the warm moist atmosphere of a confined tunnel, and then pushing the truck (eighteen hundredweight plus tare weight of seven hundredweight) several hundred yards and returning with an empty. One can see how these men became, of sheer necessity, very skilful in their work and devised every ingenious aid to improve their production. It really did demand a combination of brains and brawn.⁷³

As the basics of mining did not alter over the years, despite some improved technologies, Coppard's description of opening up the Tui mines in the late 1960s is relevant to mining from the time of the Te Aroha rush:

You put a drive in ... along the reef, and you may find that a particular section of the mine along that drive is economic to mine out. The ore does appear to be in, you could say, big pockets almost, and you have zones where some of it is quite rich, others are rather poor. What you do, you find an area and you sample the roof, perhaps even the floor, and you get an idea of the value of the metal ... and you get an idea of what value that piece of ground has. Now your next exercise is to go above that if you can and do the same thing, put a drive through and see what the value is there. That means then that you have two sides of that block evaluated and you start to look at it and think, well, I can perhaps assume that the rest of it through the middle that I can't

⁶⁹ See interview with J.B. McAra, at Waihi, 4 August 1985, pp. 31-33 of transcript.

⁷⁰ *Thames Advertiser*, 27 May 1882, p. 3.

⁷¹ *AJHR*, 1898, C-3, p. 74.

⁷² Interview with J.B. McAra, 4 August 1985, p. 34 of transcript.

⁷³ McAra, p. 61.

see will be of a similar grade. Now your next thing then is to put a connection between both levels.... Now in the earlier days it used to be quite a common practice to very carefully survey in to common points and one party would start from the top and sink a winze down and one party would start from the bottom and would rise up and as the two got together one party would stop and pull out and the other party would continue through and they'd break through and then you'd connect up and then you'd have a connection between two levels and if you were using the top level and you were going to the bottom level all the time it would be called a winze, if you were from the bottom and you were going up all the time or upwards only it would be called a rise....

So this then would give you three sides of that body of ore blocked out. Now from that you've got a pretty good idea then that the value in there would be worthwhile mining.... The stoping is the actual mining. You then can go down to the other end and you can put a small rise up, to test it, or you can put a major rise through and connect the other levels, so you'd then have four sides opened and ... the connections of course give you ventilation which is most important and it also gives you access and an escape way if something goes wrong....

Now when you've got your ventilation system established, you'd then come in to this ... block of ore that you want to mine, and because most of the stopes are done as overhead stopes ... you would then shoot the roof out or the backs [ore above the level] out....

You'd take six feet through as a slit, right through, the width of the reef or the width of the ore that you were going to work. Now it would vary sometimes because the reefs were a lot wider than the ore portion and you would take as wide as it was comfortable to work in - about five maybe six feet at the most in width. In one of two cases we had stoped like M stope, that was round about 20 feet wide at its widest and about three or four feet narrow in its narrowest section, it was one that sort of bellied out as we went along....

The face is assayed, and you don't want to take any more, because you're diluting it too low, the head grade becomes lower than accepted. So you take out that roof part, that falls on to the ground and that's cleaned up. Now you may find you have to take a little bit more out but basically six feet is about sufficient. You then stand timber along there, put a complete timber corridor in, caps, legs, you may have to put sills across on the bottom of it for the legs to sit on because the ground may be soft, then, either every set or every second set of timber you put in a chute or a hopper, with the door on it and boards in it so that the broken rock, when it falls down and it covers the timber, it's got somewhere to come out....

You have your mine trucks come in underneath, and you fill each individual mine truck.... You can control how much comes out - you either have a door which swings over that you can open it or shut it or you have boards across and you can pull the boards out and then jam them back in again....

Sometimes [the stopes jammed] just inside the hopper door. It's a work of art trying to bar them through or sometimes you have to put very light explosive charges on and blast them, crack them.... You get what's called hang-ups and the rock will be moving downwards - unfortunately sometimes you may get two or three big ones jam and of course everything is hung on that.⁷⁴

Ore was sometimes extracted through shrink stoping:

It gets its name because you blast the rock out from above your head. The broken rock takes up more volume than the in situ rock and so the area that you're working in shrinks in size, you get less and less room. So you remove that broken rock, or what you need to ... from the hoppers underneath and it settles down and you can stand on that then and reach up to the roof.⁷⁵

Using this method 'you would only pull maybe a quarter to half of the potential of the block of ore out during the stope's working life, because you're standing on it and working up. When the stope was finished, then of course you retrieve the remaining ore'.⁷⁶

Coppard described making rises, and recalled a dangerous experience:

Now normally for going vertically up you would shoot out the roof, just as if you were working in a drive except you're going straight in in the air or on the angle, the dip of the reef, but you'd shoot out the roof and then you'd stand a set of timber from wall to wall, hangingwall to footwall, timber it off on one side, one side would become an ore shute and the other side would become a ladderway. Now technically, at this stage, you're supposed to put up what was called three compartment rises. You had ore shute, ladderway, ventilation way, but we used to have just the two-compartment one, we'd have an ore shute and the other, the ladderway, and we'd also have a set of boards, twelve by one boards, two of them, slightly bevelled on edge, and they were skid boards. We'd have a winch at the bottom with a wire rope, and ...

⁷⁴ Interview with Eric Coppard, 4 August 1985, pp. 68-73 of transcript.

⁷⁵ Interview with Eric Coppard, 4 August 1985, p. 57 of transcript.

⁷⁶ Interview with Eric Coppard, 8 December 1985, p. 25 of transcript.

all your timber then would be drawn up on these, they wouldn't foul as it went up.

Now unfortunately, of course, there were times when the ladders became loose and you perhaps wouldn't realise it. I got caught once, coming between two levels. As shift boss I was coming down, and I think the connection - the distance between these two particular levels was something just on two hundred feet. I was about half way down ... and I had found earlier on that one particular ladder was loose and I'd told the party of men that were working in the area that they should get round to nailing it up. Anyway, it hadn't been done. I didn't realise it, and I got down and I got about four or five rungs down the ladder and this jolly ladder came away from the wall and here I am sort of between Heaven and Hell almost. I didn't know what was going on - and I knew I couldn't go perhaps right backwards because the distance between the walls wasn't that great, but it certainly gave a terrible fright. But what I was more worried about wasn't the fact that it leant ... backwards but was the fact that the bottom of the ladder might come unnailed, and the whole thing would just slide straight down like a toboggan. Now there were a couple of red-faced miners when I eventually composed myself and got back down again.⁷⁷

Making rises was 'a dirty job, literally, you get covered in your drillings from head to foot'. When rock drills were used, miners were wet all the time, and 'the fumes seemed to linger longer in the rises because with the timbering up that we do (they are made to not let the rock fall down the ladderway) which means, of course, ventilation's a problem'.⁷⁸ Fortunately the mines at Tui, as at Waiorongomai, were in 'secure country', with 'clean solid rock, and in small reefs'.⁷⁹

PHYSICAL RISKS

Belich noted that 'insurers assessed mining at thirteen times ... the risk of safe city jobs'.⁸⁰ One observer considered that 'in almost every situation in life a man's safety depends chiefly on himself, and this is the reason why so many accidents may be attributed to carelessness. It is

⁷⁷ Interview with Eric Coppard, 4 August 1985, pp. 62-63 of transcript.

⁷⁸ Interview with Eric Coppard, 8 December 1985, p. 28 of transcript.

⁷⁹ Interview with J.B. McAra, 4 August 1985, p. 38 of transcript.

⁸⁰ James Belich, *Making Peoples: a history of the New Zealanders, from Polynesian settlement to the end of the nineteenth century* (Auckland, 1996), pp. 430-431.

especially the case in every gold mine'.⁸¹ This was a rather harsh generalisation. Should a miner be blamed for bruising himself when slipping when carrying a load of drills out of a mine and his head hit the iron rail, the drills then falling across his face?⁸² Judging from the many descriptions of water making the ground slippery, the conditions of work were to blame. The *Thames Star* noted that, 'in addition to being dangerous', statistics showed that the average life of a miner was 'ten years shorter than the generality of occupations'.⁸³ However, mining at Te Aroha was less deleterious than at Thames. According to a 1908 statement by one prominent mine owner, Henry Hopper Adams,⁸⁴ conditions at Thames were 'much worse' than anywhere else in Hauraki, 'both as regards health and the wear and tear of clothes and boots',⁸⁵ a reference to gas and acidic water.

ACCIDENTS

Blasting was the most hazardous part of opening up a mine, and on all fields it caused injuries and death. One miner's eye was pierced by a piece of steel when putting in a shot in the Plutus.⁸⁶ An eye injury to another miner in another drive was caused also by flying metal or quartz.⁸⁷ The usual method when drilling was finished was to blast one or two holes 'and then come back, clean that up and try and perhaps knock down the loose stuff so as you didn't have to do too much hand-drilling'.⁸⁸ Occasionally the injury to humans was to an inanimate object: in the case of a 'curious accident' in 1881, when dynamite was fired a piece of stone 'struck a coat hanging on a tree in front of the drive, breaking a meerschaum pipe and completely dismembering a valuable silver lever hunting watch'.⁸⁹ A more typical accident had happened at Tui shortly before, when a miner attempted to set off a blast.

⁸¹ 'Obadiah', 'Shares and Mining', *Observer*, 20 June 1903, p. 20.

⁸² *Te Aroha News*, 19 June 1889, p. 2.

⁸³ *Thames Star*, n.d., cited in *New Zealand Herald*, 27 April 1881, p. 5.

⁸⁴ See paper on his life.

⁸⁵ *Auckland Weekly News*, 16 April 1908, p. 32.

⁸⁶ *Te Aroha News*, 30 April 1898, p. 2.

⁸⁷ *Thames Advertiser*, 20 September 1897, p. 2.

⁸⁸ Interview with Eric Coppard, 4 August 1985, p.49 of transcript.

⁸⁹ *Te Aroha Miner*, n.d., reprinted in *Thames Star*, 1 February 1881, p. 2.

The fuse went out after burning for a short time, and B____ then commenced to lay a new fuse, but had hardly inserted one end before the powder, which had hung fire, exploded, and sent several pieces of stone flying about his ears. Fortunately, none struck him, but one of his arms was very severely scorched by the explosion.⁹⁰

Another miner working a night shift in the New Find in 1885 lit the fuse and

moved away watching for it to “spit” as it is termed, showing that the fuse had ignited; not observing this however, and supposing the match had gone out without causing ignition, he was proceeding to return in order to apply a fresh light when the charge exploded without however doing him any injury beyond a few slight scratches. His escape was a most providential one.⁹¹

The *Te Aroha News* blamed some dangerous incidents on the ‘inferior fuse’, which ‘for want of a better’ was being used ‘in several mines. In two or three instances it has nearly led to disastrous results’. James Hamilton Baxter, an owner of two Waiorongomai claims and sole owner of another, managed one mine before taking charge of the Inverness.⁹² One month later, he ‘had a narrow escape’ when about to inspect a charge using this type of fuse.

It had hung fire for about a quarter of an hour, and believing the shot had missed, he went to examine it. He had reached within thirty feet of the face when the charge exploded, but fortunately without doing him much injury. If it had gone off a minute later in all probability the consequence would have been fatal to him. There should certainly be some supervision of the sale of all articles used for blasting purposes, and everything of doubtful quality should be unhesitatingly condemned by authority.⁹³

⁹⁰ *Thames Advertiser*, 21 January 1881, p. 3.

⁹¹ *Te Aroha News*, 7 November 1885, p. 2.

⁹² Te Aroha Warden’s Court, Register of Te Aroha Claims 1880-1888, folios 286, 287, 296, BBAV 11567/1a, ANZ-A; *New Zealand Gazette*, 11 October 1883, p. 1487, 18 October 1883, p. 1518; Magistrate’s Court, *Te Aroha News*, 8 March 1884, p. 2; *Waikato Times*, 15 November 1884, p. 2.

⁹³ *Te Aroha News*, 27 December 1884, p. 2.

In other cases, miners were to blame, as in an accident in 1908 after 13 holes had been bored in the face of a drive. After two of these 'cutting-in holes' were fired at a quarter to four, two 23-year-old Australians,⁹⁴ William S. Young and Alfred Hawes,

went back to fire the balance, when the fuse at one of the shorter holes to which Young had applied it fell off; he then put another piece on, and in spite of the remonstrances of his mate, who cried out to him, "Come away, or you'll get shot," he persisted and set fire to the hole. He had only got about 20ft away from the face when the holes exploded, knocking both men down. Young was seriously injured; his leg and arm were broken, and he was otherwise badly bruised. Hawes's injuries were of a lighter nature, and he will probably be able to resume work in a few weeks. The Inspector of Mines attributes the accident to the men being in too great a hurry to get the holes blasted before 4 o'clock.⁹⁵

An Auckland newspaper reported only one charge being fired before they returned to fire the remainder:

While Young was spitting the fuses a plug of gelignite fell off the fuse in one of the back holes, and although other of the charges had been fired he waited to replace the explosive. Hawes, who by this time was some few feet back in the drive making his way out, noticed his comrade's danger and called out to him to get clear, but it was already too late, as Young had no sooner turned to leave than an explosion occurred.

Both men were knocked down by the flying stones, and Hawes, who was struck on the head, managed to scramble clear of danger from the remaining shots, but his mate was less fortunate, one of his legs being broken when the first of the 12 shots went off. Young lay where he fell and sustained further injuries from the material thrown out by the shots which followed. When the explosions were over Hawes made his way back to the face, and when with the assistance of others the debris was cleared away it was found that Young still breathed.

Impromptu stretchers were rigged up, and the men taken down to Te Aroha to be treated at a doctor's surgery, where they remained overnight

⁹⁴ Waihi Hospital, Register of Admissions 1903-1910, folio 47, no. 328, folio 49, no. 329, ZABW 4935/1a, ANZ-A.

⁹⁵ *New Zealand Mines Record*, 16 March 1908, p. 359.

before being taken to Waihi hospital. Young had ‘an arm and a leg broken, a gash over the eye, and several cuts on the back’, while Hawes reportedly had a fractured skull ‘and minor injuries’. Hawes recovered quickly, but Young remained in a serious condition.⁹⁶ Far from Hawes having a fractured skull, he had a compound fracture of a little finger, and left hospital after 20 days. Young spent 176 days in hospital, and was ‘relieved’, not cured, when discharged.⁹⁷

The only death in the Te Aroha district from a blasting accident did not occur underground. On 2 October 1887, George Read (also recorded as Reid), a miner aged 50, married for eight years and with two sons, died after two days of suffering from ‘Injuries by explosion; Shock’.⁹⁸ One of the earliest settlers at Te Aroha West, he had a small farm.⁹⁹ A ‘skillful miner’, after arriving from Cornwall he mined at Coromandel and then at Thames soon after it opened, becoming a farmer as well as a miner in the 1880s.¹⁰⁰ The local newspaper provided considerable detail of the accident and its causes. Read was working in the Colonist with Thomas Scott and Ben Hill (nothing is known of the latter; the former was a fully qualified mine manager,¹⁰¹ who had been a manager and company director at Thames in the 1870s before managing mines at Waiorongomai.)¹⁰² On arriving at the mine in the morning, they went to the smithy, just outside the portal, to sharpen some tools. Scott

had pointed three picks and tempered one, in the course of which he dipped it in a small barrel of water close by, and afterwards stuck it in the floor of the smithy. The second pick Scott states he threw into the barrel of water, when an explosion immediately followed, which blew off the roof of the smithy, demolished one end, and also blew a hole eighteen inches deep in the ground right

⁹⁶ *Auckland Weekly News*, 26 March 1908, p. 23.

⁹⁷ Waihi Hospital, Register of Admissions 1903-1910, folio 47, no. 328, folio 49, no. 329, ZABW 4935/1a, ANZ-A.

⁹⁸ Death Certificate of George Read, 2 October 1887, 1887/4868, BDM.

⁹⁹ *Waikato Times*, 4 October 1887, p. 2.

¹⁰⁰ *Te Aroha News*, 8 October 1887, p. 2.

¹⁰¹ Mines Department, MD 1, 87/676, ANZ-W; *AJHR*, 1890, C-3, p. 133; *New Zealand Mines Record*, 16 August 1904, p. 44.

¹⁰² *Thames Advertiser*, 11 July 1870, p. 2, 13 March 1875, p. 3, 3 March 1878, p. 3; *Thames Star*, 16 August 1882, p. 2, 14 December 1883, p. 2; *Te Aroha News*, 10 October 1885, p. 2.

under where the barrel stood, and turned an anvil of about two hundredweight right round on the block. The explosion was heard by those at work at the New Find mine, a considerable distance off, and a number of persons were quickly on the spot, when it was found that although the three men had providentially escaped with their lives, two of them had, however, sustained injuries of a very serious nature. Hill was thrown down, but wonderful to relate, beyond a good shaking got off uninjured. Read was found to have received a very bad flesh wound, a little below the thigh joint; a jagged portion of one of the barrel staves having been forced right to the bone, and into which a man's fingers could easily be thrust, the piece of wood carrying in a piece of the trousers with it. The surface of the wound was also scorched. But what the poor fellow complains of most is a very severe pain in the bowels, which is so severe as to make him almost forget the leg wound, and it is feared he has received internal injuries of a severe character, but the nature of which is not yet known. He was promptly conveyed to Waiorongomai on a stretcher improvised for the occasion by some of the miners, and put to bed at Mr H[enry] H[opper] Adams's, where he is receiving every kindness and attention possible from Mr and Mrs Adams; Mrs Read being also at once sent for, and remains to nurse him. Scott was able with assistance to reach his home without the aid of a stretcher, and was also at once got to bed. His worst wound is in the side, just below the shoulder joint, besides he has however received some severe cuts in the legs and is much bruised all over; Dr Cooper [not a real doctor]¹⁰³ was promptly in attendance on the injured men and dressed their wounds and is doing everything possible to relieve their sufferings. As already stated the direct cause of the explosion is a matter of conjecture. From what we can learn it appears some of the men the previous evening thawed several cartridges of dynamite (close to 1lb it is thought), for use, and the proper vessel supplied for this purpose not being at hand, proceeded to do so by placing the dynamite in an empty meat tin, and the latter into a "billy" of hot water, which was then covered down. The results being that not only was the dynamite "thawed" but the inner vessel, not being close covered also as it should be, the steam caused the nitro-glycerine to exude from the dynamite, and it is thought some of this dropped about on the floor of the smithy. Several other theories are also afloat, one being that as the water which continuously runs into the barrel in which the explosion took place is that which drains the floor of the drive in the lower level, glycerine in small quantities may from time to time have been thus conveyed into the barrel and settled therein, and been exploded by the concussion of the pick which was thrown in. Some are of opinion

¹⁰³ See paper on health in the Te Aroha district.

that owing to the manner in which the dynamite was thawed, a portion of the nitro-glycerine had, through the action of the steam exuded from the cartridges into the can used for the occasion, and thence been emptied into the barrel.

This accident is still another instance of the necessity for the utmost care and caution being used when handling explosives containing such a terrible agent as nitro-glycerine.¹⁰⁴

After suffering 'very greatly from intense pain', Read died. 'He was quite conscious to the very last, and told those around him he was quite prepared to go, in fact his death-bed was a very happy one'.¹⁰⁵ His Wesleyan faith presumably fortified him in this way.¹⁰⁶ The day before he died, Read, who was in charge of the mine at the time of the accident, told George Wilson 'that he did not attach blame to any one and that the matter was accidental'.¹⁰⁷ Scott recovered rapidly.¹⁰⁸

Unlike districts with more successful, and therefore larger, mines, Waiorongomai did not have the deep shafts which caused several deaths elsewhere. Yet even in these small mines shafts and stopes created hazards. The only fatal accident was in November 1883, when 'Paddy, the valuable well-bred Irish setter dog' belonging to Thomas Frederick Fenton, later a mine and battery manager,¹⁰⁹ 'was killed by falling down a shaft in the Werahiko'.¹¹⁰ The first recorded fall by a miner had occurred two weeks previously, in the *Colonist*: Michael Quigley,¹¹¹ a part owner of two

¹⁰⁴ *Te Aroha News*, 1 October 1887, p. 2.

