

OWHAROA

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INTRODUCTORY.

This small locality, by the Ohinemuri river on the way from Paeroa to Waihi, nearing Waikino, has as a permanent feature a very pretty cascade, the Owharua Falls.

In Maori times, if one wished to go from Hauraki via the Ohinemuri to Kati Kati and ultimately Tauranga, it was in this vicinity, that after passing through the Karangahake Gorge by canoe, people had to disembark and go by land. The name suggests there was a convenient spot where one could draw alongside the riverbank at a convenient height the full length of a canoe, so everybody could disembark more or less at once.

Owha means the sideboard or gunwale of a canoe, and roa is long.

The drawing alongside landing place would have been used by successive peoples over the centuries - the "fairy" people, the Kupe people who established themselves at Te Whitianga o Kupe, the crossing place of Kupe, where some lines of descent can still be traced; The Toi people, who gave rise to Te tini o Toi, the myriads of Toi, and are said to still form the basic stock of the Coromandel Peninsula, buried by later genealogies; the Arawa people, who established peaceful ascendancy and an aristocracy that gave coveted genealogies; and finally, by conquest, the Tainui people. Around the time of Oliver Cromwell in England they too were fighting hard, sweeping south from the vicinity of present day Thames to south of Hikutaia, with 8,000 killed in a battle, till a line was drawn, south of which the fugitives were safe. Thus the area around Owharua would seem to have remained with the Ngati-Hako, of Arawised Toi people.

The Tainui conquerors to the north had tribes from the sons of Marutuahu. Whanaunga founded the Ngati-Whanaunga, Tamatera the Ngati-Tamatera, Te Ngako the Ngati-Maru and Tamatepo the Ngati-Rongo-u. The Marutuahu confederation also included what we might call a cousin tribe, the Ngati-Paoa.

It did not include for a couple of centuries or so the Ngati-Tamatera. When Marutuahu died, leaving two widows, sisters, Tamatera married one of them, his aunt. Whanaunga took deep umbrage, and Tamatera fled to Kati Kati, where his tribe grew during the next couple of centuries or so.

From 1815 the musket raids of the Ngapuhi from the Bay of Islands in the north began. The coastal settlements of the Ngati-Tamatera at Kati Kati were too exposed, and the people fled into "the interior" which had a convenient back door into the Ohinemuri, said back door being the Owharua area. The original quarrel had atrophied over the centuries, and there had already been some intercommunications and intermarriages.

Between 1815 and 1820, some time before the latter, they set up a pa at the junction of the Ohinemuri and Waihou. Marsden reported the pa in 1820, on his way up the Ohinemuri and further afield by land, no doubt via the Owharua vicinity. The pa had some European features adapting to musket warfare - at that time you learned quickly or you died.

Coromandel Harbour had already been deserted by 1820, people only coming back there and encamping temporarily while under the protection of the guns of His Majesty's Store Ship Coromandel getting kauri timber. After an attack on the strong stronghold of Totara Pa on the border of present day Thames had been beaten off during the summer of 1818-19, there had been a general heke or migration to the head of the Thames Valley in the vicinity of present day Cambridge, using European axes to hew down huge trees, with great logs as much as 80 feet long, to bar the way to the big canoes of the Grand Fleet of the Ngapuhi, who were making "every summer a shooting season."

The chief Horeta te Taniwha of Coromandel had told missionary Samuel Marsden in 1820, that the Ngapuhi and their allies were too strong for him and his people, and as soon as the Coromandel left, they left too. And apparently the Ngati-Tamatera of the pa at the junction of the Ohinemuri and Waihou thought it was time to go too, and we do not seem to hear of the stronghold there with the events of 1821.

When Hongi the chief Ngapuhi leader came to Hauraki with an overwhelming armament. He had just returned from England and Sydney with 800 muskets, at a time when the total in Maori hands was around 500,

the Ngapuhi having more than others, but not overwhelmingly so - as was the case now.

In the vicinity of present day Thames people had come back on a camping basis to grow such crops as potatoes to get European supplies, especially munitions of war. European ships had been taking in Maori-grown produce since 1803, according to Murray McCaskill. Most sensibly fled upriver, but around 500 took panic refuge in deserted Totara pa. Hongi spent the next three days chasing the main body of fugitives upriver without success, and no record of finding an occupied stronghold at the junction of the Waihou and Ohinemuri - evidently deserted.

Hongi sent envoys into Totara pa on the way back, exchanged gifts like a valuable greenstone mere he intended to retrieve, saying he was leaving, took his Grand Fleet round a headland, and came back overland overnight and surprised Totara Pa before dawn.

The Marutuahu tribes wisely remained around Cambridge for nearly a decade. The death of Hongi in 1828 served a check to the invincibility of the Ngapuhi, and in 1830, at the battle of Taumatawiwi, uneasy neighbour chief Te Waharoa of the Ngati-Haua of Matamata served notice by that indecisive engagement that it was time to go home.

This time the Ngati-Tamatera were coming back to live at Hauraki after over 200 years of exile, and there was a new division of the lands. The Marutuahu confederation could now muster around 5,000 warriors, and quite a few of these were Ngati-Tamatera, who were therefore accorded lands in many places. Thus Coromandel Harbour area, previously occupied by the Ngati-Whanaunga, was now divided between Ngati-Whanaunga, Ngati-Tamatera and the cousin tribe Ngati-Paoa.