¹⁰⁵ *Te Aroha News*, 8 October 1887, p. 2.

¹⁰⁶ Death Certificate of George Read, 2 October 1887, 1887/4868, BDM.

¹⁰⁷ George Wilson to H.A. Stratford, 10 October 1887, Te Aroha Warden's Court, Letterbook 1883-1900, p. 214, BBAV 11534/1a, ANZ-A.

¹⁰⁸ *Te Aroha News*, 15 October 1887, p. 2.

¹⁰⁹ Te Aroha Warden's Court, Register of Licensed Holdings 1881-1887, folios 14, 26, 39, 76-78, 193, BBAV 11567/1a, ANZ-A; *Te Aroha News*, 17 November 1883, p. 2, Magistrate's Court, 23 March 1884, p. 7, 19 September 1885, p. 2, Warden's Court, 26 September 1885, p. 7; *Thames Advertiser*, 3 March 1886, p. 2; *Handbook of New Zealand Mines* (Wellington, 1887), Appendix, p. 4.

¹¹⁰ *Te Aroha News*, 10 November 1883, p. 2.

¹¹¹ See *Te Aroha News*, 22 September 1883, p. 2, 18 October 1884, p. 7, 29 September 1888, pp. 2, 7.

claims,¹¹² ‘fell a distance of fifteen feet, inflicting a large scalp wound at the back of the head. On being picked up he was insensible, and remained so for some time’. After a chemist put in two stitches and dressed the wound, he soon recovered, only being bruised.¹¹³ More serious accidents occurred in the New Find.¹¹⁴

AN EXAMPLE OF MINERS ASSISTING AN INJURED MATE

When a miner was incapacitated or killed, a benefit concert was immediately organized, as for example for Edwin Hadfield¹¹⁵ after he was injured in the New Find.¹¹⁶ It was advertised as follows:

Waiorongomai Jubilee Minstrels, Assisted by other sympathising friends announce a Grand Concert and Dance, Public Hall, Waiorongomai, Thursday, 1st September 1887. Benefit to Mr Edwin Hadfield. New Songs, Jokes, Dances, etc. Admission - Single, 2s 6d, Double, 4s.¹¹⁷

As the hall was crowded, £12 was raised, and in addition over £25 was collected by public subscriptions;¹¹⁸ Hadfield publicly expressing his gratitude.¹¹⁹ It was believed his ‘present helpless condition’ would continue for ‘some time to come’,¹²⁰ but his injury proved a greater disaster than first realized. Late in March 1888, he was admitted to the Auckland hospital for treatment for his ‘badly united’ fracture, but as it could not help him he was discharged two weeks later.¹²¹ He then wrote to the *Auckland Weekly News* ‘complaining that he has been maimed for life by his leg having been

¹¹² Te Aroha Warden’s Court, Register of Licensed Holdings 1881-1887, folios 28, 132, BBAV 11500/9a, ANZ-A; *New Zealand Gazette*, 19 November 1882, p. 1705.

¹¹³ *Te Aroha News*, 27 October 1883, p. 2.

¹¹⁴ See paper on this mine.

¹¹⁵ See *Waikato Times*, 29 September 1881, p. 2; *Te Aroha News*, 14 June 1884, p. 2, 26 July 1884, p. 2, Magistrate’s Court, 18 April 1885, p. 2, 5 March 1887, p. 2.

¹¹⁶ For details of his accident, see paper on this mine.

¹¹⁷ Advertisement, *Te Aroha News*, 20 August 1887, p. 3.

¹¹⁸ *Te Aroha News*, 17 September 1887, p. 2.

¹¹⁹ Advertisement, *Te Aroha News*, 24 September 1887, p. 2.

¹²⁰ *Waikato Times*, 13 September 1887, p. 3.

¹²¹ Auckland Hospital, Register of Patients 1885-1890, folio 72, entry for 26 April 1888, ZAAP 15288/2a, ANZ-A.

improperly set when he met with an accident, and asking if he has no remedy against the person who set the limb, who it appears is not a qualified surgeon' (a correct opinion).¹²² The newspaper did not believe he would be able to obtain adequate compensation.¹²³

In June, a miner organized a raffle to raise money because since the accident he had not 'been able to do a day's work, in consequence of the leg not knitting properly'.¹²⁴ Hadfield told the *Te Aroha News* that, 'owing to incompetent treatment and subsequent neglect', he was 'a cripple for life'. It was 'pleased to announce that the miners and other friends at Waiorongomai, sympathizing with Mr Hadfield in his great misfortune' had arranged another benefit concert. His case was 'a most deserving one', as it was 'truly sad to think of a man in the prime of life, and the bread-winner of the family, thus incapacitated for life', and it was 'sure the concert will prove an immense success in every way'.¹²⁵ Presumably because some residents had read his letter, just before the concert Hadfield wrote to the local newspaper declaring there was 'no truth whatever in the report' being circulated that he would use the proceeds to prosecute the man who had set his leg.¹²⁶ The *Te Aroha News* could 'but stigmatise the action of those who set such a report afloat as most cowardly, and as being done with the object of creating prejudice' against Hadfield. 'Surely the unfortunate man has suffered enough already, being, it is stated, crippled for life, without seeking in any way to neutralise the effort of those kind friends who thus desire to raise a little money to assist him in his misfortune'. It hoped for a 'bumper house' and the raising of a 'substantial sum'.¹²⁷ The hall was indeed 'filled to the doors', despite 'rather unsettled' weather. About £15 was raised, and at the end of the concert on Hadfield's behalf the manager of the New Find thanked those who had assisted.¹²⁸

To support himself, Hadfield returned to his musical skills. Before coming to New Zealand he had been leader and conductor of a band that played in the Manchester Gardens and for some years bandmaster of the

¹²² See paper on health in the Te Aroha district.

¹²³ Letter from Edwin Hadfield, *Auckland Weekly News*, 26 May 1888, p. 17.

¹²⁴ Waiorongomai Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 7 June 1888, p. 2.

¹²⁵ *Te Aroha News*, 6 June 1888, p. 2.

¹²⁶ Letter from Edwin Hadfield, *Te Aroha News*, 30 June 1888, p. 2.

¹²⁷ *Te Aroha News*, 30 June 1888, p. 2.

¹²⁸ *Te Aroha News*, 11 June 1888, p. 2.

Aberystwyth Band.¹²⁹ Before moving to Waiorongomai, he had been bandmaster of the Hamilton one, providing music for dances.¹³⁰ Accordingly, in July 1888 he advertised that he was

prepared to TEACH and Arrange for BRASS, REED, or STRING BANDS. Also to give PRIVATE LESSONS in connection with the same. E. Hadfield has had Twenty-five years of Experience in Teaching and Arranging for Brass, String and Military Bands; and can produce testimonials to that effect from Bellevue Gardens, Manchester; Theatre Royal, Manchester; Musical Society, Burton-on-Trent; and from various Professors of Music.

His terms were ‘most moderate’,¹³¹ but even that reassurance was probably unlikely to bring him much business in this small community, and later that year, when he had moved to Auckland, he was bankrupted.¹³² How much mobility he regained is not known but from the early 1890s onwards he was living near his sons and working as a cabinet-maker, perhaps assisting his cabinet-maker sons.¹³³ In 1891 he managed the People’s Concerts at Auckland’s City Hall.¹³⁴ In 1902 he owned a small grocery shop, which was run by his daughter.¹³⁵ For several years he was a builder in Auckland¹³⁶ before returning to London with a son and his married daughter in 1907, dying there in December from cancer.¹³⁷

PREVENTING ACCIDENTS

Country rock surrounding reefs was liable to collapse, requiring timbering. In April 1888, for example, Wilson instructed the manager of the New Find to erect stronger stulls where the men were doing underhand

¹²⁹ *Waikato Times*, 29 September 1881, p. 2.

¹³⁰ *Waikato Times*, 19 May 1881, p. 2, 21 May 1881, p. 2, 20 August 1881, p. 2, 29 September 1881, p. 2.

¹³¹ Advertisement, *Te Aroha News*, 4 July 1888, p. 2.

¹³² Supreme Court, *Auckland Star*, 14 January 1889, p. 8.

¹³³ *City of Auckland Electoral Roll, 1893*, p. 162; *Auckland Star*, 11 June 1900, p. 2, 1

¹³⁴ Magistrate’s Court, *New Zealand Herald*, 6 March 1891, p. 3.

¹³⁵ *Auckland Star*, 15 December 1902, p. 5.

¹³⁶ Marriage Notice, *Auckland Star*, 1 January 1903, p. 3.

¹³⁷ Death Certificate of Edwin Hadfield, 14 December 1907, Lewisham 1d, 633, General Register Office, London; *New Zealand Herald*, 31 January 1908, p. 8.

stopping.¹³⁸ Four months later, a miner working his small Tui mine sought its protection 'on account of the wet weather and the ground continually coming in on me'.¹³⁹ In 1890, miners driving at Stoney Creek struck 'queer country' which was 'just a mass of huge boulders. Good stone was got from the reef they were driving for some time ago, but the drive falling in, the reef was lost'.¹⁴⁰ Coppard explained the precautions required:

There were certain procedures that you had to do before you did any drilling or any work in the workplace, and that was what was called scaling down. You would have an oversized pinchbar, which you would go along and you would sound the walls and you'd sound the roof, and if there was any drummy-sounding pieces of rock there they were scaled off. You deliberately pulled them off, with the pinchbar. It was about two metres long. Now, hopefully, by doing that of course you then alleviated the problem of something falling on you. It still didn't prevent nature doing what it wanted to when it wanted it done....

One chap was working in a rise and was looking up at the face just before he started drilling, and he thought to himself, well, that's a big piece of rock, it looks a bit loose, I should scale that down, and literally while he was looking at it it was falling at him, and, of course, the illusion was that it was still up there, and it hit him on the head, knocked him out for a while. Murray Hemapo [later a hero in the rescue of those trapped in the Kaimai rail tunnel collapse]¹⁴¹ was one that got hit by a rock, and knocked unconscious, and just about had a nasty accident as a result, slid down the heap and almost over the far end of it and a vertical fall of about maybe 50 or 60 feet.¹⁴²

Using timber could also create other hazards, as illustrated in 1895. Cornelius Murphy was not an experienced miner, having been a carter, operator of a punt, a butcher, and a farmer.¹⁴³ His tender was accepted for

¹³⁸ George Wilson to Hugh McLiver, 28 April 1888, Te Aroha Warden's Court, Letterbook 1883-1900, p.266, BBAV 11534/1a, ANZ-A.

¹³⁹ Te Aroha Warden's Court, Mining Applications 1888, 75/1888, BBAV 11289/12a, ANZ-A.

¹⁴⁰ Te Aroha Correspondent, *New Zealand Herald*, 23 December 1890, p. 6.

¹⁴¹ For details of this disaster, see *Waikato Times*, 3 June 1890, pp. 1, 7, 5 June 1890, pp. 4, 5, 6 June 1890, p. 36, 8 June 1890, p. 1, 9 June 1890, p. 1, 10 June 1890, p. 10.

¹⁴² Interview with Eric Coppard, 8 December 1985, p. 41 of transcript.

¹⁴³ See *Te Aroha News*, 14 March 1885, p. 2, 11 July 1885, p. 2, 16 January 1886, p. 2, 5 July 1887, p. 3, 16 May 1888, p. 2, 23 May 1888, p. 7, Piako County Council, 16 June

clearing out an old drive in the Golden Crown and driving 50 feet, but when replacing some old timbers 'they gave way, and the falling timber struck him in the face and spoilt his looks for a few days'.¹⁴⁴

WATER

Wet mines were common, and when water was encountered it was a sign of a reef ahead. In December 1880, a mining reporter, describing cutting leaders in the All Nations, wrote that another was 'making its appearance in the face, and from the quantity of water which is flowing out it is believed to be of large size'.¹⁴⁵ Two months later, when this drive struck the lode, 'a large volume of water' was 'continually issuing from this reef, and in consequence operations have been considerably retarded, the water not infrequently spurting out on to the faces of the men'.¹⁴⁶ A particularly dramatic example in the early development of Norpac's Tui mine was when Percy Growden was diamond drilling from an old face to strike a reef.

A lot of red rusty water came out of the drill and Percy felt that something wasn't right, so he stopped the machine, they disconnected the water on the machine, because it had its own water supply, and they started to pull the rods out and he undid the chuck on the diamond drill, and as he took the weight off the machine the rods literally pushed themselves down the drive - they went down about a hundred-odd feet down the drive - and of course this caused a mild panic, they didn't know what they'd hit or how bad it was. It happened that they'd broken into a little quartz reef, round about eighteen inches wide, and it was an aquifer. It apparently must connect somewhere higher up to the surface, and it had this terrific head of water, and by putting the diamond drill hole in it had short circuited out.

In preparing to blast the face out to disclose the reef, drains were dug from it for about 1,400 feet to the portal. About five minutes after the face was fired,

1888, p. 2, 18 July 1888, p. 7, Piako County Council, 22 December 1888, p. 2, Piako County Council, 16 April 1890, p. 2, Piako County Council, 17 May 1890, p. 2.

¹⁴⁴ *Te Aroha News*, 18 September 1895, p. 2, 21 September 1895, p. 2.

¹⁴⁵ Own Reporter, 'Te Aroha Goldfield', *Thames Advertiser*, 18 December 1880, p. 3.

¹⁴⁶ *Thames Advertiser*, 28 February 1881, p. 3.

you could see the water rising - it actually came to the top of the railway lines and it held there for a little while and then it sort of settled down, so that's where we left it that night. When we came back the next day, we had a real mess. All the water had washed the broken rock down the drive. Trying to clean it up with a mechanical mucker there, it was almost an impossibility, and of course the water was gushing in from the side where we'd broken through this reef.

From then until the Ruakaka reef was intercepted 'that water followed us. Every time we blasted and the five or six foot advance that we made, the water started pouring out by the face.... Every time we moved forward, the water moved with us, but there was a little less of it further down the drive'. When the reef was struck, 'of course there was even more water coming out through the floor. The result of course of all this was the discontent amongst the men of working under such conditions, being wet, cold, miserable, and so on, and especially if you were working on night shift, going home in the cold. The end result was ... there was a union formed'.¹⁴⁷ The Tui 'in general was a wet mine. There were some areas where you could wear boots and get away with it, but, in general, gumboots' were required.¹⁴⁸

All Te Aroha mines, apart from the Alameda shaft on the edge of Waiorongomai village,¹⁴⁹ opened up the ore body with adits, avoiding the expense of sinking and pumping water out of shafts. Most adits had a rise of about one inch in 12 feet, 'sufficient to carry off whatever water' was met.¹⁵⁰ This drainage did not make it any more pleasant for men working at the face. In December 1880, in the Last Hope water was 'oozing from the face of the drive',¹⁵¹ and the Golden Anchor was being driven 'through wet country,

¹⁴⁷ Interview with Eric Coppard, 4 August 1985, pp. 89-91 of transcript.

¹⁴⁸ Interview with Eric Coppard, 8 December 1985, p. 34 of transcript.

¹⁴⁹ See *Waikato Times*, 29 November 1888, p. 2, Waiorongomai Correspondent, 26 February 1889, p. 3; *Te Aroha News*, 3 April 1889, p. 2, Waiorongomai Correspondent, 24 April 1889, p. 2; F.W. Wild to James Coutts, 14 January 1902, Mines Department, MD 1, 02/68, ANZ-W.

¹⁵⁰ John Henderson, with the assistance of J.A. Bartrum, *The Geology of the Aroha Subdivision, Hauraki, New Zealand: Geological Survey Bulletin No. 16 (New Series)* (Wellington, 1913), p. 16.

¹⁵¹ Own Reporter, 'Te Aroha Goldfield', *Thames Advertiser*, 18 December 1880, p. 3.

a water course existing in the neighbourhood'.¹⁵² In the Loyalty, 15 years later, 'the water which soaks through the reef in places, has been a source of annoyance to the men'.¹⁵³ The following year, there was 'a large flow of water coming from the face' in the Premier main drive.¹⁵⁴ Any shafts or winzes were likely to fill with water until drained by a lower level. For example, rush miners in the Early Dawn 'started to sink a shaft on the flat outside their tunnel, with the object of cutting the reef which is showing in the drive. They have sunk 18 feet, and water has commenced to flow in'.¹⁵⁵

In Norpac's Tui mine,

we would put waterproof gear on and within two hours you were wet through, and that's how you stayed for most of the day. It was senseless changing because as fast as you changed you got wet through.... There were a lot of self-inflicted injuries, in the sense of getting wet, cold and chilled, and not getting into decent warm clothing. We had drying rooms there and you were able to leave your wet gear there.¹⁵⁶

Water flowed mainly from the roof:

It depended as to the time of the year as to the amount of flow and where you were working in the mine. If you were near the surface, of course you would get rain, or almost like rain, you'd get that fairly quickly. It would be raining this morning, and by an hour or so afterwards, the water would start seeping through and it would last two or three days after the rain stopped. If you were deeper in the mine it may take three or four days to show any appreciable difference and then once again it would take several days later to taper it off. In 4 level Champion, on the way in, there was one place that there was a crack in the ground and with heavy rain this crack became like a water squirter and you'd have about, oh, five, six feet of water, about - oh I suppose two inches in diameter - squirting across the track and it was a work of art getting past it without getting drowned, and that would last for quite a while after it'd stopped raining, almost like a little stream.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵² Own Reporter, 'Te Aroha Goldfield', *Thames Advertiser*, 23 December 1880, p. 3.

¹⁵³ *Te Aroha News*, 6 July 1895, p. 2.

¹⁵⁴ Te Aroha Correspondent, *New Zealand Herald*, 22 February 1896, p. 5.

¹⁵⁵ Own Reporter, 'Te Aroha Goldfield', *Thames Advertiser*, 20 January 1881, p. 3.

¹⁵⁶ Interview with Eric Coppard, 4 August 1985, pp. 85, 87 of transcript.

¹⁵⁷ Interview with Eric Coppard, 4 August 1985, pp. 88-89 of transcript.

Chemicals in the water also caused problems, although there were no reports that the Waiorongomai water was as acidic as other fields. A newspaper referred to miners in the Thames and Coromandel areas working ‘ankle-deep in acid water, with a stream of acid water pouring from the roof on to their backs and heads’.¹⁵⁸ Michael Dineen O’Keeffe,¹⁵⁹ who mined at Thames after leaving Waiorongomai, said that Thames ‘mineral water affected the boots, and he had seen the sole and upper parted in less than a fortnight’.¹⁶⁰ He did not exaggerate, as an English visitor discovered when walking through a ‘gushing stream’ in one Thames mine. ‘You must not look up, or woe betide you. A drop of this water in your eye means agony, and perhaps protracted blindness. As it drips on the rails it eats holes in the steel. Your boots will not last many weeks if you spend much time underground’.¹⁶¹ Men worked ‘ankle-deep in acid water, with a stream of acid water pouring from the reef on to their backs and heads’. In the lower levels miners were ‘drenched to the skin in a few minutes; your Khaki mining suit goes black with acid; your boots fall off your feet’.¹⁶² At Tui, the mineral-laden water soon caused the iron on parts of the tramlines to be replaced by metallic copper.¹⁶³ Even if the water was not as acidic, Waiorongomai miners had ‘often to stand under a constant drip’.¹⁶⁴ After their shift ended they had to walk home, most of them all the way to Waiorongomai. A contributor to the *Te Aroha News* noted in 1895 that companies were

required to provide houses where miners can change and dry their wet clothes, and in close workings disinfectants for the fumes of dynamite. Both these provisions are completely ignored in these parts. In Waiorongomai the first ought to be strictly enforced as during a great part of the year the men are bound, even if not working in wet ground, to get drenched on their way up the hill.¹⁶⁵

¹⁵⁸ *Thames Advertiser*, 22 October 1897, p. 4.

¹⁵⁹ See paper on his life.

¹⁶⁰ *Thames Star*, 14 September 1901, p. 4.

¹⁶¹ Radclyffe, pp. 132-133.

¹⁶² Radclyffe, p. 136.

¹⁶³ Interview with Eric Coppard, 8 December 1985, p. 56 of transcript.