European contacts were desirable, for the comforts of civilisation the people were coming to depend on, including tobacco, and particularly munitions of war. Even 10 years later, in 1840, Logan Gampbell found "tupara fever" still raging to acquire double-barrelled gun.

So the drive was northwards, to be near Europeans moving by sea, and when it came to European land sales in later years, there were Moehau blocks right to Mount Moehau at the end of the Peninsula ascribed to the Ngati-Tamatera. The main meeting house of the Ngati-Tamatera was built at Waiaro, on the west coast north of present day Colville, where they had a special stone fish trap. The meeting house was later barged to Paeroa.

European contacts were early on the scene, already well established by 1832 at both the Kauaeranga (Thames) and near Whakatiwai (Miranda on the other side of the Firth), where there were already European houses by 1832.

The story of Maori-European interaction during the 1820s and 30s is much more important than generally realised. Thus Anderson was what we might call "gun-running" up the Piako from 1823, according to a Court statement. There were visits for timber near Whitianga, hence the name Mahurangi, as early as 1832, and a shore station for timber at Coromandel Harbour in 1835, soon followed by Whitianga, then always Mercury Bay.

The fierce Ngati Tamatera chief Taraia, who had his headquarters at Puru (very seldom with a Te till a recent fiat of the Geographic Board and certainly not based on common usage), could keep himself well supplied with arms, including for settling some old scores at Kati Kati in 184?. Which is what the above has been leading up to.

His canoes went up the Waihou and the Ohinemuri, to the vicinity of Owharoa, where his war party disembarked, and went overland to a Christian pa containing some enemies from former times at Kati Kati, concerned with killing his aunt, on the Kati Kati coast. There was a pre-dawn surprise, and cannibalism. The barely established European Government wanted to bring Taraia to account for the cannibalism, but the well armed Taraia said he would "have a fish or two first." So a Government party went with soldiers to Tauranga Harbour, and established a post on Mount Maunganui, to try to overawe trouble threatening to spread from the Taraia raid.

Just how they were to do the overaweing was not very clear, till, as "Ensign" Best relates, some of them moving by water around Mercury Bay met the Admiralty timber ship Tortoise, which gave them a supply of fireworks including blue lights. Which when used at night on the superstitious inhabitants of Tauranga Harbour produced an absolutely awesome effect, and there was no more sign of trouble.

Owharua had played its part as the disembarking and re-embarking point for Taraia with his cannibal raid, moving between Puru and Kati Kati.

From 1836 to 1840, and just beyond, (when the New Government stopped private buyers paying “the native owners of the soil” quite good prices, in favour of the Government doing all the buying at low prices, and selling to Europeans at high ones, though some under the table deals and “leases” still went on). A great deal of selling went on, often to acquire those valuable creatures, resident Europeans. They meant trade goods, and in the case of munitions, survival.

In any case the great centre for land deals, before the Government clamp-down was Coromandel Harbour with the American William Webster on the island at the Harbour entrance. A number of Europeans set up in and around Coromandel Harbour as farmer-traders to add to the timbermen with their tree-fellers and pit-sawyers and sawmill hands, many of them local tribesmen.

Around 1840 the Thorps established themselves by the Puke junction of the Waihou and Ohinemuri, and around 1843 L.A. McCaskill set up quite a sizable sawmill at Hikutaia.

During the 1840s, from 1841 infant Auckland was a ready market for Maori produce, either through European traders, many established from the early 1830s, and the farmer-traders who had been buying land in the later 1830s. They had quite a fleet of schooners and cutters. The Maori people had quite a little fleet of their own schooners and cutters, as well as canoes, trading their produce direct, including from the extensive wheatfields of the Matamata region, where Wiremu Tamihana of the Ngati-Haua even had flour mills.

From around 1850, the California gold rush of the Forty-Niners and their successors produced a big boom in kauri timber to help build San Francisco and more supplies to a prospering growing Auckland - if not yet growing enough food. That came later in the 1850s, and in the Waikato, whose Maori inhabitants had had a big share in feeding Auckland, had what an observer described as once flourishing cultivations given over to weeds.

The Europeans were becoming no longer an asset but a liability, especially with the Government trying to push land sales at ridiculous prices and reselling to Europeans at proper prices, and pocketing the difference.

In 1852 there had been a short-lived little gold rush at Coromandel Harbour, of not more than 500, (the 5000 in official accounts being from a misprint in the English translation of the German speaking Austrian Hochstetter.) Europeans began to be rather avoided than sought, in the late 1850s, and the Ngati-Tamatera under their main chief Te Hira began to move southwards.

Te Hira, by 1862, was more in the southern lands, in which the Ngati-Tamatera had also established interests, if little residence, with the return of 1830. Well before the Years of the Musket from 1815-28, there had been growing intercommunication, including marriages, via the Owharua back door for the Ngati-Tamatera, then of Kati Kati.

1862 was the year Sir George Grey got the Coromandel Harbour lands reopened as a goldfield, after a more limited area had brought diggers wanting more lands, especially the lands of Paul Marshall or Paora Matutere, and then of his widow Lydia or Riria. With offer of money and threat of War, Grey had Lydia wading out after his boat chest deep, crying out, “Go not forth with a dark heart, O Governor, I too renounce the land.”

So she gave her consent to the lands being ceded for gold-mining, but not sold, though there were dark Maori suspicions that the one could lead to the other, as some years later proved true. Grey had riskily assumed the consent of Te Hira, seeing he did not turn up from away south.

When he did come on the scene - some days afterwards - he found that Grey had left with Lydia one thousand pounds for him, for which he supplied the necessary signature. The economic situation of himself and his people had become desperate. The valuable markets of up to the early 1850s had gone, and from his point of view Europeans were a curse and a liability, to move south from, and hope to get at least a little cash money to supplement subsistence cultivations, and give them certain European goods which had become necessities, by digging for and selling kauri gum, a Maori monopoly since 1845. The Ngati-Tamatera were already tending to concentrate in the Ohinemuri.

Over on the East Coast, once you passed Owharua and looked over that way, there was a different picture. Early timber setups at Mercury Bay from 1836 by 1840 were going to ruin, and an 1854 visit found relics and memories. Then there was regrowth, and in 1862 a large sawmill was set up. Maori and half caste bushmen

and sawmill hands found employment, while gumdiggers found a ready outlet. A trodden and ridden way began to link up Mercury Bay and Tairua and Kati Kati and Tauranga, giving an economic basis for a string of Maori settlements or “kaingas” along the way.

In the Ohinemuri, the McCaskill sawmill, which had been supplemented by a nearby Baines for some years from 1853, had a mixed race labour force, from an originally mainly European one of “waifs and strays” having taken Maori wives, who brought up their children largely to Maoridom. And the original European settlers, especially the Thorps, were old friends, and during 1862 the sons went around with Maori friends they had grown up with, like Nepia te Ngarara, prospecting for gold. That was all right with Te Hira and the Ngati-Tamatera. Prospecting included the enormous and always very visible quartz reef on the Waihi Plains. They probably moved up the Ohinemuri by canoe at least as far as the Owharoa landing.

To get to which again quite an amount of historical background has been taken aboard.

For Hauraki as a whole, 1862 was an interesting year. Following June 23, with land cessions for gold, £4,098 worth of Coromandel gold was mined during the rest of that year. There were around 250 or more diggers to add to the existing European population, meaning too many strangers for Te Hira and his Ngati-Tamatera.

Contrary to some accounts of a “deserted” Coromandel, the coming of the Waikato War in July, 1863, meant no great difference, except to the number of miners. The “Southern Cross” of July 28, 1864, noted 350 Europeans within a 5 miles radius from Coromandel Harbour. These were mostly timbermen and settlers. 81 holders of Miner's rights were now mostly with several companies producing gold, rather than independent diggers, who had gone off to join such military bodies as the Forest Rangers. They included Von Tempsky from a Coromandel gold claim.

Settlers and sawmillers like the Thorps and Mc Caskills were evacuated from the Thames Valley, but not from the East Coast, as if there was a kind of invisible frontier at Owharoa, and a second sawmill was set up at Mercury Bay in 1864. Another invisible frontier was at Hikutaia, defining the Ohinemuri of Te Hira and the Ngati-Tamatera, who as the war went on were joined by refugees. And after the set war was over, with Wiremu Tamihana making his formal surrender before going off heartbroken to his model village at Peria, with its abandoned wheatfields and sawmills, to die, in 1865 the guerrilla war with the Hau Haus got going, and many of these came to the “city of Refuge” in the Ohinemuri, supporting themselves by digging gum.

Because of their influence in particular and Te Hira wanting to hold a last city of refuge for his own people, when the Thames goldfield was opened in 1867, with thousands of diggers, and thousands of pounds for the Maori people of Thames, the Ngati-Tamatera of the Ohinemuri did not follow suit, but merely accelerated making the move into the Ohinemuri for any who had not already done so.

For around eight years, 1867-75, the frontiers of a kind of Little Maoriland, invisibly defined by Owharoa and Hikutaia, would hold, isolated from events moving fast beyond both places.

The southern boundary was at Mount Te Aroha, an old limit of the Marutuahu domains, with the occupying Ngati-Tamatera asserting sovereignty over two or three relict tribelets, with names like Ngati-Tumutumu and Ngati-Rahiri. As for the few Ngati-Hako, they were accorded a piece of land fronting on the Waihou a little south of its junction with the Ohinemuri. The eastern boundary was the main range plus the Ohinemuri valley, more or less as far up as Owharoa, while the western was in a way defined by the Waihou and its continuation past the Ohinemuri junction, known to Europeans as the River Thames, and to Maori people as a name I was told meant double mouth, which it still had in a drawing of 1868. “In a way” meant the domain also extended some distance into the Great Swamp that would become the Hauraki Plains.

The movement of timber and kauri gum people, encouraging the growth of a string of Maori settlements along the East Coast, including to serve travellers on foot or horseback, was powerfully encouraged by the opening of the Thames goldfield on August 1, 1867, with a new centre growing to 5,000 (Mackay) by Christmas. By which time 500 diggers were encamped on a Thorp field not far from present day Paeroa, waiting for the Ohinemuri being added to the lands being successively opened for gold mining, with thousands of diggers paying a pound a year to go to “the native owners of the soil”, a powerful inducement. Chiefs and also commoners at Thames prospered, and chief Taipari sent his daughter Victoria to complete her education at

an English finishing school.

But the sight of hundreds of diggers waiting to invade the Ohinemuri was too unsettling. They were happy with settlers and sawmillers as long time friends, who came back from being evacuated during 1865-6, a very short time before, and visitors as friends of friends, but not invading strangers.

And they had among them many refugee Hau Haus, and quite a number of the Ngati-Tamatera had embraced the cult, like Tukukino, and Hau Haus were not to be bought. Hau Haus would not take money. So James Mackay had to evacuate the disappointed diggers by river steamer, and Te Hira decreed the limit for diggers was Hikutaia, where the domains of the Ngati-Maru of Thames began. The frontier was guarded by armed men with muskets.