¹⁶⁴ *Te Aroha News*, 4 September 1886, p. 3.

¹⁶⁵ ‘Iypax’, ‘Thistledown’, *Te Aroha News*, 27 April 1895, p. 2.

In 1888 George Wilson had ordered that dressing rooms be provided at all the principal entrances to the New Find when more than four men were working a shift,¹⁶⁶ but there were no reports of any being erected in this district until the mid-twentieth century.

VENTILATION

Waiorongomai mines did not have the problem of carbonic acid gas that caused several fatalities in the lower levels at Thames.¹⁶⁷ In 1897 a visitor noted that acid water had caused ‘a pungent smell’ to pervade one mine there.¹⁶⁸

Crawling through the stopes, ankle-deep in greasy white mud, saturated with sulphuric acid, your candle goes out. “Ah,” says the miner, “this is the stink lode.” A faint, sickly smell almost overpowers you: carbonic acid gas fills the gallery, and you beat a hasty retreat. In many mines upon a damp, wet day the miners cannot go underground at all.¹⁶⁹

Gelignite ‘made terrific black smoke. If you got what they called “Gelly head” your head would really start to hurt’.¹⁷⁰ ‘Natural causes’ usually ensured adequate ventilation, but sometimes air-compressing plants provided ventilation for prospecting adits and other dead ends: ‘Water-jets or the water-blast furnish air, through light galvanized-iron pipes, for long distances’.¹⁷¹ Larger companies could afford to supply such plants, as for example the English-owned Aroha Gold Mines when driving a low level tunnel:

¹⁶⁶ George Wilson to Hugh McLiver, 28 April 1888, Te Aroha Warden’s Court, Letterbook 1883-1900, p. 266, BBAV 11534/1a, ANZ-A.

¹⁶⁷ For example, *Auckland Weekly News*, 13 June 1874, p. 7.

¹⁶⁸ Radclyffe, p. 133.

¹⁶⁹ Wandering Correspondent [Raymond Radclyffe], ‘Travels in the Goldfields: On the Thames of New Zealand’, *Financial Times*, n.d., reprinted in *Thames Star*, 21 October 1897, p. 3, and *Thames Advertiser*, 22 October 1897, p. 4, and Radclyffe, p. 134.

¹⁷⁰ Fred Carbutt, interviewed on 27 September 1995 about his experiences in the Waihi mine in 1933-1934: *The People of “The Plains”*, ed. Ken Clover (Hamilton, 2004), vol. 1, p. 120.

¹⁷¹ Henderson, *Geology of the Aroha Subdivision*, p. 16.

The air is good, though a little warm, and is being kept cool by means of a water-blast and fire-draft, which are both temporary, being connected with the 2in and 7in pipes laid for the rock-drills which it is intended to use in driving the tunnel later on. The water-blast is sending the air along the 2in pipe, while a small furnace connected with the 7in pipe is drawing out the smoke and warm air. This keeps the face cool and clear of fumes from the explosives.¹⁷²

As smaller mines could not afford this machinery, miners in these could be exposed to bad air over long periods, the *Te Aroha News* noting in 1886 that miners often had to ‘suffer dynamite fumes for eight hours a day’.¹⁷³ Where mines had only one adit, explosions were detonated at the end of a shift or before a lunch break, expecting the smoke to ‘be cleared away by the time they went in again’.¹⁷⁴ In larger mines, connections between different levels greatly assisted to improve the quality of air, and without these mining had to be curtailed. In 1885, making a connection in the New Find between a level and a winze was stopped because stoping could not be carried on ‘to a very large extent, owing to the foul air created by blasting operations’.¹⁷⁵ One month later, sinking a winze had to stop ‘owing to the lightness of the air’,¹⁷⁶ which may have referred to the effects of blasting, carbon dioxide being heavier than air. In 1896, preparations were being made to sink from an upper to a lower level in the Premier to ‘give better ventilation’. Until this connection was made, ‘a furnace draught, with pipes carried into the main drive and crosscut’, was ‘keeping the mine fairly clear’.¹⁷⁷ However, creating natural ventilation did not always work, as Coppard recalled:

Natural ventilation isn't always good enough, because with different days, especially in the summer time, the atmospheric pressure changes a fair bit, and you can get mornings where the air is going upwards and out to the sky and you can have, ten minutes later, it reversing and it's blowing down and out the portal, and because of the difference in the air pressure columns

¹⁷² George Wilson to Minister of Mines, 12 May 1898, *AJHR*, 1898, C-3, pp. 73-74.

¹⁷³ *Te Aroha News*, 4 September 1886, p. 3.

¹⁷⁴ *Te Aroha News*, 18 February 1909, p. 2.

¹⁷⁵ *Te Aroha News*, 18 July 1885, p. 2.

¹⁷⁶ *Te Aroha News*, 22 August 1885, p. 2.

¹⁷⁷ *Te Aroha Correspondent*, *New Zealand Herald*, 22 February 1896, p. 5.

will change the direction the direction and, unfortunately, because of this you may have blasted and the smoke will start going up and then it'll come back and it'll actually pulsate through the mine and never clear - it just sort of gets so far and it's like a swing, it just goes from one end to the other. Well, usually in these sorts of cases it's quite the normal practice to have a fan, a ventilation fan, you can have small individual ones for the headings, the faces, or you can have a large one that does a whole section of the mine or perhaps in the case of the Tui you'd have most of the areas of the mine ventilated by about three fans. And they would suck the air out. You would have doors, ventilating doors, to stop air short-circuiting, or you'd have ... stoppings, the same thing as a door except it's just made out of [material] like the old-fashioned scrim, and they would put an air barrier up.¹⁷⁸

In 1968 Norpac's general manager reported that 'with the incoming of warmer days, natural ventilation at the Mine tends to reverse', or in many cases 'balances itself out. Smoke produced by blasting then becomes a nuisance', and to avoid delays an electric suction fan would be installed.¹⁷⁹ Three years later, ventilation in the Champion North section left

much to be desired. On days when the flow of air is upcasting, the bulk of it finds its way up Ruakaka way, owing to the action of the suction fan at Ruakaka 3 Portal. Some air does find its way to Raise 15, but the flow is by then very slow with a tendency to balance itself out. When the system downcasts smoke produced by blasting on 4 Level descends down Raise 15 and the fumes then settle for long periods along the whole length between Stope M and the face at the headings end.

At the request of the mining inspector, two more electric fans were installed, one to suck air out and the other to blow fresh air to the face.¹⁸⁰ Even with this improved ventilation, some miners got 'gelly heads' from nitro-glycerine fumes.¹⁸¹

¹⁷⁸ Interview with Eric Coppard, 4 August 1985, pp. 70-71 of transcript.

¹⁷⁹ F.J. Handcock, Report 12/3 for period ending 30 November 1968, Norpac Papers, Box 5, NMC 19/3, MSS and Archives, Vault 4, University of Auckland Library.

¹⁸⁰ F.J. Handcock, Report 11/6 for period ending 30 October 1971, Norpac Papers, Box 6, NMC, 19/6, MSS and Archives, Vault 4, University of Auckland Library.

¹⁸¹ Interviews with Eric Coppard, 4 August 1985, p. 49 of transcript, and 8 December 1985, p. 28 of transcript.

After inspecting the Te Aroha Silver and Gold Mining Company's workings in 1888, Wilson requested that ventilation be improved. When no action was taken within two weeks, he referred the manager to the appropriate clauses of the Mining Act, trusting that he would 'at once take steps to convey a current of air to the face of all levels and working places in your mine where men are employed'.¹⁸²

Developing the Tui mines after the Second World War revealed that gas would be a problem. As Bert McAra, for a time mine manager for the Auckland Smelting Company, explained, they contained 'quite a lot of calcite', and acid water reacting with this produced carbon dioxide.¹⁸³ His report as mining inspector for May 1970 noted that 'minor soda springs occur in the floor of the No. 5 level Ruakaka North and CO₂ gas could build up there'.¹⁸⁴ As this section had not been worked since 1966, when the manager first inspected it he discovered a high concentration of this gas and 'ordered that a warning sign be placed just past Raise 9 so that no one travels past this point'.¹⁸⁵ As Coppard recalled,

Working on shift work had its problems because of this gas. When we were putting the crosscut through to the Ruakaka reef we became aware that gas was there and it was ... a fairly dramatic thing.... We would start work on a Sunday afternoon, we'd start the fan up outside ... and as we walked up the drive and got closer to where we were to work, our carbide lights would start sounding like a jet engine. The flame would become longer and longer.... It wouldn't burn by the little ceramic burner - it would move away from it and it would end up about half-an-inch away. There'd be this zone of unburnt gas and then the light would start burning, the flame would be there and it was roaring literally like a jet. If you went any further into the mine it just went "phut" and it was gone and you couldn't light it, that was it. There wasn't sufficient oxygen in the air to support a match burning, let alone the carbide light.¹⁸⁶

¹⁸² George Wilson to Hugh McLiver, 28 April 1888, 3 July 1888, Te Aroha Warden's Court, Letterbook 1883-1900, pp. 266, 278, BBAV 11534/1a, ANZ-A.

¹⁸³ Interview with J.B. McAra, 4 August 1985, p. 19 of transcript.

¹⁸⁴ J.B. McAra, Report for May 1970, Inspector of Mines, Box 16B, 13/11/D, vol. 2, Ministry of Commerce, Hamilton.

¹⁸⁵ J.P. Abatametteo, Inspection of 24 November 1969, Inspection Record Book no. 2, Norpac, later held by Mineral Resources at Union Hill, Waihi, in 1980s: access provided by Eric Coppard, Waihi.

¹⁸⁶ Interview with Eric Coppard, 4 August 1985, p. 95 of transcript.

Mines could become unpleasantly warm. McAra noted that Tui mines had the normal gradient of half a degree of heat for every 50 feet of depth:

Some places got warmer than others because of the oxidation of the minerals that takes place, makes it a lot warmer.... In any mine there's hot spots and of course there's the odd places where you have difficulty in getting ventilation and have to put in local fans to bring the air into the working place where the men are. It does get very oppressive in places.

He claimed that at Tui 'the air was good throughout'.¹⁸⁷ The only mention of a minor air problem at Waiorongomai was in Aroha Gold Mines' low level.¹⁸⁸

FINANCIAL RISKS

As Edwin Hadfield's experience illustrated, accidents caused severe economic hardship if miners were unable to work for an extended period. Another example was that, two months before Hadfield's accident, a meeting of creditors was held in the bankrupt estate of another miner, Andrew Jamieson.¹⁸⁹ His statement indicated how many miners needed more than one job and how their low earnings did not permit them to save sufficient money to tide them over periods of unemployment:

I have resided at Waiorongomai four and a half years. I have worked partly at goldmining and partly at tramway work. For the past nine months I have tributed in the Waiorongomai claim; my earnings not amounting to more than ten shillings per week. I have met with three accidents which disabled me from working for eighteen months out of the four and a half years; this, with the losses I have sustained whilst keeping a greengrocer's shop at Waiorongomai, is the cause of my present position. None of my creditors have pressed me up to the present time, but I am afraid of their doing so. My furniture is not worth more than £15. I have

¹⁸⁷ Interview with J.B. McAra, 4 August 1985, pp. 24-25 of transcript.

¹⁸⁸ George Wilson to Minister of Mines, 12 May 1898, *AJHR*, 1898, C-3, pp. 73-74.

¹⁸⁹ See *Te Aroha News*, 21 August 1886, p. 2, 18 September 1886, p. 2, 13 November 1886, p. 2, 1 January 1887, p. 2, 21 May 1887, p. 2, 23 June 1890, p. 2; *Thames Advertiser*, 1 January 1891, p. 2.

no other property but that which is shown in my statement. I have no interests in any mines; my life is not insured.¹⁹⁰

His small debts ranged from 10s 6d to £32 15s 6d; the deficiency between assets and liabilities was £87 12s 10d. The creditors allowed him to keep his furniture and be a tenant in his own house at 5s a week for three months, after which the house, valued at £40, would be sold.¹⁹¹

A thoughtful *Thames Advertiser* editorial made some pertinent points about the economic struggles (and occasional rewards) of being an independent gold miner:

Mining in itself is a very precarious pursuit, and although now and again those engaged in it meet with some rare good luck, the average gleaned from the quartz by the hard working seeker after the precious metal is not by any means a large one. Months of dead work have to be passed, with but poor returns and sometimes, such is the uncertainty of this all important industry, it will not infrequently happen, that even after toiling day after day to obtain a crushing - such will prove to be unremunerative. To pierce the earth, in order to strike the reefs lying hundreds of feet in from the surface, and to properly timber up the work as it progresses, not only energy, but money is required. Candles, picks, powder, dynamite and fuse, all have to be obtained in order to allow the miner to prosecute his work with even the smallest chances of success. The expense attendant on it is very great, and therefore when you hear people gushing over an excellent yield of gold, you are forcefully reminded that such, although perhaps good, is not a source of so great a profit to the possessors after all. The family of the miner has to be provided for, and as numbers of people when working ground are aware of that, it follows that storekeepers have to supply them with all articles they require on credit. A few months, during which no money is obtained from crushings, will result in long tradesmen's bills, with large totals, and when a crushing is obtained the miner generally finds he has to hand over the fruits of this entire exertion to the storekeepers who have supplied him with the necessities of life. In some cases, it is true, tributers are exceptionally lucky, and are enabled to put by a respectable portion of their earnings for the proverbial rainy day; but, in the majority - in fact we might safely say the large majority - of cases it is a matter of working life out, in order to keep life in. The struggle for existence continues from boyhood to the grave, and few there are who reap anything more than a bare

¹⁹⁰ *Te Aroha News*, 11 June 1887, p. 2.

¹⁹¹ *Te Aroha News*, 11 June 1887, p. 2.

subsistence. To command sufficient to keep the miners and their families in physical health is about all that even the most sanguine can expect, for experience shows that for everyone who makes a handsome competence by mining, there are hundreds who only succeed in making but a poor living for themselves and those dependent on them. To fight against difficulties, and uncertainties, is a highly commendable action, and the greatest praise is due to those who have never ceased in their efforts to obtain gold from the innermost recesses of the earth. The exercise of the proverbial patience of Job has been not only required - but such patience as would have tried even the venerable patriarch himself has been expended in the prosecution of this important means of living.¹⁹²

To feed their families, many Waiorongomai miners had gardens, orchards, and small livestock, their families looking after these whilst they were mining. For example, John Hawkins, who worked in several mines, including his own Sunny Corner,¹⁹³ ran pigs and cattle, including at least one milking cow, on vacant allotments.¹⁹⁴ After his death his widow relied on her cows, garden, and orchard to make a living for herself and her young children.¹⁹⁵ In the 1890s, when Waiorongomai was declining, Patrick Moriarty, previously a miner but now a contractor,¹⁹⁶ was permitted to hold two residence sites for garden purposes.¹⁹⁷ He had more than vegetables in his garden, for in 1895 his pigs were running at large through the settlement.¹⁹⁸

MONOTONOUS TOIL

¹⁹² Editorial, *Thames Advertiser*, 10 September 1887, p. 2.

¹⁹³ Te Aroha Warden's Court, Register of Te Aroha Claims 1880-1888, folio 323, BBAV 11567/1a, ANZ-A; *Te Aroha News*, 26 September 1885, p. 2, 6 February 1887, p. 2, 23 June 1888, p. 2.

¹⁹⁴ *Te Aroha News*, Magistrate's Court, 4 November 1888, p. 2, 26 January 1889, p. 2.

¹⁹⁵ Waiorongomai Correspondent, *Te Aroha News*, 16 February 1895, p. 2.

¹⁹⁶ Te Aroha Warden's Court, Register of Licensed Holdings 1881-1887, folios 28, 132, BBAV 11500/9a, ANZ-A; *Te Aroha News*, 23 February 1884, p. 7, Warden's Court, 5 April 1884, p. 7, 22 May 1889, p. 2; Piako County Council, *Waikato Times*, 9 July 1892, p. 2, 3 November 1892, p. 2, 4 November 1893, p. 7.

¹⁹⁷ Te Aroha Warden's Court, Register of Mining Privileges 1893-1910, folios 3, 19, BBAV 11500/2a, ANZ-A.

¹⁹⁸ Piako County Council, *Te Aroha News*, 30 November 1895, p. 2.

Another feature of mining was its tedium. Just before Christmas 1883 miners were looking forward to their holidays after ‘the continued monotonous life they lead from month’s end to month’s end’.¹⁹⁹ From Monday to Friday they worked for seven and a half hours each day, and four hours on Saturday.²⁰⁰ Those living at Waiorongomai had an additional long walk to and from work each day. One such miner left at 2 p.m. for his shift in the New Find and did not return until 1 a.m.²⁰¹ One woman, writing of her mother-in-law’s years at Waiorongomai, recorded that ‘when her husband worked the late shift Jane would watch the light of his lantern he carried until it disappeared’.²⁰² John O’Shea,²⁰³ who lived in Quartzville during the 1880s, recalled miners coming ‘down from the mountain every Saturday afternoon to Te Aroha, stay that night and Sunday and go back on Monday morning with fresh food. Sometimes we would go back over the trig on Sunday night, finding our way with candles, and once I went over the mountain with a box of matches’.²⁰⁴ Their unpaid holidays were sometimes very brief; for example, at Christmas 1888 the employees of the Te Aroha Silver and Gold Mining Company had only three days.²⁰⁵

BREAKING THE MONOTONY

An American historian has described practical jokes as being ‘an outlet, an escape from the humdrum and tedious workaday world’ of the miner.²⁰⁶ No examples were recorded at Te Aroha in the nineteenth century, but soon after the Thames field opened a new chum miner was the victim of two such jokes:

¹⁹⁹ *Te Aroha News*, 22 December 1883, p. 2.

²⁰⁰ *Te Aroha News*, 12 January 1884, p. 2.

²⁰¹ *Te Aroha News*, 16 August 1884, p. 2.

²⁰² Muriel Maisey, ‘Portrait of a New Zealand Pioneer Woman’, *Journal of the New Zealand Federation of Historical Societies*, vol. 1 no. 11 (July 1981), p. 20.

²⁰³ See *Te Aroha News*, 30 June 1883, p. 2, 7 February 1885, p. 2, 25 August 1885, p. 2, Ohinemuri County Council, 11 February 1888, p. 2, 24 April 1889, p. 2, 28 November 1940, p. 5.

²⁰⁴ Recollection of John O’Shea, *New Zealand Herald*, 28 November 1930, p. 8.

²⁰⁵ *Te Aroha News*, 29 December 1888, p. 2.

²⁰⁶ Duane A. Smith, *Rocky Mountain Mining Camps* (Bloomington, Ill., 1967), p. 19.

One Sunday morning ... I saw the men playing some game with a pick. One of them would strike the pick into the ground, and was then blindfolded. To prove if he were a good man with a pick, he had to lift it and try and strike it again into the same hole, or as near to it as possible. After several had tried their skill, I was invited to show what I could do. I drove the pick into the ground, and my hat was then removed and my eyes bandaged. I lifted the pick carefully and drove it in again, and, feeling sure that I had struck the same hole and, anxious to show off my skill, I lifted it and drove it in again and again. Not hearing a sound, I removed the bandage, but no one was in sight. Looking around, I saw the men peeping from the whare at me, and then, looking down, I discovered that when they bandaged my eyes and removed my hat they had, as soon as the pick was lifted, placed the hat exactly over the hole, causing me to drive the pick clean through the crown, every succeeding attempt driving it further through and making a jagged hole in the crown, through which I could have passed a coconut. They evidently expected me to "see red" and attempt dire vengeance, but, fortunately having a keen sense of humour, which on many occasions has stood me in good stead, I took it in good part and thus further won their friendship.

On another occasion, on coming home late at night, I found on getting into my bunk that, instead of my blanket, there was an immense brown cigar. It was perfectly shaped, and as hard and tight as the best Manila. I could not find an opening, and, after spending some time trying to unfold it, had to lie in the bare bunk for the night. Next morning I found that one of the men, who had been a sailor, was the author of the trick, and it took him two hours to open the blanket.²⁰⁷

In about 1907, a joke was perpetrated by Henry Brownlee,²⁰⁸ who acquired two claims at Tui in 1909.²⁰⁹ When aged about 70, Alfred Frederick Sawyer recorded two versions (Brownlee was nicknamed 'Darkie', probably a play on his name):

Harry was then working in the Long Drive - Moanatarai Low Level, with old Bill Simmonds - a pair of Beuties How they had

²⁰⁷ T.E. Crowhurst, *Life and Adventures in New Zealand* (Auckland, c. 1920), pp. 21-22.