Naturally the above disappointed digger looked upon the Ohinemuri as a forbidden Eldorado, with “nuggets as big as potatoes,” and there was pressure. Not military, too expensive. (Thus the hunt for the Hau Hau guerrilla leader Te Kooti would be tacitly called off in 1877 because it was costing too much.) But James Mackay, in charge of the Thames goldfield, was willing to lay out at least some money, and on good security - land.

The people of the Ohinemuri had no objection to goods - “on the slate” - or rather pieces of paper to sign or make a mark, naming lands as security. When there was a tangi, Mackay could be generous. And at what is now Paeroa, there was a hotel with store. The bounty was called raihana, as during the recent Waikato War “friendly” tribes got rations.

The combination of gum digging for some cash money and subsistence cultivation might not have worked, but with raihana the isolated piece of Maori-land had quite a good financial basis to support it for around 8 years like a Maori Trebizond. Beyond were the confiscated lands of the Waikato, and where Te Waharoa had once reigned at Matamata, followed as chief of the Ngati-Haua by his son Wiremu Tamihana, during the 1860s there arose the baronial estate of Josiah Clifton Firth. The King Country was far away to the south, though Te Hira and others did go there at times. Thames newspapers recognized his claim to belong to the King Country, and wrote of the King Country boundary at Hikutaia.

He could live in some state, with a big house commanding an extensive marae, with a staff of riflemen guards. It did not escape Maori notice that they were in a false position, and on July 9, 1870, the Thames Advertiser reported that Te Hira had gone to consult with the Maori King about opening the Ohinemuri goldfield, and the message was - all peace.

And as reported on September 3, 1870, they were willing to sell land to the Government - if they could get a sufficient price. “The Maoris of the Upper Thames are sticking together to get their own price for land, when the big Vogel loan from England arrives. The Maoris are pretty wide awake here.” On September 23 it was reported that only a few diggers of gum - not gold - were allowed on the Hikutaia border, and had to pay, “better pile (money) for Te Hira and party.”

Not long before, there had been Land Court proceedings, establishing just which lands belonged to whom, including Ngati-Tamatera blocks here and there from Moehau blocks at the northern end of the Peninsula to the Ohinemuri lands in the south. Which Ohinemuri lands were noted beyond Hikutaia as being over the border into the “King Country,” making the area an enclave separated by some distance from the King Country beyond the Puniu in the central North Island.

Much of the population of this enclave was concentrated along a kind of axis, starting out east across the river with the settlement of Kerepehi, with many Hau Haus, “on an oasis of slightly elevated land, not far from the south side of the Turua forest; on all other sides a wilderness of raupo swamp, dotted here and there with a few cottages, extends as far as the eye can see” (Thames Advertiser, Sept. 28. 1870.)

On the eastern side of the river, from the junction with the Ohinemuri, said Ohinemuri was quite densely lined with Maori habitations, with at the site of present Paeroa the more imposing European style house of the chief Te Hira with the large marae and nearby hotel and its store for raihana. The dwellings and cultivations went on to the beginning of the Karangahake Gorge, a retired distance up which was a kind of summer house, occupied now and then for withdrawal, by the chief Te Hira, indicating one was approaching the border, which for the practical purpose of leaving canoe transport and going overland by the old back door between the

Ohinemuri and Kati Kati, was at Owharua. With more habitations along the river banks. And the walking tracks also led to "Tauranga and the interior," as mentioned in the Advertiser of October 1, 1870.

As for Kati Kati, where the Ngati-Tamatera had been for over two centuries, there would be relatives still there to visit - Taraia around quarter of a century before had killed only some from one village, and there were several by the seashore. Contrary to some, like Dansey, the traditional Maori lifestyle was intensely urbanised, with water highways by sea and river, and going about and taking heavy and light goods by canoe like those of Auckland and so on now do by cars - with the same word waka used for a car as a canoe. Cook found only one place in New Zealand, in a Poverty Bay area, where people lived in dwellings scattered around the countryside.

Hence the significance of places like Owharua, in the vicinity of which one changed between canoes and overland. This does not seem to have been brought out before, and hence is given some attention.

Incidentally the few "cottages" scattered out in the swamp from the Hau Hau population centre of slightly elevated Kerepehi meant matters like eel traps. Said Kerepehi Hau Hau population centre, being both in King Country and over the river meant that, as described on September 19, 1870, it could be used by the chief Te Moananui, to flee bailiffs to the "Hau Hau side of the Thames River." A message soon arrived to tell him the case was settled, and the services of solicitor Turton were offered. But he was said to be offended, and did not want to pay a lawyer. He was a Ngati-Tamatera living a good deal at Thames, but his main land interests were in the Ohinemuri. Meaning he was not likely to have been getting much of the bounty that came to Thames landowners from the pound per digger per year, for around 5,000 diggers December, 1867 and over 8,000 in August, 1868. Now declining as companies took over from independent diggers, but still very many, as even company ground had to be kept "manned" by holders of Miner's Rights.

Te Moananui next took a step, apparently innocent, which could have acted as a spoiler to signs that the stance of Te Hira in particular had been softening re mining. The Thames Advertiser of July 6, 1870, had reported that, "Te Hira does not seem so bitter against the opening of the country (Ohinemuri)," meaning to gold miners.

Te Moananui's Ohinemuri lands were on the south side of the Ohinemuri near the Karangahake Gorge by the Rotokohu area. The Native Land Court, in assigning titles, had decided these and other Ohinemuri lands were outside the scope of goldfield rules and regulations, being outside the declared goldfields.

Though not outside European influence and visitation and dwelling. Thus on November 19, 1870, there was, "the first recorded sale of livestock in the Ohinemuri at Thorp's farm about 30 miles up the Upper Thames River" (as the river steamers wound around the river, which in Maori eyes was a highway for all.) On July 6, 1870, when talking about Te Hira less bitter, "Talk of putting a guard on the Thames River below Cashell's (farm on the riverside) was dismissed as "mere bounce." (Or a bargaining counter).

Another favourable sign had been noted on August 10, "A contract to a Thames gentleman for construction of a telegraph line from Shortland (Thames) to Tauranga via the Ohinemuri has been accepted."

Though there was a warning note, in case anything occurred to upset the progress being made, as noted on September 30, 1870. The sister of Te Hira, Mere Kuru, "and her amazons," were "ruling the roost" in the Ohinemuri. They would be only too willing to cause trouble, if given an occasion.

On December 6, 1870, there appeared:- "There is talk of Te Moananui taking possession of certain lands against the Court's decision, and letting in diggers." This had, "other Maoris rushing about with fern hooks establishing their claims." meaning boundaries. (The ants' nest was disturbed.)

The Thames Advertiser of December 13 said that Te Moananui taking possession of land was thought to clear the way soon "to the long looked for and much desired opening of the Ohinemuri."

The next year, 1871, saw Vogel loan money for New Zealand and a tremendous peak to Thames gold production, with over a million pounds' worth in a year, enough to buy a battleship.

It did not see the opening of the Ohinemuri for mining. It saw favouring signs reversed. There was a refusal to let the telegraph line go from Thames to Tauranga via the Ohinemuri. Instead it had to be laboriously taken over the dividing range just short of Hikutaia, by a track still called "the Wires."

Thence it could go by the by now well beaten timbermen's coastal roadway via Whangamata, the string of Maori coastal settlements including Waihi, and on to KatiKati and Tauranga, as being outside the influence of

the Ohinemuri people. An interesting anomaly was that in James Mackay's books, where records were being kept of raihana advances against blocks of land, those designated as Ohinemuri extended to the coast and the settlement or kainga of Waihi by the seashore.

In ancient times a chief going along said sandy shore stopped to drink at a rivulet running across the sand, rather small to get down and drink from, but he used a long hollow reed to suck up the water - wai, with hi the sucking noise (or pronounced shee in Old Maori, when Hongi was Shungee (Marsden.) The present site of Waihi, with the last lazy coils of the upper Ohinemuri, was not a place with good water access, the practical limit of heavy navigation upriver being around Owharoa landing place, with the Waihi Plains empty lands between. Gilbert Mair, who died at Thames in 1925, on being shown bones exposed by winds in sand dunes behind the Waihi beach, said they were old friends of his of the Urangawera tribe.

Both the difficult Wires crossing of the range and quite a stretch of the beaten track along the East Coast, from Whangamata and past Waihi to the vicinity of Kati Kati, would have been avoided by using the Ohinemuri's breakthrough of the range, then taking off and crossing the Ohinemuri at Owharoa and taking long used tracks by the old backdoor way to Kati Kati, a much easier and much less expensive proposition.

Both land sales and "ceding" or opening Ohinemuri lands for gold had by Te Moananui been thrown into "the sweet bye and bye," but James Mackay continued to put Government money into the Raihana system. There was growing suspicion, but by 1872, with Thames no longer producing literal tons of gold in a month, though still producing, causing something of a recession, with less of a "trickle down" for the Ohinemuri, raihana became a dangerous prop to support the Ohinemuri economy in the style to which it wished to remain accustomed.

TOWARDS THE OPENING OF THE OHINEMURI.

January 3, 1872, reported a steamer excursion by the Enterprise No. 2, crowded with holiday makers, to the Ohinemuri, where Mere Kuru (and her Amazons) received them with "savage dignity." The river was a highway.

But by now there was indeed a guard on the Thames River at the Hikutaia River. The threat had been more than "mere bounce." The Kiriwera hapu, led by Tukukino and his lieutenant Tinipoaka, had established an armed guard, with access subject to certain conditions.

On February 15, 1872, the news was that Tukukino and Tinipoaka had "violently stopped the mailman Watene who was to take mail on between the Ohinemuri and Tauranga. They said there was no agreement for mail to pass.

Meanwhile the gap was closing between the advance construction camp going over the range by "the Wires," and a telegraph station at Kati Kati from Tauranga, leaving an 8 hour gap by horse rider. (The Ohinemuri was being outflanked for such communication.)

But February 22 saw the probability of a regular river steamer service to the Ohinemuri failing through lack of Government support. (They had other plans - for opening the Ohinemuri by raihana.)

Thus on March 22 there was mention of the big tangi over the remains of Taraia in the Ohinemuri. (It was now a good 30 years since his cannibal raid on Kati Kati. He had always, however, been an influence on the side of the Europeans, who had been so vital to him for munitions of war.)

April 1. (Raihana supplies had been available for Taraia's tangi, with a lavish hand, befitting so great a chief.) There was mention of tangis and Maori cost - "they will cry all their land away."