²⁰⁸ See *Thames Star*, 9 May 1901, p. 4, 13 September 1901, p. 2, 12 December 1904, p. 4, 22 May 1905 p. 2, 3 January 1931, p. 5.

²⁰⁹ Te Aroha Warden's Court, Register of Licensed Holdings and Special Claims 1887-1909, folio 194, BBAV 11500/8b; Mining Applications 1909-1910, 129/1909, 20/1910, BBAV 11289/20a; Mining Applications 1913, 1/1913, BBAV 11289/21a, ANZ-A.

fun, with old H. Woods²¹⁰ of Tararu Road Miner - old Woods - used to Brag, about his Daughter cooking - etc - so these two stopped him as old H. Woods was going into work - with other men Simmonds would sing out - now You Black B- to Harry - leave a poor old man alone - then old Bill, would get near- old Woods - of course - me noble. Darkie would reach out and give some one a good hug - (and he new) old Mr Woods - used to have Tarts and Jam Cakes in his shirt - Brownlee would pretend he had a hold of old Bill (and rough him) knowing it was Woods - well after Darkie was done - old Woods Tarts was covered with his hairy chest etc hell to pay.²¹¹

The second version explained that Brownlee and his accomplice were shift bosses at the time. Symonds (in this version) blew his candle out, called Brownlee 'a lot of bad names', and when the latter pretended to attack him, 'instead he caught hold of Old Jack W, and gave him a good Drag and Squee, old Jack taken by surprise - tried to keep darkie off - but Brownlee had old Jack around the waist and squeeze all the Jam tarts on his Chest etc hell to pay'.²¹²

Those who boasted, whether of their daughter's cooking or their own mining skills, were begging to have their egos deflated. Coppard recalled one Norpac miner who

always said that his rounds whenever he blasted always came out. Now the assumption was that they always came out perfect, and he claimed that if they didn't come out that he would cut his throat; and one particular occasion they didn't come out properly, so somebody handed him a knife and asked him to do the honours - at which he stuttered and stammered and so forth and claimed that he didn't say it.²¹³

He recalled other jokes at the expense of fellow miners:

At this particular time we had a chap by the name of David Malone working with us as a wages chap and John Deed. While

²¹⁰ The only H. Woods listed in the electoral rolls at that time was Henry, a fireman: *Thames Electoral Rolls, 1905, p. 75, 1908, p. 95.*

²¹¹ A.F. Sawyer, *Handwritten Recollections*, n.d. [1940s], W.G. Hammond Papers, folio 34a, MS 134, Library of the Auckland Institute and War Memorial Museum.

²¹² A.F. Sawyer, 'Notes on Early Thames', (1947), W.G. Hammond Papers, folio 34b, MS 134, Library of the Auckland Institute and War Memorial Museum.

²¹³ Interview with Eric Coppard, at Waihi, 4 August 1985, p. 80 of transcript.

he [Deed] was okay for drilling, he was okay for handling explosives and he was okay for doing all the general work, the moment we went to push that button we literally referred to him as a startled gazelle, he would take off, he would say, "Oh, please, wait till I get outside." Although quite often he'd stay if our own face was being blasted, and once we had done that one, he'd sort of feel a little bit more confident and away he'd go *but* unfortunately when we went to blast the other face it was very hard, the rock there, and I don't know what they used to do, how they used to load it up, but when you pushed the button it really hit your chest, the concussion. Well, on this particular night it was David Malone's last night, we'd fired the Ruakaka face and John Deed was heading out and we thought, "Right, come on David, we'll catch John, we'll give you something to think about." So we shot up to fire this other face, we tested it, it tested out safe, we wired it up and we went to crank up the exploder and unfortunately we had lost the key - yes, David had dropped the key from the firing boxes as he was walking - well, as we were running along the drive to try and catch John Deed in the tunnel. So anyway, we decided that we'd better try and find the key before the smoke and fumes came down from our face, so he went back up, we were only using carbide lights at this time, and he went back up and I was walking down the tunnel and I found the handle lying in the drain. So I went back up to the firing point and had everything ready to blast as David Malone was coming back and as David came along the drive I said to him - or sang out to him, "Oh, did you find the key?" and he said, "No." And I said "Oh well, it looks like we'll have to let it go at this stage." So he said "All right then," and with that I pushed the firing button and of course the shot fired, the carbide lights went out, and David Malone's hat got blown off down the drive and he - you know, a fairly lightly built chap - he got blown off his feet and there was a fair bit of yelling and cursing went on for a few minutes but it worked out that he was given a rather nice sort of farewell present there.²¹⁴

Practical jokes were even made at the expense of Norpac's mine manager, John Abatematteo:

These incline headings, they were quite good, because of their steepness, and yet not dangerously steep, you could be working away up at the face, maybe loading it up with explosives or drilling, but you could see lights shining and you knew somebody was coming up, and just to be perhaps a little bit nasty sometimes you'd perhaps knock a rock down or something like

²¹⁴ Interview with Eric Coppard, at Waihi, 4 August 1985, pp. 65-66 of transcript.

this. In one particular case, a chap by the name of Peter Jackson and his offsider John Coombs, they knew the boss was coming, because it was measure-up day, and they waited till he was about half-way up and he was too far up to try and jump to get anywhere, and they had an empty cardboard carton which contained the explosives in, they'd loaded up the face and they were just waiting for him to come up and measure it and when they could see him coming, they sang out to him, "Oh, how are your Johnnie?" And he sang back. And they said, "Oh, oh, you'd better watch out, there's something coming." And they kicked this empty box down, of course underground it made a terrific amount of noise. The poor chap was petrified, he thought the place was coming in on him.²¹⁵

INDEPENDENCE AND ITS FINANCIAL COST

A man who spent his childhood in Te Aroha recalled that, after the 'petering out' of mining in the late 1890s, 'an old miner' followed 'a small lead into a ridge just out of town, where he picked out the best stone and sent [it] to [the] School of Mines at Thames. He made about 3 pounds per week just working away himself'.²¹⁶ One commentator considered that when miners had 'got a good thing on hand', they were rarely willing to part with it. If a claim could be 'worked without the interference of capital, the miner, as a rule', would 'make the most of his property, and take out the gold in his own rough and ready fashion'.²¹⁷ An 1883 example of the sense of freedom enjoyed by one miner working alone caused 'a hearty laugh' at the warden's court:

A case where the complainant prayed for the forfeiture of a certain claim on account of its not being worked on, and the defendant was under cross-examination. He had stated that he had worked on it every day, when the complainant's solicitor asked if he had ever really worked a full shift on it at one time, in reply to which defendant said, "Shure and I did not say that, for wasn't I my own boss." The manner in which the reply was given, and the rich brogue accompanying, caused the only real genuine

²¹⁵ Interview with Eric Coppard, at Waihi, 4 August 1985, pp. 81-82 of transcript.

²¹⁶ Ronald McIndoe, untitled typescript reminiscences, n.d., p. 5, MS Papers 3806, Alexander Turnbull Library.

²¹⁷ Thomas M. Humphreys, *Handbook of the Auckland Goldfields, New Zealand* (Auckland, 1888), p. 16.

laugh during the sitting. Defendant clearly took it as a great joke that he should over-exert himself when he was “his own boss.”²¹⁸

This amused onlookers when it was the man’s own mine he was working at a casual pace, but sleeping partners who paid men to work for them were not amused. In 1890, after the warden visited a mine partly owned by an Auckland lawyer, he warned ‘you would be better without it. The men told me they had worked for some considerable time but could not show me more than they should have done easily in three weeks’.²¹⁹ Miners could exploit as well as be exploited.

Miners working a small area of ground had difficulty paying their way. William Henry Andrew, for example, a Waiorongomai pioneer,²²⁰ acquired the Ophia in May 1887, one man’s ground,²²¹ or a third of an acre. Nearly 11 months later, he obtained protection for three months ‘to obtain funds to work ground and to put in a level 80 feet’.²²² To raise this money, he sought contracts in other mines: two bids were unsuccessful, but he did win one to sink a winze.²²³ The following year he was granted protection twice, not just because he needed a tramway extension to transport his ore but for being ‘short of funds’ and (later) ‘want of funds’.²²⁴ A month after the second grant, he died, aged 57, of severe bronchitis coupled with heart disease;²²⁵ no doubt mining exacerbated his bronchitis. His illness lasted three weeks, ‘gradually getting worse and worse’, and he died ‘in great agony’ after being ‘tended by his brother miners, who did all they could to allay his sufferings’.²²⁶ He had possessed ‘a few hundred pounds’ when he arrived at

²¹⁸ *Te Aroha News*, 18 August 1883, p. 2.

²¹⁹ H.W. Northcroft to Samuel Hesketh, 28 March 1890, H.W. Northcroft Papers, Letterbook, p. 606, ARC 2159, Te Awamutu Museum.

²²⁰ Waiorongomai Correspondent, *Te Aroha News*, 22 June 1889, p. 2.

²²¹ Te Aroha Warden’s Court, Register of Te Aroha Claims 1880-1888, folio 302, BBAV 11567/1a, ANZ-A.

²²² Te Aroha Warden’s Court, Mining Applications 1888, application dated 5 April 1888, BBAV 11289/12a; Register of Applications 1883-1900, 18/1888, BBAV 11505/1a, ANZ-A.

²²³ *Te Aroha News*, 4 April 1888, p. 2, 2 June 1888, p. 2; *Waikato Times*, 15 May 1888, p. 2.

²²⁴ Te Aroha Warden’s Court, Mining Applications 1889, Applications dated 21 January 1889, 11 May 1889, BBAV 11289/12a; Register of Applications 1883-1900, 11, 36/1889, BBAV 11505/1a, ANZ-A.

²²⁵ Death Certificate of William Henry Andrew, 20 June 1889, 1889/1878, BDM.

²²⁶ Waiorongomai Correspondent, *Te Aroha News*, 22 June 1889, p. 2.

Waiorongomai, but was ‘rather unfortunate in his mining speculations, and prior to his death had run through his savings’, and his wife and a daughter, aged about 15, were ‘left without means’.²²⁷ A subscription list to raise money for his widow was ‘liberally responded to’ by members of the general community as well as miners and battery hands.²²⁸

Even parties of miners backed by sleeping partners could not continue working for very long because their capital was limited. For instance, in July 1881 the manager of the Don sought protection because ‘the owners of the claim have continuously worked the mine for 8 months without receiving any return - their means being exhausted they require protection to enable them to obtain means to carry on work’.²²⁹ Even when ore worth crushing was found, the level of return determined whether mining could continue. John O’Shea, who participated in the Te Aroha rush,²³⁰ recalled his claim, ‘the Early Dawn, so named because we pegged it out at daylight’. He kept living expenses low by living in a tent on it for about six months. ‘We could never get more than seven pennyweight of gold to the ton and the result was we only made expenses’. He lived there until the Waiorongomai rush, when he abandoned this unprofitable claim.²³¹

Some miners who worked their claims with little or no assistance became known as ‘hatters’ because their self-imposed isolation affected their personalities. Malcolm Hardy²³² and William Tregoweth²³³ could be regarded as such. Usually hatters’ stubborn search for gold produced little success.²³⁴ Their personal circumstances influenced their decision to work alone, as with James Smith or Smyth, a prospector who was one of the discoverers and first owners of the Rising Sun, at Owharua. After the mine went into decline, he ‘took on superintending; in fact, he worked almost

²²⁷ *Te Aroha News*, 22 June 1889, p. 2.

²²⁸ Waiorongomai Correspondent, *Te Aroha News*, 29 June 1889, p. 2, 6 July 1889, p. 2.

²²⁹ Te Aroha Warden’s Court, Mining Applications 1881, Application dated 22 July 1881, BBAV 11289/10a, ANZ-A.

²³⁰ Te Aroha Warden’s Court, Miner’s Right no. 333, issued 25 November 1880, Miners’ Rights Butt Book 1880, BBAV 11533/1a; Register of Te Aroha Claims 1880-1888, folio 164, BBAV 11567/1a, ANZ-A.

²³¹ Recollections of John O’Shea, *Te Aroha News*, 28 November 1940, p. 5.

²³² See paper on his life.

²³³ See paper on prospectors’ working lives.

²³⁴ For South Island examples, see Stevan Eldred-Grigg, *Diggers Hatters and Whores: The story of the New Zealand gold rushes* (Auckland, 2008), pp. 487-489.

solely. Being an old bachelor, living in a shanty alone, he was in the habit of working in the winze ... breaking dirt and lifting it up in the bucket during the night hours, lacking the ability to sleep'.²³⁵

TRIBUTERS

When companies or syndicates could not work profitably with wages men and calls were not being paid, they often let blocks of their mines to tribute parties, usually for 12 months.²³⁶ Writing about the 1870s at Thames, a leading mine manager, John Watson Walker,²³⁷ considered 'was in the best interests of both the mine and the men' that finding and working 'thread-veins was left to tributing parties (the companies having dealt with the principal lodes and leaders), while still the adits, drives, crosscuts, passes, etc, remained in safe working order'. This provided work to unemployed miners while shareholders received 'substantial profit from otherwise worthless gleanings' and 'many very sickly companies' were saved from liquidation and even 'made very pronounced dividenders through the discoveries made by tributers'.²³⁸ In contrast, a correspondent for the *Financial Times* considered that working Thames mines on tribute had 'gutted them out'. Tributers had 'a wonderful scent for gold', and were 'splendid fellows – hard-working and honest', who kept mines open and prospected them.

Many a mine has been kept alive by the enterprise of these men. But it does not tend to make a good mine, neither do the tributers open up the mine in a scientific manner. They fossick about, and that is all. Their timbering is careless and make-shift, and their drives are wretched things. The Thames and Coromandel are the great places for tributing, Both are pickety, and the tributer loves searching for pockets. They know these huge underground rabbit warrens as well as they know the streets of the Thames – every level, every rise and stope'.²³⁹

²³⁵ *Observer*, 19 July 1929, p. 21.

²³⁶ See *Thames Star*, 18 June 1898, p. 4, 2 April 1901, p. 2.

²³⁷ See paper on his life.

²³⁸ *Thames Advertiser*, 23 June 1898, p. 4.

²³⁹ Wandering Correspondent [Raymond Radclyffe], 'Travels in the Goldfields: On the Thames of New Zealand', *Financial Times* (London), n.d., reprinted in *Thames Star*, 21 October 1897, p. 3, and *Thames Advertiser*, 22 October 1897, p. 4.

Tribute parties had to be well organized. For instance, the 'Minutes of Meeting held by Tributers of the Morning Star claim' held at Te Aroha on 16 August 1881 have survived. After appointing Charles Jenkins²⁴⁰ manager, several rules were adopted. 'A Quorum of the Tributers shall have power to rule the Manager's actions in cases of dispute'. They would work eight-hour shifts, and anyone failing to work a shift would have 8s deducted from his dividends. 'In case of accident or Sickness each Tributer shall receive his full Share of the dividend', but if absent from work for more than a week for this reason 8s a day would be deducted. Failing to give the manager two hours' prior notice of absence would mean a fine of 10s.²⁴¹ As with other parties, regular meetings would have been held and minutes kept.²⁴² For convenience and no doubt also for social reasons, parties commonly met in hotels.²⁴³

Sometimes parties offered rates to companies, as in early 1885 when the Colonist Company was offered from 10 to 20 per cent.²⁴⁴ Others offered 10 per cent on all gold yielding under 1 1/2oz to the ton and 15 per cent above that value.²⁴⁵ Sometimes much higher percentages were demanded by owners and agreed to by desperate and unemployed miners. In the mid-1870s, when Clem Cornes,²⁴⁶ later the discoverer of the Tui mines, was a member of a tribute party in the Kuranui, at Thames, he stated that by having to pay from 15 to 25 per cent of the gold to the owners 'they were obliged to throw away thousands of tons of stuff which they could crush if the ground was their own'.²⁴⁷ By the late nineteenth century, the law stated that if tributers earned more than £1 a week they were required to pay companies 10 per cent, but if earning less no percentage was paid.²⁴⁸ As a

²⁴⁰ For his career at Te Aroha and Waiorongomai, see *Thames Star*, 26 November 1880, p. 2, 12 January 1881, p. 2; *Te Aroha News*, 22 September 1883, p. 2, 10 November 1888, p. 2, Waiorongomai Correspondent, 20 July 1889, p. 2.

²⁴¹ 'Minutes of Meeting held by Tributers of the Morning Star claim', Te Aroha, 16 August 1881, Te Aroha Museum.

²⁴² For example, Magistrate's Court, *Thames Advertiser*, 22 July 1882, p. 3.

²⁴³ For example, *Te Aroha News*, 22 September 1883, p. 2.

²⁴⁴ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Thames Advertiser*, 28 February 1885, p. 3.

²⁴⁵ *Te Aroha News*, 28 February 1885, p. 7.

²⁴⁶ See paper on Clement Augustus Cornes.

²⁴⁷ *Thames Advertiser*, 24 February 1876, p. 3.

²⁴⁸ *Auckland Weekly News*, 4 June 1898, p. 21.

general rule, by then tributes required parties to pay 10 per cent.²⁴⁹ To protect tributers, in the twentieth century agreements were not legal unless approved by the warden.²⁵⁰

Although tributers always hoped to find profitable ore, the *Thames Advertiser* pointed out in 1881 that, in general, their average earnings were ‘far below the average rate of wages’.²⁵¹ Tributers in one mine earned an average of 5s 3/4d per man per day,²⁵² compared with 8s paid to wages men.²⁵³ John Watson Walker produced figures proving that tributers in Kuranui Hill mines earned below normal wages, worked harder and for longer hours than wages men, saved companies ‘all costs of supervision’, and took ‘risks that companies dare not accept’.²⁵⁴ Edward Kersey Cooper, briefly managing director of the Arizona at Waiorongomai,²⁵⁵ agreed their average earnings at Thames were ‘considerably under the current wage’.²⁵⁶

In 1887, the *Thames Advertiser* noted that tributes were important for financially struggling miners. Many a tributer toiled for months without ‘earning his tucker’, but ‘in not a few cases’ they received a good reward for their ‘steady perseverance’. Patchy reefs meant patchy returns, and although it cited some successes, tributing was ‘not all prizes and no blanks’.²⁵⁷ One observer noted that, while some parties made ‘rises’, most were unsuccessful and the average return was not ‘fair wages’. As an example of how success could rarely be predicted accurately, he knew of ‘one piece of ground thrown open to tributers, but not one of the old employees would take it, as it was not thought to be worth a trial at all; but a party who did not know a thing about the ground made a good rise out of it in a very short time’.²⁵⁸

In 1878, a Thames correspondent listed several mines which, without tributers, shareholders would have been forced to abandon because they refused to raise more capital. Most tributers persevered ‘in the hope of some

²⁴⁹ *Ohinemuri Gazette*, 18 April 1902, p. 2.

²⁵⁰ Warden’s Court, *Thames Star*, 17 July 1900, p. 3.

²⁵¹ *Thames Advertiser*, 4 April 1881, p. 3.

²⁵² Editorial, *Thames Advertiser*, 6 April 1881, p. 2.

²⁵³ For example, *Te Aroha News*, 12 January 1884, p. 2.

²⁵⁴ *Thames Star*, 8 April 1881, p. 2.

²⁵⁵ See paper on his life.

²⁵⁶ *Thames Star*, 6 December 1889, p. 4.

²⁵⁷ *Thames Advertiser*, 19 November 1887, p. 2.