April 19. "The Maoris are dismayed that the food at the Ohinemuri tangi has been charged against them by the Government. They said if they had known they would have had to pay for it in land they would not have eaten it."

But somehow raihana went on, as a dangerous prop to the Ohinemuri economy. During 1871 the telegraph line closed the gap between Thames and Tauranga, beyond the effective frontier at Owharoa. Stopping mailmen at Hikutaia from going via the Ohinemuri to Tauranga could no longer work.

With raihana a dangerous prop, the surrounded Ohinemuri remained relatively prosperous. Both Te Hira

and his frontier guardsman Tukukino had their horse-drawn vehicles, and we have a description of Te Hira appropriately dressed, with top hat to take off and whip to wave in greeting.

Not only telegraph messages, but East Coast horse and foot traffic went on regardless, to the benefit of the string of small Maori settlements along the coast, like the original Waihi, under its chief Kepa, who had some interesting ploys up his sleeve for the lands beyond the Ngati-Tamatera frontier at Owharoa.

Raihana continued steadily and insidiously during 1873 and 1874.

On April 1, 1874, there were newspaper complaints that the Government had been setting dates for the last 6 years (from 1867-8) for the opening of the Ohinemuri goldfield. (However, much of the raihana undermining had already been done.) An interesting article on the same date started, "A Maori is miserable unless he is living on land he can call his own."

There were rumours of big land purchases by private individuals in the Ohinemuri. Which had been allowable since 1862. But the Government still had to give consent - which did not appear to be forthcoming. One such purchaser was willing to buy Komata land from Tukukino, but that somehow was aborted, making Tukukino a rabid obstructor of roads a little later.

April 21, 1874, noted that even the Hau Haus were willing to sell land, but a prospective purchase by a Mr. Young had been stopped by a telegram from Commissioner James Mackay telling the Magistrate Captain Fraser and his Registrar Puckey "that they must not receive declarations of natives including Hau Haus willing to sell."

Thames Advertiser, April 21, 1874. "Formerly the law used to be that only the Government could purchase land in New Zealand. Following recent Acts, a Government official can allow certain parties to go in and purchase land from the natives, while he can despotically prohibit others."

(By now, around £20,000 of Government money, a huge sum in those days, had "been expended on raihana by James Mackay and his agents, so in this case it was not who wanted to purchase land, but where. The Government did not want any land titles that could interfere with "cession" for gold mining and the entry of diggers.)

Mackay was now close to being able to put a very stark alternative:-Open the Ohinemuri for gold mining by "ceding" lands for that purpose, or lose them altogether. They could legally be forfeit in satisfaction of the debts that had been run up with the lands as security.

Meanwhile complaints continued that the Government was not getting the Ohinemuri lands opened by gold mining, and would not let them be sold. Like Brer Fox, Mackay and the Government 'lay low and said nuffin'."

Soon frontiers would mean nothing, whether out in the great swamp to the west, Mount Te Aroha to the south, Hikutaia to the north, and Owharoa to the east. And not a single soldier would be required. Following in particular the South Island gold rushes of the 1860s, and that of Thames 1867-8, the Europeans numbered hundreds of thousands, and military resistance by an isolated segment of a heavily outnumbered race was obviously futile. In 1874, Te Kooti and his remnant guerrilla band were hunted fugitives, with prices on their heads.

Not that the impish Maori sense of humour could fail to produce a few little surprises. As noted on April 29, 1874, the Government action re stopping Young had set disappointed would-be sellers to quarrelling over the welcome money they had failed to get. So they sent a message to the Government. Could it supply them with rifles to pursue their quarrel? (Meaning, seeing it was the Governments fault.) (request duly filed and supplied to the newspapers as an interesting oddity.)

(Meanwhile Tukukino's poverty and sense of grievance would grow.)

Over on the other side of the range, beyond Owharoa and its back door to the KatiKati lands, the fate of a great part of said lands had just been decided, the Government having allowed the Kati Kati Block, less certain "native reserves," to be bought for a settlement of Ulstermen by their Emigration Agent Vesey Stewart, who selected the land and "secured it from the Government."

As for Hauraki, James Mackay told the "natives" he was angry at them treating with Young, and they ought to sell to the Government, and said the Superintendent of Auckland Province intended to advise the General Government "to place the district under the Immigration and Public Works Act, reserving the right to

the Government to purchase.” And Te Hira disowned the Hau Haus for being willing to sell land to H.C. Young, and was calling a meeting to open “the whole district for leasing,” blocking sales. “A cutter has been chartered at Auckland to take flour and grog to the meeting.” (The source for such quantity would have to be raihana.) It turned out the nearby Ngati-Paoa would sell to the Government only, and got an immediate deposit of £200. The Ngati-Tamatera of Ohinemuri would not sell to anybody, only lease. On June 17, 1874, H. Alley was complaining he had been turned off land he had leased from “the natives,” by the Government.

Meanwhile some land purchases that had already been started by the Government, in 1872, were reopening, as reported on July 17. There was an area of 38,362 acres of Ohinemuri land, and 89,215 acres, with greater part in the existing goldfield and not fit for settlement. Still under negotiation, as for some time past, were 330,622 acres, from the Ohinemuri to Tauranga, 100,000 being in the Ohinemuri, with a third suitable for settlement.

James Mackay now called a big meeting, to bring in all tribes concerned, at Miranda on July 27, 1874. Groups kept arriving, the meeting getting properly under way by August 14, with large and small canoes, some really imposing, and like the “native” whaleboats, carefully looked after.

Participants came from far and near. They included the Ngati-Haua of Matamata, the 14 hapus of the Ngati-Tamatera from the Ohinemuri, the Nga-toki from Waihi on the East Coast (the proper name of that group), Ngati-Pu of Hikutaia, Ngati-Maru of the Thames district, “all the Coromandel tribes,” and others to the number of over 1,000. There was a regular tented encampment, with flags, and really big flags, including a black emblem on a great principal canoe. Beside the whaleboats, there were many ordinary rowboats - “excellent boats, of which the natives are very careful.” There were bodies of men in military array - “fine martial appearance, evidently careful military training,” with small cannon used to greet fresh arrivals.

Who came by water to add to the growing fleet. There were 120 boats of all sizes and builds, 4 big canoes, “some boats really fine specimens of whaleboats by some of the best boatbuilders at the Thames, Auckland and Coromandel.” There were sports, a grand war dance in two armies. Tent shops and hotels were set up, as at the beginning of the Thames goldfield, even a bootmaker. And there were feasts, with piles of food, or rather “great piles of food.” Some came as gifts with arrivals, including a canoe full “dragged as part of the presents for distribution.”

The Thames Advertiser of August 13 had its own idea of where most of the food came from. “Demolishing stores - we wonder how much of these came through Sir Donald - flour, pork, beef, shark and vegetables.” Sir Donald McLean was Minister of Native affairs, to whom Commissioner James Mackay was directly responsible, for the distribution of raihana.

To which what was to be the last great display in the region of independent Maoridom owed its glamour and substance, which during the last few years had been given quite a margin over what could be grown for subsistence, enabling display. And it was at this final high point that Mackay opened the books. The raihana debt, secured against land, was now £23,000 - say that many million in to-day’s money.

The Thames Advertiser of August 21, 1874, referred to the “sneering assertion” that there was “not a block of land from Cape Colville to Te Aroha that has not been treated for. Old Te Hira does not hesitate to say that Ohinemuri must not go as payment for the monies and raihana admitted to have been taken. His fiat is that all those who have received any of the above mentioned payments must find land for it elsewhere.”

The meeting broke up suddenly.

In the next few months Te Hira continued to try to divert the debts, on the Ngati-Tamatera blocks, to the north, saying the Ohinemuri was the last place he had to himself, and he would not let the Ohinemuri go. He would give up the blocks to the north, the Moehau blocks and suchlike (which they no longer occupied.) They could be taken outright to satisfy the debt, rather than “cede” the Ohinemuri lands for gold mining. (He took cession as as good as losing the lands - they would be invaded by strange miners -and they could soon be more than opened for gold-mining (which would in the not too distant future be proved correct.)

But Mackay wanted the Ohinemuri opened for gold, with much European public pressure for that to happen. He called a meeting for November 9, which Te Hira at first evaded. Mackay began calling in individual after individual who had “signed orders for cash etc., giving Ohinemuri as security.” These were

acknowledged. "Te Hira thereupon retired in disgust."

By December 8, 1874, James Mackay was conferring at Thames with various chiefs, "fixing the goldfields boundary, marking off native reserves and arranging other matters for the proposed opening of the Ohinemuri."

Actual signing of an agreement was left over to early 1875.

THE OHINEMURI OPENED: A DIFFERENT ROLE FOR OWHAROA.

Envoi

The signing took place at "Ohinemuri," (soon to be Paeroa, with a sale of sections as a European township,) on February 18, 1875.

This provided for the actual opening to take place on March 5 [3 - E], at a tented Mackaytown, which by the day had around a thousand, 800 odd diggers, the rest businessmen to set up shops and pubs, officials, and spectators.

Even Te Hira had signed, in default of any economically viable choice. Raihana had naturally ceased, with a final figure of £26,000 - the bills would have been heavy for the feasts at Miranda-Whakatiwai over to the west, with sunset on a piece of independent Maoriland, which had been largely supported by said raihana.

A likely source of revenue, judging by Thames, was to have thousands of diggers paying those Miner's Right fees of a pound a year, for "the native owners of the soil."

But the Karangahake ridge, across the river from Mackaytown, with a wild rush over said river on foot and horseback, and then on foot up the steep side of the ridge, soon was showing not "nuggets as big a potatoes," but difficult quartz with little gain, and with April 10 starting a rush to Neavesville nearer Thames, most soon streamed away. A few diehards hung on through the winter at more promising Waitekauri, but a year after the opening, on March 3, 1875, there still had to be any recordable production of gold.

Turning ceding into losing title altogether soon began to be a reality, with Mackay getting his 100,000 acres in the Ohinemuri, with his third considered settleable divided into 50 acre blocks, soon occupied by eager settlers, who soon found 50 rather hilly acres too small, so abandoned or amalgamated leaseholds. The river flatlands where cultivations and dwellings lined the river in particular, had been left as "native reserves."

Which in two or three more years or so became virtually deserted. There was nothing lasting in land sales at Government prices, and the people streamed away across the river into the Piako lands and disappeared.

Te Hira remained, but without his bodyguard of riflemen and beautifully kept fine house. He later lived his last few years in retirement and poverty.

The frontiers had all gone, except that at Hikutaia Tukukino kept up a running feud against roads coming through past Hikutaia, instead of the natural and recognised highway of the river. He wanted to get his financial wrongs over the soured H.C. Young land deal redressed. For years he got no redress and the Government no road, till after a martial show of cavalry going through in March 1880, the County came and put the road through anyway, with protestors showing up vainly every morning and being ignored.