²⁵⁸ Letter from A.H.C., *Auckland Weekly News*, 2 March 1878, p. 18.

day making up for lost time', and although they were the best miners, it could take three months before they broke out any quartz, taking the risk while the companies were 'sure to reap more or less benefit'. Many parties threw up their tribute because of lack of success in its first stages.²⁵⁹ Which might make outsiders wonder why so many men were keen to seek tributes. Harry Brownlee told the Conciliation Court why he preferred tributing: 'A man had a chance to make a rise on tribute but he never could be a rich man on wages'.²⁶⁰

There were many complaints of tributers being exploited. In the words of one tributer, having followed 'the smallest threads' of payable quartz, managers handed mines over to tributers only when companies were 'dead beat' and could not find more gold.²⁶¹ A mining correspondent noted that if tributers made a rich find they were given 'notice to quit, and the company works the ground itself'.²⁶² A Thames man whose pseudonym was '25%', presumably a reference to the terms demanded by some companies, in 1887 complained that mines were 'almost entirely under Auckland control'. The directors, many of whom were sharebrokers, had no real 'interest in the district, save what they can get out of it', which explained 'the large percentages charged to the working miner, and the grasping manner in which tributers are treated; the cry being that of the horse leech's daughter,²⁶³ give, give'. If companies charged tributers 'a little less', more ground would be worked. Private owners treated tributers more fairly:

They know very well that the more gold comes out the better for themselves. They let the tributes at a less percentage, and give the workmen all the assistance in their power. An instance of this came under my own observation the other day. A party of men took a tribute and got a good show. After a while the air got too bad to continue work; a tunnel of about 100ft in length was driven so as to improve ventilation. In this cross drive some likely

²⁵⁹ Thames Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 2 March 1878, p. 12.

²⁶⁰ *Thames Star*, 9 May 1901, p. 4.

²⁶¹ Letter from 'A Tributer Under Fair Conditions', *Thames Star*, 7 July 1898, p. 2.

²⁶² Wandering Correspondent [Raymond Radcliffe], 'Travels in the Goldfields on the Thames of New Zealand', *Financial Times* (London), n.d., reprinted in *Thames Star*, 21 October 1897, p. 3, and *Thames Advertiser*, 22 October 1897, p. 4.

²⁶³ Printed as 'horse leak'; a horse leech was an insatiable person, an extortioner, even a whore: Eric Partridge, *A Dictionary of Slang and Unconventional English*, 8 ed., edited by Paul Beale, (London, 1984), p. 572.

looking leaders were intersected, and the owner of the mine duly informed of the circumstance, this drive being looked upon by the tributers as so much dead work. When he saw what had been got, instead of putting men on to take advantage of the work done by the tributers, he let them the additional piece of ground, thereby enabling them to increase the number of their party. In consequence of the owner's liberality, the men think themselves lucky to get a tribute off him. He is enabled to work out a good deal of low grade dirt, which would otherwise remain in the ground, and which on account of the liberal terms given pays the tributers.

He contrasted this owner with companies who required their managers 'to pick the eyes out of the ground, and to grind all you can out of the tributers. Sometimes these poor fellows have to pay a royalty for even using a line of rails if outside their own block of ground'.²⁶⁴ Two years later, 'Rambler', a *Thames Star* columnist, on his rambles 'invariably' met miners who were 'loud in their denunciation of the tribute system', which he agreed was 'most iniquitous'. He agreed with Wilson that Thames mines were worked 'to a very considerable extent' by tribute, and that tributers obtained about one-seventh of the gold obtained at Coromandel, one-third at Thames, and seven-ninths at Ohinemuri.

The percentage paid by tributers to the companies or mine owners varies from five to twenty five per cent on the gross yield of gold. The average may be estimated at twelve and a half per cent. In very few instances do the companies or private owners of mines give any assistance to tributers in the way of advances while prospecting works are being carried on. Some parties of tributers are very well remunerated, while others frequently run in debt to the storekeepers for food for their families and for mining requisites.

Instead of being assisted to develop the fields, tributers were 'invariably called upon to pay a very heavy percentage for the mere privilege of being allowed to prospect ground that has been left by companies or private claimholders as worthless'. Owners had their ground prospected and obtained their percentage without risk of loss, and could count tributers towards their manning requirements.²⁶⁵ At the time he wrote, the Te Aroha Silver and Gold Mining Company arranged a tribute

²⁶⁴ Letter from '25%', *Thames Advertiser*, 18 April 1887, p. 2.

²⁶⁵ 'Rambler', 'Passing Notes', *Thames Star*, 21 September 1889, p. 3.

for eight men to work in the New Find whereby there was ‘an equal division with the Company’. A Waiorongomai correspondent considered this was ‘not at all likely to be productive of profit to either of the parties’, and was pleased when the tributers were put on wages after eight days.²⁶⁶ Almost a year later, a Thames mine offered ‘exceptionally easy terms’, namely ‘5 per cent on all gold won, and “dead work” to be allowed for at the discretion of the manager’.²⁶⁷

Eight years later, ‘A Would-Be Tributer’ wanted companies not working their ground to let tributes, for they ‘would be making money ... at no expense to themselves’. He had ‘no doubt that many fresh discoveries of rich shoots of ore would be made’, for rich patches in some leading Thames mines ‘were originally discovered by tributers’. He knew of one mine ‘in which the existence of a leader containing good picked stone is known to some of the men who were working there. The leader is only a few inches thick and would suit tributers, and when opened up might lead to a new and valuable discovery’.²⁶⁸

John McCombie, a very experienced mine manager,²⁶⁹ when late in his life giving evidence in a forfeiture case, declared he ‘would not be prepared to take a tribute in the mine, the tributers have always known too much’.²⁷⁰ In other words, they had extracted the best ore because they knew where it was located. Some people regarded tributers with disfavour because of a reputation dating back to well before the Hauraki fields. Reputedly, a Cornish tributer in Bendigo, asked to define a ‘tribute’, replied: ‘He kept the gold he could carry and shared the rest with the mine owners’.²⁷¹ The *Observer* shared this cynicism:

It has happened time after time that mines have been worked at great cost and with doubtful or negative results, and that directly protection has been obtained and tributes let to working miners, these working miners have been able straight away to discover

²⁶⁶ Waiorongomai Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 28 September 1889, p. 2, 8 October 1889, p. 2.

²⁶⁷ *Thames Star*, 16 August 1890, p. 2.

²⁶⁸ Letter from ‘A Would-Be Tributer’, *Thames Star*, 14 May 1898, p. 3.

²⁶⁹ See *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 2, pp. 471-472; *New Zealand Herald*, 4 September 1926, p. 12.

²⁷⁰ Paeroa Warden’s Court, Plaints 1922-1972, 11/1922, BAFV 11975/1a, ANZ-A.

²⁷¹ Blainey, p. 300.

and exploit rich deposits of the existence of which the managers and directors were quite in the dark. Strange, isn't it?²⁷²

Three years later it repeated this point by referring to 'that marvellous good fortune that so mysteriously attends tributes'.²⁷³ 'The easiest way for mining companies to find gold is to stop operations and let tributes. It is astonishing how quickly the gold comes then'.²⁷⁴ One mining agent and sharebroker, William Humphrey Jones,²⁷⁵ who invested at Te Aroha as well as throughout Hauraki,²⁷⁶ complained in 1874 of being 'personally victimized'. Writing that 'mines in the hands of the tributers (i.e., former workmen invariably) have been made to pay large dividends which when worked by companies never paid expenses', he claimed he could name a score of mines where this had happened:

In the case of the Whau the expenses were so heavy, and the then operations so barren of result, that the shareholders were led to believe that the mine was exhausted, and thus induced to sign a winding-up order. Singular to say, however, it was afterwards purchased by parties who had an intimate knowledge of its workings, amongst whom was a former mine manager. The dividend list and the marketable value of its scrip since their purchase will show how far their knowledge and judgment warranted the speculation. Comments are unnecessary.²⁷⁷

In 1880, there was 'an impassioned discussion' about the morality of mining at a shareholders' meeting:

One gentleman said he could never understand how it was that the company could never find any gold, but when the same ground was let on tribute it paid handsomely, especially if old servants of the company were in tributing parties. Those present

²⁷² *Observer*, 18 March 1899, p. 5.

²⁷³ *Observer*, 30 August 1902, p. 17.

²⁷⁴ *Observer*, 30 August 1902, p. 7.

²⁷⁵ See *New Zealand Herald*, 12 October 1891, p. 4.

²⁷⁶ For Te Aroha and Waiorongomai, Te Aroha Warden's Court, Register of Licensed Holdings 1881-1887, folio 80, BBAV 11500/9a, ANZ-A; *New Zealand Gazette*, 6 September 1883, p. 1266; for Hauraki, see for example *New Zealand Gazette*, 14 September 1882, p. 1263, 29 November 1883, p. 1704, 20 August 1885, p. 990.

²⁷⁷ Letter from W.H. Jones, *Auckland Star*, n.d., reprinted in *Thames Advertiser*, 27 June 1874, p. 3.

have been struck with the same coincidence, but it had been so from the beginning, and would be to the end. The mystery by common consent was classed with “the ways that are dark, and the tricks that are vain.”²⁷⁸

Some critics were more direct, notably ‘Verbum Sap’:

If, by crooked management, miners can block or cover up part of any mine showing payable quartz until winding up a company is imminent or accomplished, and their friends can attend the funeral and afterwards buy the corpse, or what is as bad, pension the living skeleton for the rest of life with poor-house allowance, then I apprehend the tribute system does not agree with shareholders.²⁷⁹

Shortly afterwards, in explaining why investment in Thames mines had declined, an editorial stated that investors had been ‘so often victimized by their own servants, that nearly every business man has registered a vow in his heart never to look at mining shares again’. The crude methods of salting a mine having been abandoned, ‘dishonesty’ was ‘now carried out on more scientific principles’. In place of ‘floating companies for the purpose of effecting sales of scrip’, tributing was the new ‘source of profit to the adventurer’:

People look with wonder at the rapid rises and small fortunes acquired by lucky tributers. Unfortunately the shareholders do not to any great extent participate in this good fortune. The tribute system of mining, which should have proved the most effectual aid to the support and progress of the gold mining industry, has proved a positive curse. It has held out inducements to employees of companies to hide any good finds that might be discovered, in order that they might afterwards have [the] chance of getting on tribute the block in which the discovery was made. It is often found that the first to take a mine on tribute, after the means of the company are exhausted, is the mine manager – the man trusted by the directors and shareholders as one on whose skill and honesty they might place reliance. Often under these circumstances, sudden discoveries are announced which positively stun the confiding shareholders, and it is no wonder that their faith is shaken, no wonder that speculation is checked.

²⁷⁸ *New Zealand Herald*, n.d., reprinted in *Thames Advertiser*, 4 September 1880, p. 3.

²⁷⁹ Letter from ‘Verbum Sap’, *Auckland Weekly News*, 23 February 1878, p. 17.

It listed several cases where dubious tribute agreements leading to good discoveries were made with the connivance of some directors and mine managers.²⁸⁰ A.H.C. was not impressed with this argument, for rich discoveries could not be hidden without the manager's knowledge, and whose interest it was

to keep the mine afloat as long as possible, so as to ensure the good salary generally paid; for as soon as there is not sufficient gold to pay expenses his services are dispensed with. Miners generally know from experience that no run of gold can be depended upon for very long, and a certain salary regularly paid is better than the chance of covering up any discovery made on the remote chance of getting the same piece of ground on tribute.²⁸¹

His letter prompted 'Miner' to complain that he had been turned down by Auckland directors when he tried to get a tribute:

I suppose the directors think they might be able to work the lead themselves. Well, let them work it, *when they find out where it is*, as I mean to keep the knowledge to myself. Now, Mr Editor, I am only one of many on this field who know where "tributer's leaders" exist, and who will hold their tongues about it till such time as they can get the ground; or if the companies remain obstinate, the men will clear out.²⁸²

'Leo Erectus' responded that miners 'concealing rich leaders for the purpose of at some future time obtaining a tribute where these rich hidden leaders exist' could 'surely only be termed barefaced robbery'; miners were paid to discover gold, not hide it.²⁸³ 'Miner' then explained what he had meant:

When a party of men are crosscutting through a mine they often intersect small leaders, which although good enough in themselves will not pay a company to work, but will pay a party of two, four, or six tributers. The mine manager ought to know of their existence, and if he understands his business – which not too many of them do – ought to locate the discovery on his

²⁸⁰ Editorial, *Auckland Weekly News*, 2 March 1878, p. 12.

²⁸¹ Letter from A.H.C., *Auckland Weekly News*, 2 March 1878, p. 18.

²⁸² Letter from 'Miner', *Thames Star*, 21 May 1898, p. 3.

²⁸³ Letter from 'Leo Erectus', *Thames Star*, 23 May 1898, p. 2.

working plans; however, in many instances, these small leaders are forgotten by the manager, but not always by the men. “Leo Erectus” must know very little about mining when he states that miners are paid to discover these leaders. The men are paid to work according as they are directed by the manager or the shift boss, whose *duty* is to note *all* quartz veins struck – whether big or little.²⁸⁴

‘1867’ intervened with the common theme that ‘tributers absolutely *made the field* after the first four big patches’ were worked out. Many later ‘patches’ were ‘discovered by tributers following small leaders that would not then pay a company to work and from which the companies by following up the leaders from the end of the tribute blocks were able to pay big dividends’.²⁸⁵ Samuel Cochrane Macky,²⁸⁶ a mining agent and director who invested in various Hauraki mines,²⁸⁷ including Waiorongomai,²⁸⁸ wrote that in 1868 he ‘had a share in a tribute from the Kuranui Co. at 20 per cent, and, although we worked like niggers, could not make wages, and yet the company took from us as tribute money 4s in the £. Was that fair? But, although I did not make wages, I bought experience, which has been useful to me ever since’. Other tributers ‘reaped the benefit of the thousands expended by unfortunate shareholders’.²⁸⁹

Macky later claimed that a wages man who ‘came on a good leader, would put a prop before it’, and when the company was forced to let tributes ‘would come in and take his leader on tribute at a low percentage – making a pile’.²⁹⁰ ‘A Tributer Under Fair Conditions’ responded that ‘this red rag of concealing rich leaders and stealing specimens’ was ‘worn threadbare’, and only existed ‘in the minds of a few suspicious people’. Having mined for 22

²⁸⁴ Letter from ‘Miner’, *Thames Star*, 3 June 1898, p. 2.

²⁸⁵ Letter from ‘1867’, *Thames Star*, 16 June 1898, p. 2.

²⁸⁶ See *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 2, p. 465; *New Zealand Herald*, 3 November 1914, p. 7.

²⁸⁷ For example, *New Zealand Gazette*, 4 March 1880, p. 271, 20 May 1880, p. 789, 21 December 1882, p. 415.

²⁸⁸ Te Aroha Warden’s Court, Register of Licensed Holdings 1881-1887, folios 1, 46, 53, 54, 56, 88, 107, BBAV 11500/9a, ANZ-A; *New Zealand Gazette*, 23 March 1882, p. 490, 17 August 1882, p. 1131, 14 September 1882, p. 1264, 2 November 1882, p. 1616, 14 December 1882, p. 1885.

²⁸⁹ Letter from S.C. Macky, *Thames Star*, 18 June 1898, p. 2.

²⁹⁰ Letter from S.C. Macky, *Thames Star*, 11 July 1898, p. 2.

years from the top of the peninsula to Waiorongomai he could ‘solemnly declare’ he knew of no such behaviour.²⁹¹ Macky then admitted that whilst living at Thames for 13 years he knew only ‘two or three men refused employment by mine managers, simply on account of their acquisitive proclivities’,²⁹² an insignificant total seemingly referring to specimen stealing. On that note this argument ended, but investors commonly believed tributers misused their prior knowledge. Joshua Jackson, a mining reporter turned mining agent,²⁹³ who had investments in all of Hauraki,²⁹⁴ including one claim at both Waiorongomai and Tui,²⁹⁵ the following year told a company meeting ‘he had known tributers get rich ore in three days when a company had not seen any gold’.²⁹⁶

Tributers were regularly defended from such accusations. In April 1881 a Thames correspondent responded to the ‘considerable distrust’ created by tributers occasionally discovering a rich patch of gold. He believed that the good created by the system was ‘so great that the evils’ were ‘scarcely worthy of a second thought’, justifying this view by describing tributating at Thames. Portions of a mine were let that the manager considered would not pay the company to work with wages men:

The ground is then cut up into tribute blocks, and thrown open for selection, at prices varying from 10, 15, and 20 to 25, and even as high as 30 per cent upon the gross amount of gold obtained – the block being held for a fixed term. The party taking up a block have generally to do a large amount of valuable prospecting work before they have any opportunity of obtaining an adequate return for the time and labour expended upon the ground, and it not infrequently happens that the term is nearly up before anything payable is met with, and probably on applying for another term they will only get it by paying a higher percentage. Some blocks of ground are known to have been let and relet several times before anything remunerative was obtained from them. Of course,

²⁹¹ Letter from ‘A Tributer Under Fair Conditions’, *Thames Star*, 14 July 1898, p. 2.

²⁹² Letter from S.C. Macky, *Thames Star*, 18 July 1898, p. 3.

²⁹³ See *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 2, pp. 469-470; *Observer*, 28 December 1907, p. 5.

²⁹⁴ For example, *New Zealand Gazette*, 19 February 1874, p. 110, 25 August 1881, p. 1123, 2 June 1882, p. 837, 29 November 1883, p. 1704, 18 March 1886, p. 375.

²⁹⁵ Te Aroha Warden’s Court, Register of Licensed Holdings 1881-1887, folio 80, BBAV 11500/9a; Certified Instruments 1888, R.G. Macky to Joshua Jackson, 11 May 1888, BBAV 11581/9a, ANZ-A.

²⁹⁶ *Thames Star*, 9 May 1899, p. 2.

on the other hand, cases have occurred where a tribute party have taken up a block of ground, and almost immediately discovered a rich deposit of gold upon which they have worked during the whole of their time, but these cases are few and far between. A sore point with shareholders is the excellent averages which tributers frequently obtained – that is, parcels of quartz are crushed which yield large averages per ton. It must be remembered, however, that tributers, as a rule, only work small leaders, and it is the small leaders which yield the best grade quartz. It must also be borne in mind that these small leaders only produce a very small quantity of quartz, and that a parcel of ten tons which may possibly have yielded 40 or 50 ounces of gold may have taken a party of four men four or five months to break out.

‘Those at a distance’ merely looked at the return without considering that the time taken to obtain it made the average earnings ‘far below the average rate of wages’. Tributers also ‘frequently’ opened up ground ‘in such a manner that ultimately a large and valuable deposit of gold’ was discovered, whereupon the company took over the ground again. ‘Many instances’ could be produced (two were given) in which ‘tributers, by their energy and patience, have really proved the salvation of a company’.

A tribute party, too, after they’ve had possession of a block of ground for some time, will acquire such a knowledge of it that they will be able to make it pay well, while others, with equal skill so far as mining is concerned, but without any knowledge of the ground, will be unable to obtain “salt” at it. This will account for the singular fact that when some blocks have been re-entered the company’s operations upon them have only resulted in loss, while the tribute party would again go back and obtain excellent wages.

As the system was ‘of incalculable value’, more ground should be offered, on easier terms.²⁹⁷ Four days later, the *Thames Advertiser*, which had reprinted this article,²⁹⁸ in an editorial noted that despite its efforts to explain the system ‘a great deal’ continued to be made of tributers’ crushings ‘invariably’ yielding ‘a much larger percentage of gold than company’s crushings’. Critics refused to understand that tribute parties only crushed ‘ore of a certain grade’, only following veins ‘to intersect such

²⁹⁷ Thames Correspondent, *New Zealand Herald*, 2 April 1881, p. 5.

²⁹⁸ *Thames Advertiser*, 4 April 1881, p. 3.

ore'. As well, men working for themselves were 'not content with merely taking down the lode before them' but spent 'hours of extra labour in sorting and searching the quartz, and following up the slightest indication of a good vein, which might otherwise be overlooked'.²⁹⁹ Other journalists agreed.³⁰⁰

Blainey argued that the system pleased most miners and most companies. The former could select the portions they wished to work, could abandon them if the ore was unpayable, and might earn considerably more than those working for wages. From the companies' point of view, the men mined enthusiastically and carefully, meeting their own expenses, and taking out ore, not mullock.³⁰¹

The company with good tributers had in effect many practical geologists whose knowledge of the lodes of the mine was unrivalled. The tributer had to study rocks because he was bidding for a block of ground which, exposed on only one side, might prove unexpectedly rich or poor when broken into. In Cornwall and Australia alert tributers had saved many mines from early extinction by their ability to find new lodes or old lodes that were lost. The tributers were aristocrats amongst miners. They worked in a company mine but were their own bosses.³⁰²

But he admitted that miners could lose money whilst the company profited by their labour and that either side could trick the other. Some tributers illegally mined outside their block.³⁰³

CONTRACTORS

Looking back over a long life as miner, manager, and mining inspector, Bert McAra considered that men who became gold miners liked 'freedom ... from being constantly under the eye of a boss', for in the twentieth century they worked on their own contracts.³⁰⁴ Increasingly during the late nineteenth century, owners replaced wages men with contractors, a system intended to benefit owners rather than miners. In May 1881, a Te Aroha correspondent wrote that it was 'beginning to be perceived' that 'contract

²⁹⁹ Editorial, *Thames Advertiser*, 6 April 1881, p. 2.

³⁰⁰ For instance, Thames Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 2 March 1878, p. 12.

³⁰¹ Blainey, pp. 122-123.

³⁰² Blainey, p. 123.

³⁰³ Blainey, p. 123.

³⁰⁴ Interview with J.B. McAra, 4 August 1985, pp. 23-24 of transcript.

work, when carefully defined and precisely measured', was better than paying wages.³⁰⁵ When noting in March 1884 that 'wherever practicable' work in the New Find was being done by contract, the *Te Aroha News* argued 'that this system will prove more economical and in other respects more satisfactory both to manager and shareholder' than employing wages men.³⁰⁶ This resulted, as in the *Colonist* in mid-1884, in 'a considerable number' of the latter being discharged in preparation for calling tenders to take out ore 'at per ton'.³⁰⁷ By the following year, all work in that mine was being done on contract 'wherever practicable'.³⁰⁸ By 1887 mining was 'being carried on almost entirely by contract' at Waiorongomai.³⁰⁹ As a later mining inspector wrote, the Battery Company did all its mining in the cheapest possible way with contracts 'at prices very much below what would rule nowadays'.³¹⁰

Some miners considered contractors to be superior workers. Walker, in opposing the Thames Miners Union's desire to abolish contracts, declared that earlier miners 'preferred contract work, where his skill and his will ensured his efforts'.³¹¹ John Goldsworthy,³¹² a mine manager who worked at Waiorongomai in the 1880s,³¹³ told the Conciliation Board that contractors worked harder than wages men.³¹⁴ His brother William, another mine manager,³¹⁵ who had also worked at Waiorongomai,³¹⁶ agreed that 'the same men who worked for wages did twice as much work when contracting'.³¹⁷ This had long been believed; for example, in 1883

³⁰⁵ *Te Aroha Correspondent*, *Waikato Times*, 17 May 1881, p. 2.

³⁰⁶ *Te Aroha News*, 29 March 1884, p. 2.

³⁰⁷ *Te Aroha News*, 17 May 1884, p. 2.

³⁰⁸ *Te Aroha News*, 10 January 1885, p. 2.

³⁰⁹ *Te Aroha News*, 7 May 1887, p. 2.

³¹⁰ J.F. Downey, *Gold-Mines of the Hauraki District, New Zealand* (Wellington, 1935), p. 256.

³¹¹ *Thames Star*, 13 September 1902, p. 2.

³¹² See paper on the Goldsworthy brothers.

³¹³ *Thames Advertiser*, 6 December 1880, p. 3, 1 January 1891, p. 2; *Waikato Times*, 11 July 1882, p. 2, 6 August 1883, p. 2, 9 August 1884, p. 3, 18 December 1888, p. 2; *Te Aroha News*, 15 September 1883, p. 3, 15 December 1888, p. 2.

³¹⁴ *Thames Star*, 24 May 1901, p. 3.

³¹⁵ See paper on the Goldsworthy brothers.

³¹⁶ *Te Aroha News*, 20 October 1883, p. 2, 28 June 1884, p. 2.

³¹⁷ *Thames Star*, 24 May 1901, p. 4.

'Shareholder' asked why more mining was not done on contract, being cheapest and quickest. He stated as 'a fact well known' that miners who took up contracts were 'the cream of workmen, with no 7s 6d stokers', whom he described as 'Come day, go day, God send Sunday' workers.³¹⁸ Another manager estimated that, on average, contractors did '20 per cent more work than wages men'.³¹⁹

Although James Belich has written, about contractors in general, that contract labour was 'better paid than wage work and was believed to carry more status and independence',³²⁰ there were no indications in Hauraki that mining contractors had a higher status. Instead, contracts were viewed as being imposed for the benefit of owners, and many miners at Waiorongomai and elsewhere objected the contract system,³²¹ mainly because competition meant tenders were forced too low. A Te Aroha correspondent wrote of 50 feet of driving in the Bonanza being let 'at 10s per foot. About sixteen tenders were received, ranging up to 32s. Some experienced hands consider it will cost nearly the 10s for material alone'.³²² Sometimes a tender was so low that the contract was abandoned. One party whose tender to drive a low level in the Colonist was accepted then refused to do the work,³²³ presumably realizing they could not make a profit. Shortly afterwards, another party driving this low level gave up after driving 78 feet, willingly forfeiting the 25 per cent of the price deposited as a guarantee.³²⁴ In 1897, the men driving the Aroha Gold Mines' 'big low level tunnel threw up their contract' because the price was too low for the hard country they were driving through.³²⁵ Another contract was let at £2 17s per foot, but one reporter noted that, as the ground was 'very hard', it would take the contractors 'all their time at that price to make anything more than fair wages'.³²⁶

When the contract system was fully introduced at Waihi in early 1903, the *Observer* commented that this might be 'a good policy from the mine

³¹⁸ Letter from 'Shareholder', *Thames Advertiser*, 24 August 1883, p. 3.

³¹⁹ *Auckland Weekly News*, 26 September 1901, p. 36.

³²⁰ Belich, p. 382.

³²¹ See letter from 'Rory O'More', *Te Aroha News*, 31 July 1889, p. 2.

³²² Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 10 November 1888, p. 2.

³²³ *Te Aroha News*, 31 May 1884, p. 2.

³²⁴ *Te Aroha News*, 14 June 1884, p. 2.

³²⁵ *Ohinemuri Gazette*, 3 March 1897, p. 3.

³²⁶ *Thames Advertiser*, 11 March 1897, p. 3.

point of view, but we doubt it'.³²⁷ It was soon claimed that it cost approximately a third less to break out the ore and that, although the number of miners had been 'considerably reduced', more ore was being extracted.³²⁸ In Brownlee's opinion, contracting was 'a system of sweating'.³²⁹ At Waihi the system compelled miners 'to fight amongst themselves', according to the workers,³³⁰ and it provoked the 1912 strike.³³¹ Miners believed the system created financial insecurity because the amount earned varied greatly and there was no continuity of employment. In addition, the competitive nature of the contracts caused men to rush their work, endangering health and safety.³³² 'Waiheathen' claimed that in its first three months the system had increased the percentage of fatal accidents at Waihi by 'fully two hundred per cent, and ordinary minor accidents considerably more'.³³³ Miners complained that, as they could not anticipate the nature of the ground to be driven, contracting was immoral and speculative. They were 'necessarily better off with steady work than with occasional contracts', which were to their 'manifest disadvantage', in the opinion of the *Observer*.³³⁴

When Norpac operated the Tui mines in the late 1960s and early 1970s, all work was done on contract.³³⁵ McAra, then the mining inspector, believed the company gave its workers 'a fair price and a fair rate' to avoid trouble.³³⁶ Very detailed contracts were arranged, with job requirements

³²⁷ *Observer*, 21 February 1903, p. 5.

³²⁸ 'Obadiah', 'Shares and Mining', *Observer*, 9 May 1903, p. 20.

³²⁹ *Thames Star*, 9 May 1901, p. 4.

³³⁰ *Auckland Weekly News*, 10 November 1910, p. 20.

³³¹ See H.E. Holland, *The Tragic Story of the Waihi Strike* (Wellington, 1913), pp. 19-25; Stanley Roche, *The Red and the Gold: An informal account of the Waihi strike, 1912* (Auckland, 1982), pp. 32, 41-42.

³³² See A.S. Nightingale, 'Waiuta: a history of a quartz goldmining community on the West Coast (MA thesis, University of Canterbury, 1985), pp. 64-65, 70.

³³³ Letter from 'Waiheathen', *Observer*, 16 May 1903, p. 16.

³³⁴ *Observer*, 11 October 1902, p. 2.

³³⁵ P.J. Carter to Stenhouse New Zealand Ltd, 12 June 1970, Norpac File no.4 [Office file], formerly held by Mineral Resources at Union Hill, Waihi, and made available by Eric Coppard, Waihi.

³³⁶ J.B. McAra, interview on 4 August 1985 at Waihi, p. 22 of transcript.

thoroughly spelled out; even though rates were agreed, all were ‘subject to change by negotiation’.³³⁷

Some miners were forced by financial circumstances to become contractors for non-mining work, sometimes at unprofitably low rates. The *Te Aroha News* was ‘under the impression’ in April 1889 ‘that contracting for road works and such like, had been almost reduced to a fine art in this district, seeing the ridiculously low prices at which work had been taken during the past couple of years’.³³⁸ Denis Murphy,³³⁹ a farmer and contractor, feared prices could still go lower and only meet the contractors’ ‘tucker’.³⁴⁰ In the early 1890s, contractors constructing the railway line from Te Aroha to Paeroa were granted an increased rate because the original price meant they ‘could not possibly make wages’.³⁴¹ And sometimes contractors were not paid on time. The one who erected the tramway stables on Fern Spur had to appeal to the council for payment. ‘He stated the contract had been taken very low for cash, and subject to a fine of £2 a week for every week the work was delayed beyond the three weeks allowed by specifications for completion’. As his letter was ‘received’, clearly the council was in no hurry to pay this debt.³⁴²

In 1888 contractors constructed part of the water race from the Wairakau Stream to the Waiorongomai battery at 10d per yard through the bush and 8d in partly open country, prompting another newspaper to comment, ‘How these people expect to make this sort of thing pay is a puzzler’.³⁴³ One of these contractors was James Wiseman,³⁴⁴ who, as a very experienced roading, drainage, and railway contractor,³⁴⁵ might be assumed

³³⁷ For example, ‘Contract No T/1-68/262, Ruakaka Maxwell Stop Timbering, Contractor – C. Mann & party’, 12 March 1968; Norpac Mining Ltd, Memoranda re costs of various operations, 17 June 1968; Shrinkage Stopping, 19 June 1968, 21 June 1968, Contract data file, formerly held by Mineral Resources at Union Hill, Waihi, and made available by Eric Coppard, Waihi.

³³⁸ *Te Aroha News*, 20 April 1889, p. 2.

³³⁹ See paper on his life.

³⁴⁰ *Te Aroha News*, 20 April 1889, p. 2.

³⁴¹ *Auckland Weekly News*, 13 March 1892, p. 23.

³⁴² Piako County Council, *Te Aroha News*, 4 April 1885, p. 2.

³⁴³ *Waikato Times*, 25 August 1888, p. 3.

³⁴⁴ *Waikato Times*, 18 August 1888, p. 2, 25 August 1888, p. 3.

³⁴⁵ For a railway contract, see *Freeman’s Journal*, 28 March 1884, p. 13; for roading contracts, see for example *Waikato Times*, 25 January 1883, p. 2, 17 May 1883, p. 2, 4

not to tender at an unprofitable level. As an example of the versatility required of miners and other settlers, for part of the 1880s and 1890s he managed a farm,³⁴⁶ and in 1888 won two contracts from Waiorongomai companies to drive 100 and 900 feet.³⁴⁷ A newspaper commented that one drive was in 'hard country, and we wish Mr Wiseman all sorts of success'.³⁴⁸ Wiseman had invested in one claim and one company at Te Aroha and in two claims and three companies at Waiorongomai, although when the latter proved failures he refused to pay his calls.³⁴⁹

Wiseman was an experienced contractor, but some others lacked the necessary skills. When Peter Ferguson was impatiently awaiting the completion of his New Era tramway in 1885, he complained of 'faulty work' done by the contractors, quoting this as 'another instance of the many that have occurred in the district of contractors undertaking work and afterwards proving themselves unable to perform same in the time specified'.³⁵⁰

PARTNERSHIPS

In the early stages of goldfields, before large companies took up most of the ground, miners grouped together into small partnerships to own and develop their claims, sleeping partners provided funds while working partners did the work.³⁵¹ A common complaint amongst partners was that others were not meeting their commitments. The most detailed complaint to

October 1883, p. 2, Piako County Council, 20 March 1885, p. 2, 12 November 1885, p. 2; for drainage contracts, see for example *Te Aroha News*, 25 July 1885, p. 7, 31 October 1885, p. 7, 14 November 1885, p. 7, 22 May 1886, p. 2, 20 October 1888, p. 2, 16 January 1889, p. 2, 2 February 1889, p. 2.

³⁴⁶ See *Te Aroha News*, 10 July 1886, p. 3, 14 May 1887, p. 3, 1 September 1888, p. 2, 30 April 1890, p. 2.

³⁴⁷ *Waikato Times*, 15 May 1888, p. 2; *Te Aroha News*, 26 May 1888, p. 2.

³⁴⁸ *Waikato Times*, 15 May 1888, p. 2.

³⁴⁹ Te Aroha Warden's Court, Register of Te Aroha Claims 1880-1888, folio 155, BBAV 11567/1a; Register of Licensed Holdings 1881-1887, folios 29, 132, BBAV 11500/9a, ANZ-A; *New Zealand Gazette*, 24 February 1881, p. 258, 29 November 1883, p. 1795; *Te Aroha News*, 6 June 1885, p. 7, 25 July 1885, p. 7, 1 August 1885, p. 7.

³⁵⁰ *Te Aroha New*, 10 October 1885, p. 2.

³⁵¹ For examples of these arrangements and the problems that sometimes occurred, see paper on financing miners and mining companies.

Warden Kenrick surviving was written by James William Farmer, a miner at Owharoa,³⁵² in August 1883:

I wish you would be so kind as to let me know how to get out of the Present difficulty.

Whe are the holders of a Peace of ground five Shear holders and have binn working for over the last two years and have not made half Wages and whe have binn to a deal of expence in Putting in a low level and cut the reaf the reaf I beleave us a good Payable one and for some unknown cause one of the Shear Holders discharged the man reipresenting is Share

A nother Shear Holder being in Town for the last five Weaks on the Pretence of Being Sick His Shear not being represented leaving me and my two mates working to of us being Married Men with a Family and working Hard to try and git a living when they left of work whe had about fifteen tuns of quartz Broken out

questions

1 Can they claim any thing out of the crushing there Shares not being represented

2 How long can they hold there Shares without being represented By Showing me how to git out of the Presant dificulty you will much Oblige³⁵³

Kenrick asked his clerk to inform Farmer that he could not ‘advise on matters in dispute between Partners. If shareholders cannot agree or any one fails to represent his share the remedy’ was ‘by suit in Warden’s Court for dissolution of Partnership or forfeiting for non working or any other move they are advised to adopt’.³⁵⁴ As an example of this, at Te Aroha in December 1880 William Sharpe McCormick, a former Thames miner,³⁵⁵ laid ‘a plaint against the other shareholders of the Golden Eagle for non-working’. He had ‘great faith in the ground’, and had taken out a ton of ore

³⁵² See *Tauranga Electoral Roll, 1884*, p. 9.

³⁵³ J.W. Farmer to Harry Kenrick, 14 August 1883, Thames Warden’s Court, Inwards Correspondence to Resident Magistrate and Warden 1879-1896, BACL 13388/1a, ANZ-A.

³⁵⁴ Memorandum of Harry Kenrick to F.W. Burgess, n.d., Thames Warden’s Court, Inwards Correspondence to Resident Magistrate and Warden 1879-1896, BACL 13388/1a, ANZ-A.

³⁵⁵ See, for example, Thames Warden’s Court, Warden’s and Resident Magistrate’s Notebook 1870, Warden’s Court Hearings of 19 October 1870, 27 October 1870, BACL 14457/2b, ANZ-A.

to be tested for what he expected to be a payable return.³⁵⁶ Helped by the non-appearance of the defendants, the ground was forfeited and granted to his party.³⁵⁷ Two years, later, 11 shareholders of the Queen sued the remaining four partners. One defendant, who lived in Thames, had refused 'to pay his proportion of the cost of working' and owed £15 15s. Another, in Paeroa, owed £1 1s, the third, in Waitekauri, owed £4 4s, and the fourth, in Auckland, owed the same amount. As the defendants were accused of refusing to work their interests or contribute to the working, the warden was asked to require payment, dissolve the partnership 'so far as the said several defendants therein', and award their shares to the complainants. He was also asked to determine the assets and liabilities of the partnership 'and the division of any surplus'.³⁵⁸ One year later, three of the owners of the Pride of the West sued the fourth one, then living at Reefton, to dissolve the partnership because he 'had left no one to represent his interest'. Having been forced to make a call of £2 per half share, they were owed £10 by the defendant, and wanted to sell his share to pay the rent. Kenrick adjourned the matter to let the partners resolve their dispute, but when no settlement was reached he dissolved the partnership and required the defendant to meet the costs.³⁵⁹

Partnerships were based on trust, and as Peter Cheal, a surveyor on the early Thames goldfield,³⁶⁰ recalled, 'it was always a cardinal sin for a man to sell his mates'.

I had an experience with my party two of them went to peg out ground & got what was thought "a good thing" – the arrangement was that we protected our interest in our Claims, if their ground was better we went to work there or if it was sold we divided – On one occasion two went to a rush & secured ground, sold out for £65 but did not divide with their mates.³⁶¹

³⁵⁶ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Thames Advertiser*, 20 December 1880, p. 3.

³⁵⁷ Warden's Court, *Waikato Times*, 8 January 1881, p. 3.

³⁵⁸ Te Aroha Warden's Court, Plaints 1882, 69/1882, BBAV 11572/1a, ANZ-A.

³⁵⁹ Te Aroha Warden's Court, Plaintiff Book 1880-1898, 44/1883, BBAV 11547/1a, ANZ-A; Warden's Court, *Te Aroha News*, 24 November 1883, p. 3.

³⁶⁰ See *Thames Star*, 30 June 1890, p. 2, 1 August 1917, p. 2; *Observer*, 7 April 1900, p. 2, 5 May 1900, p. 6, 19 February 1910, p. 16.

³⁶¹ Peter E. Cheal, untitled reminiscences of the Thames goldfield, n.d., no pagination, Cheal Papers, folder 1, 85/106, MS 1319, Library of the Auckland Institute and War Memorial Museum.

Failure to fulfil an agreement led to several court cases, as, for instance, when Thomas Myers Scott, a miner,³⁶² sued William Wilson, a Te Aroha storekeeper,³⁶³ in 1882. Scott along with the other owners of the Waitoki Extended had arranged for Wilson to register it, Scott to receive one share. When Wilson refused to give Scott his share, even though he had paid working expenses to ‘the defendant as Treasurer of the party’, Scott demanded his share, or its value, £100.³⁶⁴ Robert Johnson, another miner,³⁶⁵ made the same demand, but judgment was for Wilson with costs awarded against Johnson.³⁶⁶ Wilson, originally the sole owner of this claim, sold interests to nine men but not to Scott or Johnson.³⁶⁷

Failure to register the names of all shareholders was a common cause of litigation, and Kenrick warned miners about this several times in late 1881. In one example cited by the *Thames Advertiser*, a party of five or six marked out a piece of ground but when giving notice to the warden’s office only appended one man’s name. As the license was granted to him alone, he was ‘in sole and undisputed possession of the holding, and his confreres’ were ‘entirely dependent on his generosity’ as to whether or not they obtained an interest. The newspaper warned those who helped peg out a claim and considered themselves entitled to an interest to ensure their names appeared in the register.³⁶⁸ Miners commonly used the argument that, having assisted to peg off, they should be included as owners; in some cases this attempt was withdrawn, presumably because others in the party rejected their claims.³⁶⁹

³⁶² See *Thames Advertiser*, 13 March 1875, p. 3, 3 June 1878, p. 3, 3 May 1883, p. 2; *New Zealand Herald*, 27 September 1884, p. 3.

³⁶³ See *Thames Advertiser*, 25 March 1878, p. 3, 26 March 1878, p. 3, 30 November 1880, p. 3, 19 April 1882, p. 3; *Te Aroha News*, 5 June 1886, p. 7.

³⁶⁴ Te Aroha Warden’s Court, Plaints 1882, 93/1882, BBAV 11572/1a, ANZ-A.

³⁶⁵ See Birth Certificate of Leonard Elles Johnson, 18 August 1883, 1883/10458, BDM.

³⁶⁶ Te Aroha Warden’s Court, Plaints 1882, 92/1882, BBAV 11572/1a; *Plaint Book 1880-1898*, 92/1882, BBAV 11547/1a, ANZ-A.

³⁶⁷ Te Aroha Warden’s Court, Register of Licensed Holdings 1881-1887, folio 88, BBAV 11500/9a, ANZ-A.

³⁶⁸ *Thames Advertiser*, 26 November 1881, p. 3.

³⁶⁹ For example, *Plaint by John O’Shea*, 6 October 1888 (withdrawn 1 November 1888), Te Aroha Warden’s Court, Plaints 1888, BBAV 11572/1a, ANZ-A.

Competition for ground led to many attempts to wrest claims off their owners, usually because it was claimed they were not being worked. In one case when a miner charged three brothers with non-working a Te Aroha claim, they explained that they had wanted to work it but the other shareholders refused to work. Accordingly, it was forfeited and awarded to the plaintiffs, the three brothers being allowed to retain their interest.³⁷⁰ On 20 November 1883, a carpenter and miner, Charles Henry Arthur Tonge,³⁷¹ sought the forfeiture of the Exchange by Thomas Redmond³⁷² for the same reason; Redmond had been sole owner of this ground since 24 September.³⁷³ The very detailed press report provided a good example of how parties formed and re-formed as they fought or colluded amongst themselves. At the start of the proceedings, Joshua Cuff, a solicitor,³⁷⁴ appeared on behalf of another miner, Thomas Stewart Potts,³⁷⁵

whose name did not appear on the register, but who had paid money into the Exchange Claim for wages. Without his client's knowledge work had stopped, but on hearing the news he immediately took steps to provide means for the lease, and when this was arranged he found the plaint had already been laid.

Charles Tonge, complainant, sworn, stated that he had received reliable information to the effect that no work was being done on this ground. [William] Gibbons³⁷⁶ showed him over the ground on which a little scratching appeared to have been done, but nothing to speak of. He went on several occasions prior to making the application, and saw no one on the ground. Redmond subsequently came to him, saying it was a hard case, and offered to resign all right to the ground if he was given a show in it. Had no conversation with Redmond previous to issuing summons.

³⁷⁰ Te Aroha Warden's Court, *Thames Star*, 14 May 1881, p. 2.

³⁷¹ See *Thames Advertiser*, Police Court, 16 December 1881, p. 3, 21 November 1883, p. 3, District Court, 4 June 1884, p. 3, 18 April 1885, p. 3.

³⁷² See Mackaytown Armed Constabulary Letterbook and General Order Book 1875-1877, entry for 16 March 1875, BBAV 4895/1a, ANZ-A; *Thames Advertiser*, 26 November 1880, p. 3, Te Aroha Warden's Court, 13 January 1882, p. 3.

³⁷³ Te Aroha Warden's Court, Register of Te Aroha Claims 1880-1888, folio 300, BBAV 11567/1a, ANZ-A.

³⁷⁴ See *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 1 (Wellington, 1897), p. 1281.

³⁷⁵ See Te Aroha Warden's Court, Register of Te Aroha Claims 1880-1888, folio 196, BBAV 11567/1a, ANZ-A; *Auckland Weekly News*, 2 April 1881, p. 20; *Waikato Times*, 9 August 1884, p. 2.

³⁷⁶ See *Te Aroha News*, 16 June 1883, p. 2, 21 March 1885, p. 2.

[Richard] Schofield [a Thames miner]³⁷⁷ was also interested in the plaint lodged. Knew Potts, but was not aware of his interest in the claim.

To Mr Cuff: Gibbons and mate told me the ground was not being worked. I did not know that Gibbons had been living with Redmond.

Mr Cuff: Have you agreed to give Gibbons an interest if you get this ground?

Complainant declined to answer, and appealed to the Warden who said, as the question could be put through him it was just as well to answer it.

Plaintiff: I promised Redmond a share this morning.

The Warden: Why did you promise him a share?

Plaintiff: He came to my house and asked for an interest as it was hard lines after the work he had done to lose it.

Mr Cuff said he appeared on behalf of an equitable claim of Potts and other Waikato residents. The ground had been pegged off by Redmond, and money was provided by Potts for Redmond's use. Subsequently Gibbons came to Potts with the information that there was no one working, and said if Potts would give him a show he would say nothing about non-working. His client declined, and took steps to provide money for the lease. He had up to this paid money into it, and claimed in equity to be still entitled to his share in the ground, which could not be given to plaintiff as collusion had been proved.

Thomas Redmond, sworn, said he had worked the ground for two months since pegging it out on Sept. 14th, and worked up to the day the summons was issued. Kattern,³⁷⁸ another man, had worked with him for ten days, but he (witness) neither gave him money nor an interest. Potts agreed to take out the lease and pay for the survey. He paid me some money for prospecting on the ground. He was to have ten shares for paying lease and survey. Witness said he [had] done a lot of work tracing reefs, and was absent five days, because he could not get money to proceed with, and knocked off on this account.

To Mr Cuff: I gave Potts a written agreement that he should have ten shares. I took up the Exchange, through my experience with the Alma.

To complainant: I know something about the Alma that I am not going to tell you.

³⁷⁷ See *Thames Advertiser*, 15 April 1874, p. 3, 30 May 1874, p. 3, 6 July 1874, p. 4, 11 November 1874, p. 3, Police Court, 3 December 1874, p. 3; *Thames Star*, 7 September 1874, p. 2, Magistrate's Court, 5 January 1875, p. 2, 20 September 1878, p. 2, 4 July 1879, p. 2, 10 May 1880, p. 2.

³⁷⁸ Not traced.

Complainant: Perhaps cracking stone was the hardest work you did!

Witness: Perhaps so.

To Mr Cuff: From Oct. 14 to Nov. 14 I worked constantly, excepting a few days.

Complainant: Does this mean work or in the whare?

Witness deigned no reply.

To the Warden: I was not working on any other ground during this two months. I was living with Gibbons, who worked on the Alma.

To Mr Cuff: I know they had traced the run of gold from the Alma into the boundary of the Exchange.

John Stuart Potts, sworn, said he had paid Redmond £7 for prospecting; also knew Kattern had prospected the same, having arranged with him to do so. Was not aware of work being suspended, until Gibbons told him. He then advised Redmond to go back to the claim, and saw Mr [George] Purchas with the object of getting a survey. On first negotiating with Redmond, found that the latter, after giving him written transfer of shares, had gone to Mr [John] Coleman [a publican]³⁷⁹ and others at Te Aroha, trying to dispose of the interest again. He had always desired to retain the ground.

To complainant: I had agreed to pay Kattern if he got gold.

The Warden said it was evident that the ground had not been properly worked. Such cases were too common. If men will not take the trouble to come to the Court and ask for the reasonable protection afforded, they would have to take the consequences. He should, in future, have to insist on this being done. At this point the Warden was interrupted by Gibbons, who jumped up from his seat in the body of the Courthouse, and said he could prove that Redmond had not worked three days on the ground.

William Gibbons, sworn, said defendant had been one day on the ground and stopped away three; that he had been working for Tommy Gavin³⁸⁰ away from the Exchange claim. Could say positively he had not done four days work; used instead to go to Waiorongomai and Te Aroha, hear news, and one thing and another, but he did not work.

The Warden said he would declare the ground to be forfeited. Had Potts done his duty he would have taken the necessary steps to secure the ground, so that it could be worked by two men. The

³⁷⁹ See advertisement, *Te Aroha News*, 9 June 1883, p. 1; for his investments in Waiorongomai mining, see Te Aroha Warden's Court, Register of Te Aroha Claims 1880-1888, folio 278, BBAV 11567/1a; Register of Licensed Holdings 1881-1887, folios 97, 118, BBAV 11500/9a, ANZ-A; *New Zealand Gazette*, 14 December 1882, 1885, 31 May 1883, p. 722, 6 September 1883, p. 1265, 18 October 1883, p. 1518.

³⁸⁰ See paper on Thomas Gavin.

claim was awarded in the following proportion:- Tonge, 10 shares; Potts, three shares; Redmond, two shares, and if the claim was not fully represented, it would again be forfeited. In future he would insist on ground being properly manned, and should enforce the clause unless the necessary protection was obtained.³⁸¹

This case suggested that Gibbons and Redmond, who lived together and might therefore have been regarded as mates, were not close friends. Gibbons and another man told Tonge that Redmond was not working his ground, thereby giving Tonge the opportunity to sue for forfeiture, as Kenrick considered he should have done. According to Potts' lawyer, there was collusion between Tonge and Redmond, because Tonge was willing to give Redmond a share in the claim if he won the forfeiture. Potts was also told by Gibbons that the ground was not being worked, and interrupted Kenrick's judgment to stress the minimal amount of work Redmond did on any claim. Potts had provided money to enable Redmond to obtain a lease, survey the boundaries, and prospect, in return receiving written transfers of ten shares that Redmond then tried to sell for a second time to potential sleeping partners. Instead of working the ground, Redmond worked for wages for Gavin; despite this, Kenrick allotted him the smallest interest, presumably because this had been arranged with Tonge, whereas Potts received three, not the ten he had paid for by providing money to obtain and work the claim.

Despite Redmond saying that he knew 'something about the Alma' that he would not reveal to Tonge, within three weeks of obtaining three and a half shares in it he had sold them for a profit of £22,³⁸² implying he knew it had no value. Tonge had held five shares in the Alma since December 1881, selling one for £10 to Gibbons on 7 November 1883;³⁸³ another indication these two men were colluding over the Exchange? The impression that the performance in the court was collusion was confirmed by Tonge, Potts, and Redmond marking out the Odd Whim, adjoining the

³⁸¹ Warden's Court, *Te Aroha News*, 24 November 1883, p. 2.

³⁸² Te Aroha Warden's Court, Register of Licensed Holdings 1881-1887, folio 133, BBAV 11500/9a; Certified Instruments 1883, Transfers dated 13 August 1883, 3 September 1883, 4 September 1883, BBAV 11581/4a, ANZ-A.

³⁸³ Te Aroha Warden's Court, Register of Licensed Holdings 1881-1887, folio 133, BBAV 11500/9a; Certified Instruments 1883, Transfer dated 7 November 1883, BBAV 11581/4a, ANZ-A.

Alma, on 21 November and being registered as its owners on 4 December, the same date Tonge and Gibbons became owners of the Junction.³⁸⁴

During 1881 and 1882, Redmond lost two claims for non-working, might have lost another had the suit not been withdrawn, unsuccessfully sued another miner 'for value of a share' in another claim, won possession of one claim for non-working, and might have obtained another had not Kenrick fined the owners 1s in lieu of forfeiture.³⁸⁵ Redmond's hanging around the townships and not working may have been caused by his drink problem: in 1882 he was convicted for being drunk and disorderly.³⁸⁶

As an example of a miner trying to obtain ground without any overtones of collusion, in mid-1887 Edward Quinn,³⁸⁷ a mine manager, objected to renewed protection for Tui claims being floated in London. The local newspaper, which did not approve of his interference, probably with malicious intent published his misspelled letter to the warden, Harry Aldborough Stratford:

Te aroha
11th July 1887

To Warden Straafod Esq

Sir I the undersinged do hereby loge an objection the granting of protection of the keep it dark champion lode No 4 Mark Moon and surprise on the ground that the have not been worked according to the mining regulations
Singed Edward Quinn

At the hearing, Stratford asked what regulations he was referring to:

Mr Quinn: Re working ground your Worship. The Warden here had a copy of the regulations handed Mr Quinn requesting him to find and point out the regulations he specially referred to in making this objection, but this he failed to do, and handed back the regulations saying he objected on the general grounds of non working, and proceeded to state that the Mark Moon, held by Mr

³⁸⁴ Te Aroha Warden's Court, Register of Te Aroha Claims 1880-1888, folios 312, 313, BBAV 11567/1a, ANZ-A.

³⁸⁵ Te Aroha Warden's Court, Plaintiff Book 1880-1898, 51, 85, 90/1881, 31, 58, 66, 68/1882, BBAV 11547/1a, ANZ-A.

³⁸⁶ Armed Constabulary Force, Report of Charges taken at Te Aroha Lock-Up 1880-1903, no. 16, in private possession; Magistrate's Court, Criminal Record Book 1881-1896, 5/1882, BCDG 11220/1a, ANZ-A.

³⁸⁷ See paper on his life.

[Henry] Brett [owner of the *Auckland Star*],³⁸⁸ one of the claims referred to, had only been worked 17 days since it was taken up about a year and nine months ago. Mr [Clement Augustus] Cornes here requested the Warden to ask if Mr Quinn was the holder of a Miner's Right.

Mr Quinn said he was, but on being produced it proved to have been only *taken out the previous day*, being dated July 18th. Mr Quinn went on to state that the Surprise had been worked about three months, the No 4 Champion Lode about three months, and the Keep it Dark about six weeks, all four claims having been taken up about a year and nine months or two years ago. In reply to the Warden, Mr Quinn admitted he had held interest in one of the claims mentioned, namely in the Keep it Dark, in which he held shares for over a year, and transferred his interest about nine months ago.

The Warden: How long was the Keep it Dark worked whilst you were a shareholder in it? Mr Quinn: About six weeks.

The Warden: And when work was stopped what did you do then, I suppose you applied to the late Warden Kenrick for protection?

Mr Quinn: No protection your Worship, the ground was left idle.

The Warden: Why left idle?

Mr Quinn: Because there were no funds wherewith to work it.

The Warden having put some further questions in support of his objection; whereupon Mr Quinn commenced to spin a yarn respecting the manner in which the whole district was locked up, etc, etc; in the delivery of which the Warden cut him short by remarking he did not want a speech from him, but would listen to anything he had got to say with reference to his objection. He was quite aware of the circumstances of the district, and with respect to what was being done as regards the claims under consideration, before he granted them protection on the last occasion. No further evidence being forthcoming, the Warden addressing Mr Quinn said: I consider this objection comes with very bad grace from you, who, on your own admission held an interest in the Keep it Dark, (one of the claims for which renewed protection was asked) for a year, during which time you say only six weeks' work was done on the ground, and during the balance of the time you were a shareholder the ground was left idle, without even protection being asked for; and now, because you no longer hold an interest in it, you try to turn others out of it. Nobody knows better than you do, as you stand there, that I heard all about the state of affairs as regards these claims, when protection was previously applied for. The least you could have done was to show me you were one of the "unemployed," and desiring to go and work on the ground you object to being further

³⁸⁸ See *Observer*, 21 February 1882, p. 296.

protected. An objection would have come better from any outsider than from you, one of the original shareholders.

He granted protection for three months, after which time men must be employed to work it.³⁸⁹ In the same issue, the newspaper reported it had been informed Quinn's statement the Mark Moon had been worked for only 14 days was 'utterly false and calculated to mislead. The end aimed at was evidently the forfeiture of the ground'.³⁹⁰ Court records confirmed that Quinn had held one of the 15 shares in Keep it Dark when it was registered in November 1885, selling half of it to a publican just over a year later for £15.³⁹¹ In February 1887 he owned two valueless Tui claims, the Victory and the Nelson.³⁹² 'Old Resident', who had attended the hearing, applauded Stratford's 'severe, but richly deserved rebuke', claiming his 'outspoken and just remarks' had 'given very general satisfaction, and been commented on in the highest terms on every hand'. He regretted that Stratford had not called witnesses,

as had he done so evidence of a very important nature would have been given. I have heard it stated on good authority by several persons, that Mr Quinn intimated very plainly that he would be willing to withdraw the objection lodged by him, for an inducement such as an interest in the ground. Let him deny it if he can. I have further heard it publicly stated that during the whole time Mr Quinn was a shareholder in the Keep it Dark ... although two calls were made to meet working expenses, he did not pay his share of the calls, and has not done so to this day. If these statements are correct, I ask, what could be more mean and contemptible than for a person, having left his fellow shareholders in a mine to meet the working expenses, and still owing his calls, to turn round on his former mates, and endeavour to get their ground forfeited, on the plea that the mining regulations had not been complied with? Had Mr Quinn succeeded in his little game, would he have gone to work himself on the ground, or is he in a better position to influence capital than those who hold the ground? Was his objective the welfare of

³⁸⁹ *Te Aroha News*, 23 July 1887, p. 3.

³⁹⁰ *Te Aroha News*, 23 July 1887, p. 2.

³⁹¹ Te Aroha Warden's Court, Register of Licensed Holdings 1881-1887, folio 193, BBAV 11500/9a; Edward Quinn to Arthur Downes, 1 November 1886, Certified Instruments 1886, BBAV 11581/7a, ANZ-A.

³⁹² Te Aroha Warden's Court, Complaint Book 1880-1898, 1, 2/1887, BBAV 11547/1a, ANZ-A.

the district, or the chance of making a “rise” out of the ground, if forfeited?³⁹³

Quinn ignored these accusations, and for reasons probably not related to this controversy left the district one month later.³⁹⁴ Earlier in the same year, he had given evidence when Michael Marriman³⁹⁵ asked Stratford to dissolve a partnership established during the Te Aroha rush with the brothers James and Thomas Corbett³⁹⁶ and ‘cause a statement of accounts to be made’ by the former, ‘who was supposed to be manager of the partnership’. Marriman provided another insight into how partners traded in shares and into the lax way at least some parties kept accounts:

In 1880 both defendants and I entered verbally into mining partnerships at Te Aroha. [James] Corbett at the time held 1-ninth share in a claim called the “Prospectors,” an ordinary claim. It was not registered under any company’s act; nor do I think registered in the Warden’s court. Thos. Corbett held in the same claim 1-thirty-six share. Thos. Corbett and I held also one full share each in the “Bonanza” claim situated on the north side of the Prospectors. We three were to be equal partners in the transaction, and gains, and losses. Shortly after this the Werahiko and Bonanza claims were forfeited, Mr Corbett held all the accounts, and, in 1881, asked me to Hikutaia, to settle up accounts. I said it could not be done until Thos. Corbett was present. The latter arrived, but settling up was postponed. Thos. asked us not to charge him with Bonanza shares which he sold in Auckland. I agreed all the shares in the Prospectors’ were held in James Corbett’s name. The Bonanza shares were in my own and Thos. Corbett’s name. A letter produced from Jas. Corbett, dated June 18th, 1885, containing some accounts. Thos. Corbett told me that the shares he sold were my shares and not his, he asked me to sign a transfer. The money £10s was given to James Corbett as treasurer.... I wanted Jas. Corbett as treasurer to render an account, but he would not do so. Edward Quinn and I sold some shares to an Auckland man, and the cash was handed to Jas.

³⁹³ Letter from ‘Old Resident’, *Te Aroha News*, 30 July 1887, p. 2.

³⁹⁴ *Te Aroha News*, 27 August 1887, pp. 2, 3; 3 September 1887, p. 2.

³⁹⁵ Sometimes recorded as Merriman or Marrinan; see paper on rumours of gold at Te Aroha.

³⁹⁶ For James, see *AJHR*, 1875, I-3, pp. 29-31, 45; *Freeman’s Journal*, 28 March 1884, p. 12; *Ohinemuri Gazette*, 28 August 1908, p. 2; for Thomas, see *Thames Advertiser*, 13 February 1881, p. 3, *Ohinemuri Correspondent*, 18 January 1897, p. 2; *Freeman’s Journal*, 28 March 1884, p. 13; *Ohinemuri Gazette*, 4 July 1895, p. 4.

Corbett. The shares were in Jas. Corbett's name, but were a portion of the partnership property. He did not give a transfer, but only a slip of paper acknowledging receipt of the money, about £7. Mr Jas. Kirkwood was the agent through which the shares were sold. The two brothers in 1881 conjointly signed a transfer for 500 shares to me; it was left in Mr [Michael] Hennelly's [sharebroker's] office.³⁹⁷ I could not swear that I signed the transfer, however I believe I did. We held two meetings at Te Aroha. I wanted to sell right away, out, but they would not. To Mr [James Armstrong] Miller: We were mates in Te Aroha only in the Bonanza and Prospectors. The agreement was that all profits from gold produced, or arising from the sale of shares should be equally divided; this agreement was made in October 1880.... Made no other agreement. Jas. Corbett was manager of the Prospectors; Bonanza shares were worth 2s 6d, the former 9s, some were sold at 14s. After the sale of the shares the balance were transferred to me. I think that in December, 1880, the two claims were formed into companies. I sold a 1/2 share in Bonanza for £11 to E. Quinn. Thos. Corbett had £6, and I had £5. We rendered an account to Jas. Corbett. To my knowledge no other share in the claims were sold. I believe that there were between £300 and £400 made by the partnership at Te Aroha.

At this stage of the proceedings, the Warden remarked that all matters connected with mining should be under the jurisdiction of the Warden.

Edward Quinn, sworn, deposed: I do not know whether the shares were registered or not; I dealt with them as scrip, I did not know that you and the Corbetts were mates.

Jas. Corbett, sworn, deposed: I did hold one of the original shares in the Werahiko claim; I never sold any interest in it as a claim. In December, 1880, it was formed into a company called the Werahiko G.M. Co. All my dealings were in the company, which was registered at that time. I deny any partnership with either you or my brother. I sold interests and divided the money between you and my brother, as your agent; and not as a partner. The Warden: As far as the case against Jas. Corbett is concerned, I shall dismiss it with costs, £2 7s.

The case against the other defendant, Thos. Corbett, was withdrawn.³⁹⁸

This complicated story of trading in each others' shares, without proper records being kept, was hardly unique, prompting Stratford to remind them that by registering transfers the later claim and counter-claim

³⁹⁷ See *Thames Star*, 26 February 1881, p. 2; *Thames Advertiser*, 16 December 1885, p. 2.

³⁹⁸ Warden's Court, *Thames Advertiser*, 6 May 1887, p. 2.

would have been avoided. He clearly accepted James Corbett's case, perhaps not knowing that there was no claim registered or company formed during the Te Aroha rush using Werahiko's name. Marriman had earlier that year won another case against James Corbett over their partnership in a Waihi hotel and then lost another one over mining shares.³⁹⁹

Working partners sometimes mined for lower rates than the men they employed, or even for no payment, as they would share the proceeds of selling the ore. For example, John Blain, or Blaine,⁴⁰⁰ worked in the Lord Nelson from August to December 1888, stripping the reef with another miner. In the latter month he gave a boy a quarter share in the claim to look after it for him. A sleeping partner who knew of this arrangement stated that 'Blain received no wages, but worked on the claim on account of having an interest'.⁴⁰¹ Thomas Gavin and William Morris Newsham,⁴⁰² the principal partners in the Loyalty in 1895, charged the partnership 6s 8d per day for their services; sometimes Gavin charged 10s per week, whereas the wages men they employed received 8s per day.⁴⁰³

Dissolving a partnership because a shareholder did not pay their contribution was common, their shares being sold to defray debts.⁴⁰⁴ Ending a partnership was frequently complicated and sometimes required the warden's assistance. An example was the Young Caledonian, taken up in John Sheehan's name⁴⁰⁵ in August 1882.⁴⁰⁶ Encouraged by reports of its 'good prospects',⁴⁰⁷ others became partners, a half share (equivalent to a one-thirtieth interest) being offered for sale in September 1883 for £20.⁴⁰⁸ As usual, it was under-capitalised, and calls of £2 and £1 1s per full share

³⁹⁹ Magistrate's Court, *Thames Advertiser*, 8 January 1887, p. 2; Paeroa Magistrate's Court, *Te Aroha News*, 9 April 1887, p. 2.

⁴⁰⁰ See *Thames Advertiser*, 26 September 1895, p. 2.

⁴⁰¹ *Auckland Weekly News*, 27 October 1888, p. 37; *Te Aroha News*, 29 May 1889, p. 2.

⁴⁰² See paper on his life.

⁴⁰³ Te Aroha Warden's Court, Plaints 1895, 1/1895, BBAV 11572/2a, ANZ-A.

⁴⁰⁴ For example, Te Aroha Warden's Court, *Plaint Book 1880-1898*, 44/1883, BBAV 11547/1a, ANZ-A.

⁴⁰⁵ See *Thames Advertiser*, 11 October 1886, p. 2; Death Certificate of John Sheehan, 13 August 1896, 1896/5736, BDM.

⁴⁰⁶ Te Aroha Warden's Court, Register of Licensed Holdings 1881-1887, folio 132, BBAV 11500/9a, ANZ-A.

⁴⁰⁷ For example, *Thames Advertiser*, 16 December 1882, p. 3.

⁴⁰⁸ *Waikato Times*, 15 September 1883, p. 2; *Te Aroha News*, 15 September 1883, p. 2.

were made by Nicholas Cleary,⁴⁰⁹ the honorary secretary, in August and September that year.⁴¹⁰ In December, when a sleeping partner would not pay his share, the partnership was dissolved, a liquidator appointed, and Kenrick ordered the assets to be realized, any surplus assets being shared amongst the owners.⁴¹¹ Despite this decision, the partnership continued, until in March the following year a miner, Patrick Moriarty,⁴¹² sued Cleary and the others for £13 10s, being wages for working from 24 September to 27 October. He asked that the partnership be dissolved so that he would receive his money, less his share of the claim. Kenrick did as requested, ordering a local lawyer, Joshua Cuff, who was not a shareholder, to realize the property within one month.⁴¹³ There being little competition when the claim was sold, Cleary purchased it for £35, establishing a new partnership which mined until forfeiting it in March 1885.⁴¹⁴ Cuff as receiver in liquidation made a call of 30s per one-fifteenth share, and sued nine miners who did not pay for amounts ranging from 7s 6d to £3.⁴¹⁵ Not till January 1885 were all creditors required to prove their debts; those who did received £8 10s 3d, whilst shareholders who proved they were owed money received 11s 6d. The balance of £10 7s 6d was paid to Cuff as his fee.⁴¹⁶ The statement of accounts showed that Cuff's costs had been £41. He gave the

⁴⁰⁹ See *Te Aroha News*, 25 August 1883, p. 2, Licensing Committee, 14 March 1885, p. 2, 10 July 1886, p. 2, 7 May 1887, p. 2, Ohinemuri County Council, 15 October 1887, p. 2, Warden's Court, 5 October 1889, p. 2, 16 April 1890, p. 3.

⁴¹⁰ *Te Aroha News*, 25 August 1883, p. 2, 22 September 1883, p. 2.

⁴¹¹ Warden's Court, *Te Aroha News*, 8 December 1883, p. 2.

⁴¹² See *Te Aroha News*, 14 September 1914, p. 2.

⁴¹³ Te Aroha Warden's Court, *Plaint Book 1880-1898*, 12/1884, BBAV 11547/1a; *Plaints 1884*, 12/1884, BBAV 11572/1a, ANZ-A; Warden's Court, *Te Aroha News*, 5 April 1884, p. 7.

⁴¹⁴ *Te Aroha News*, 12 April 1884, p. 2, 10 May 1884, p. 2, 13 September 1884, p. 2; Te Aroha Warden's Court, *Register of Licensed Holdings 1881-1887*, folio 160, BBAV 11500/9a, ANZ-A.

⁴¹⁵ *Te Aroha News*, 7 June 1884, p. 6; Te Aroha Warden's Court, *Plaints 1884*, 12/1884, BBAV 11572/1a; Te Aroha Magistrate's Court, *Civil Record Book 1881-1884*, 186, 188-195/1884, BCDG 11221/1a, ANZ-A.

⁴¹⁶ Te Aroha Warden's Court, *Plaints 1884*, 12/1884, BBAV 11572/1a, ANZ-A; Warden's Court, *Te Aroha News*, 21 February 1885, p. 2.

warden itemized invoices from storekeepers and statements of money owed to miners, less calls they had not paid.⁴¹⁷

WORKING IN BATTERIES

Sometimes when mining was depressed miners might take work in a battery, but only of necessity, as the work, and its financial reward, was off-putting. In the late 1940s, an old miner's recollections of life at Thames in the nineteenth century mentioned the unpleasant conditions endured by boys working in batteries. '£1 per week, washing blankets, empty tailing Pits, breaking stone etc. No Gum Boots - naked feet - wet as hell, with washing the dam heavy blankets etc - cold as hell 8 long hours - wet clothes etc'.⁴¹⁸ No battery hand at Waiorongomai or indeed anywhere in Hauraki described their daily life, although a man who assisted Edwin Henry Hardy⁴¹⁹ recorded assisting in his battery in 1900 in addition to his other mining duties. He mentioned that on a rainy day

I was indoors all day putting up some new machinery.... There was a crowd here today and Hardy showed them round the battery. It must be rather a tedious job for the machinery makes such a row until one gets used to it, it is impossible to hear what anyone is saying or to make them hear you. I don't notice it now, but at first I found it a great nuisance.⁴²⁰

An American account about a six-stamper battery treating silver ore provides something of the 'feel' of being a battery hand:

We had to turn out at six in the morning and keep at it till dark.... One of us stood by the battery all day long, breaking up masses of silver-bearing rock with a sledge[-hammer] and shoveling it into the battery.... Quantities of coarse salt and sulphate of copper were added, from time to time to assist the amalgamation by destroying base metals which coated the gold and silver and would not let it unite with the quicksilver. All these tiresome things we had to attend to constantly. Streams of

⁴¹⁷ Te Aroha Warden's Court, Plaints 1884, 12/1884, BBAV 11572/1a, ANZ-A.

⁴¹⁸ A.F. Sawyer, Notes on early Thames, written 1946-1947, W.G. Hammond Papers, folder 346, MS 134, Auckland Institute Library [Sawyer died in 1964, aged 90].

⁴¹⁹ See paper on his life.

⁴²⁰ Thomas Franz Holt to Nell Holt, 31 October 1900, T.F. Holt Papers, p. 66, Te Aroha Museum.

dirty water flowed always from the pans and were carried off in broad wooden troughs to the ravine. One would not suppose that atoms of gold and silver would float on top of six inches of water, but they did; and in order to catch them, coarse blankets were laid in the troughs, and little obstructing "riffles" charged with quicksilver were placed here and there across the troughs also. These riffles had to be cleaned and the blankets washed out every evening, to get their precious accumulations - and after all this eternity of trouble one third of the silver and gold in a ton of rock would find its way to the end of the troughs in the ravine at last and have to be worked over again some day. There is nothing so aggravating as silver milling. There was never any idle time in that mill. There was always something to do. It is a pity that Adam could not have gone straight out of Eden into a quartz mill, in order to understand the full force of his doom to "earn his bread by the sweat of his brow." Every now and then, during the day, we had to scoop some pulp out of the pans, and tediously "wash" it with a horn spoon - wash it little by little over the edge till at last nothing was left but some little dull globules of quicksilver in the bottom. If they were soft and yielding, the pan needed some salt or some sulphate of copper or some other chemical rubbish to assist digestion; if they were crisp to the touch and would retain a dint, they were freighted with all the silver and gold they could seize and hold, and consequently the pans needed a fresh charge of quicksilver. When there was nothing else to do, one could always "screen tailings." That is to say, he could shovel up the dried sand that had washed down to the ravine through the troughs and dash it against an upright wire screen to free it from pebbles and prepare it for working over. The process of amalgamation differed in the various mills, and this included changes in style of pans and other machinery, and a great diversity of opinion existed as to the best in use, but none of the methods employed involved the principle of milling ore without "screening the tailings." Of all recreations in the world, screening tailings on a hot day, with a long-handled shovel, is the most undesirable.

At the end of the week the machinery was stopped and we "cleaned up." That is to say, we got the pulp out of the pans and batteries, and washed the mud patiently away till nothing was left but the long accumulating mass of quicksilver, with its imprisoned treasures. These we made into heavy, compact snow-balls, and piled them up in a bright, luxurious heap for inspection. Making these snow-balls cost me a fine gold ring - that and ignorance together; for the quicksilver invaded the ring with the same facility with which water saturates a sponge - separating its particles and the ring crumbled to pieces.

We put our pile of quicksilver balls into an iron retort that had a pipe leading from it to a pail of water, and then applied a roasting

heat. The quicksilver turned to vapor, escaped through the pipe into the pail, and the water turned it into good wholesome quicksilver again. Quicksilver is very costly, and they never waste it. On opening the retort, there was our week's work - a lump of pure white, frosty looking silver, twice as large as a man's head. Perhaps a fifth of the mass was gold, but the color of it did not show - would not have shown if two thirds of it had been gold. We melted it up and made a solid brick of it by pouring it into an iron brick-mould.

By such a tedious and laborious process were silver bricks obtained....

From our bricks a little corner was chipped off for the "fire-assay" - a method used to determine the proportions of gold, silver and base metals in the mass....

I will remark, in passing, that I only remained in the milling business one week. I told my employer I could not stay longer without an advance in my wages; that I liked quartz milling, indeed was infatuated with it; that I had never before grown so tenderly attached to an occupation in so short a time; that nothing, it seemed to me, gave such scope to intellectual activity as feeding a battery and screening tailings, and nothing so stimulated the moral attributes as retorting bullion and washing blankets - still, I felt constrained to ask an increase of salary.

He said he was paying me ten dollars a week, and thought it a good round sum. How much did I want?

I said about four hundred thousand dollars a month, and board, was about all I could reasonably ask, considering the hard times.

I was ordered off the premises! And yet, when I look back to those days and call to mind the exceeding hardness of the labor I performed in that mill, I only regret that I did not ask him seven hundred thousand.⁴²¹

PLUSES AND MINUSES

Bert McAra, asked whether there was any pleasure in being a miner to make up for the hazardous working conditions, responded that it was 'the sharing of things, doing things together, men like doing things together, I am convinced of that. Working together, and there wasn't too big a crowd' at Tui, meaning that they 'knew everybody else thoroughly and there's a lot of pleasure in that'.⁴²² Coppard also noted the sense of solidarity because of the nature of their work. 'Whether you're fighting or arguing or whatever

⁴²¹ Mark Twain, *Roughing It*, first published in 1872, reprinted in *The Works of Mark Twain*, vol. 2 (Los Angeles, 1972), pp. 233-235, 237.

⁴²² Interview with J.B. McAra, 4 August 1985, p. 25 of transcript.

with your workmate ... you're literally putting your life in his hands every time you go underground because he may have to come and get you out one day, or you may have to go and get him'.⁴²³ 'You have a different attitude in general to your workmates too, because of this relying, like a buddy system, you're relying on them and their integrity in the event of something going wrong'.⁴²⁴

The life of a miner was not for everyone. Coppard recalled one young man lasting only one day in the mine.

Apparently he woke up through the night in a cold sweat - he'd realised where he'd been working. Now we were all working in a rise about 140 feet up in this particular case, and we were standing on six by sixes putting the next lot of six by sixes up above us, and then of course you'd stand on the ladderway and you'd nail the boards on and put the ladders up and carry on. And he woke up through the night in a cold sweat realising where he was and of course that was it.⁴²⁵

Even some experienced miners did not like blasting. 'Now, you'd start off in the morning - you'd go in, you may have to clean up or you may go straight into drilling, and about lunchtime the first thing that would be asked by one chap in particular, "When you gonna blast? When you gonna blast?" and for the next couple of hours, he'd be pestering you'.⁴²⁶ Even for those who enjoyed the work, 'there is always in the back of your mind the chance, the possibility of some form of an accident that you become badly maimed or maybe killed even, and you leave dependants behind ... [or] of maybe having to go in and get one of your workmates out'.⁴²⁷ The dangers of life underground was considered by Coppard to be a reason for why, after work, miners 'let off steam because of the psychological build-up that has been going on in their mind'.⁴²⁸

During the nineteenth century, Blainey noted, many Australian miners 'started their working life with the freedom of the independent gold digger and closed it working for wages; they began mining with the hope

⁴²³ Interview with Eric Coppard, 8 December 1985, p. 51 of transcript.

⁴²⁴ Interview with Eric Coppard, 8 December 1985, p. 53 of transcript.

⁴²⁵ Interview with Eric Coppard, 4 August 1985, pp. 63-64 of transcript.

⁴²⁶ Interview with Eric Coppard, 4 August 1985, p. 64 of transcript.

⁴²⁷ Interview with Eric Coppard, 8 December 1985, p. 51 of transcript.

⁴²⁸ Interview with Eric Coppard, 8 December 1985, p. 51 of transcript.

that they would become rich and instead mined wealth for others to spend'. He considered that the change 'from the romantic life of the digger to the discipline of a company mine' was probably preferred by many miners, 'for undoubtedly they earned more money' than those working alluvial goldfields. 'Married men usually preferred the regular weekly wage'.⁴²⁹ And many 'retained the optimism of the old order by speculating in mining shares', but unless they were tributers, 'they were no longer their own masters', which 'rankled' with many.⁴³⁰

Reports of the Te Aroha rush reminded a leading journalist, Charles Montrose,⁴³¹ of his involvement in the Indigo one of 1869 in Victoria, Australia, and prompted a lament that 'the slow, laborious, costly and scientific quartz-mining' had 'taken all the romance out of gold digging'.

"Piles" are no longer made in a day, and lost as quickly. The rapid changes of fortune which set the heart beating wildly, stirred men's pulses, and made life a golden dream, a perennial hopefulness, are gone for ever. We have become hard, calculating, selfish, and scientific. The times are no longer when a man could wrest wealth from the earth with a pick and shovel, tin dish, tub, cradle, a bucket and rope, and a few days' "tucker." It is all capital, scrip, adits, tunnels, costly machinery, and laborious science, in which men wear out heart and soul deep down in the bowels of the earth, slowly tearing out great masses of hard rock, and moodily awaiting the tedious process of crushing, retorting, and so forth.⁴³²

An assessment of New Zealand mining at the beginning of the 1890s noted this change and its impact on the miners (especially the alluvial ones) of old:

Every year brings about conditions under which the individual miner must give way before the organized efforts of capitalists. To the digger of bygone days this style of mining is anathema: that love of liberty which took him long ago to a new and perhaps uninhabited country, and which has sustained him through all the hardships and perils of a pioneer's life, prevents his sinking to the level of a wages-man," and he not infrequently wanders off alone into the wilderness, there to work as a "hatter" on the

⁴²⁹ Blainey, p. 294.

⁴³⁰ Blainey, p. 295.

⁴³¹ See *Observer*, 5 October 1887, p. 17, 23 December 1893, p. 5, 17 August 1907, p. 4.

⁴³² Charles O. Montrose, 'A Digger's Christmas', *Observer*, 1 January 1881, p. 148.

banks of some creek, where he ends his days free from the galling chains of servitude. There are, however, in New Zealand, still many gold-fields where parties of men can, with only such capital as is contained in indomitable energy and undying perseverance, carry out works of considerable magnitude, and earn a comfortable living. Kind-hearted, frequently well-read, generous beings, they keep alive the traditions of a race which was called into existence by special circumstances, and which is rapidly becoming, in New Zealand at least, as extinct as the moa.⁴³³

CONCLUSION

Mining was not for everyone, but many miners, especially alluvial miners, preferred their work to any alternative, and regretted the loss of independence as companies increased their control of goldfields. Although goldmining was over-romanticized, especially by non-miners, for it was a dirty and dangerous occupation, it had an allure to fit young men in particular, who could dream of the wealth to be obtained after the next blast in an adit or on the next new discovery. Few would attain this wealth, but hopes kept many going through a lifetime of hard toil in difficult conditions.

⁴³³ George J. Binns, 'Mining in New Zealand', *Transactions of the Federated Mining Engineers*, vol. 3 (1891-1892), p. 645.