If Owharua was to take any further noticeable place in the scheme of things, it would have to be for gold.

In a New World of Gold

When over 800 diggers were pushing for documents at the long counter in front of the huge Government Marquee at tented Mackaytown from 10 a.m. on March 5 [3 - E], 1875, some had horses hidden in the scrub nearby. Some of these were merely to get across the river more quickly, before scrambling afoot up the steep side of the Karangahake ridge.

But others had thoughts further afield. They had places further afield to look at, often already quite well known.

The "closed" Ohinemuri had always been porous, to friends, and friends of friends, with some even joining in, like Nepia te Ngarara with the Thorp lads at least as early as 1862. Incidentally, said Thorp young men, and

Maori friends, took up a Karangahake claim on March 3, when Maori parties as such were also welcome.

Once it became evident that the Ohinemuri was to be opened, the trickle became a flood.

They did not wait for the agreement being signed on February 18, even less the official opening on March 5 [3 - E], 1875. They were out at the beginning of January, and even lighting fires to “clear” ground for prospecting, in fern and manuka country. (The actual forest would not burn, unless first cut over for kauri, when the heads would be left to dry and generate intense heat when they caught fire.)

By January 7, James Mackay was reported as having them “brought in so as not to compromise the Ohinemuri negotiations.” The diggers did not seem to understand - nobody was trying to stop them on the spot, and instead asked Mackay for “protection” for claims they were pegging. But Mackay could not do that till he had signed agreements.

On January 9, 1875, Native Agent Puckey was saying the only way they would be able to prospect the Ohinemuri was where the prospector had the consent of the aboriginal owner. (Who took the attitude all was already lost.)

January 13 (Advertiser). “Prospectors are out in all directions in spite of the notice issued by the Native Agent, and as the Maoris do not seem to care very much, it will be impossible to prevent the whole country being run over.”

January 16. There was mention of several fires “on the face of the range.” (That conveyed an old message, as it was common practice for besiegers and conquerors to light fires to sweep the countryside and give a threatening, end of the world appearance, as missionaries observed in 1832 at Tauranga.) The same date saw complaints that newcomers were finding what the old-timers had already spotted - illegally, as with the newcomers, before those documents were signed.

“The aboriginal owner” was more interested in a fait accompli than pakeha documentation, and January 16 had, “Te Hira standing by and not interfering.”

By February 4, temporary business premises were being set up at what was to be Paeroa - illegally. With these and prospectors there were 500 in the Ohinemuri by February 15, the prospectors in particular “very scattered.” On the same date, it was noted in the last few days the township of Paeroa had been laid out, well before the February 18 signing of agreement, with some “substantial buildings” by February 17.

What with old-timers of former years, and the new prospectors swarming in and all around, by the time of the official opening on March 3, a good deal was already known about likely spots for gold mining. The night before, horses were hidden in the scrub near Mackaytown - where not “burnt off.” (March 3 was a day of heat and fine black ash into everything, including faces that with sweat and black ash looked like the then popular “nigger minstrels.”) While some used the horses to at least cross the river before tackling the steep side of the Karangahake ridge on foot, others rode off to already known spots at Rotokohu, Waitekauri and the great reef on the Waihi Plains, showing up white, where many had chipped before, and the riders came back in the evening of March 3 to pronounce the great reef “buck “ or barren. Whether anyone had already noticed anything about Owharoa is not on record.

A likely person, in view of subsequent developments, is James Liddell. He appears on an 1875 directory list as living at Thames - he had already had quite a mining career on the West Coast of the South Island, and by the opening of the Ohinemuri seems to have already known his way around.

Thus as reported in the Advertiser, on February 13 James Liddell and others were able to go to an unfrequented place between Ohinemuri valley and Te Aroha. One would need to know something about such country to be able to go to “an unfrequented place.”

Incidentally, he found a broken up camp from around 3 years before, with two smashed rifles, apparently linked with an earlier report of a skull with a bullet hole. Any unknown and unintroduced stranger who had gone prospecting around 1872 armed with a couple of rifles would have been very effectively committing suicide.

If James Liddell had been looking in earlier, he had exactly the right background, from a family trading post in the 1830s, speaking boyhood Maori.

On March 3, he did not feel the need to go further afield than the Karangahake ridge where most went, to take up a claim with J. B. Hannah and Adam Porter, who would in time become quite a name in the Ohinemuri. While in succeeding days the crowd soon thinned, what was registered as Hannah's claim, the Mazeppa, set to work, and continued through the winter, like a few diehards in the then almost inaccessible Waitekauri in the season of mud. A few of the business people who had flocked to tented Mackaytown on March 3 also stayed on, most prominently the McCloughlens.

On March 6, another matter was brought up. With the opening of the Ohinemuri for gold, "For years the Government have endeavoured to get leave to make a road through the Ohinemuri country to Tauranga. The working parties have, time after time, been stopped by natives, and for some time nothing could be done except by employing friendly natives on the sly. Now there is abundant labour in the district, and whether Ohinemuri goldfield or not, a road between the districts of Thames and Tauranga is urgently required."

They already had something between Paeroa and Mackaytown. (Between Paeroa and Thames there were the river steamers.)

The great reef on the Waihi Plains was written off for the time being, but outside the Karangahake ridge gold was reported up the Waitawheta and up the Waitekauri, where quite a rush was reported, "on a large scale," by March 9. However, with rain the way soon became impassable to Waitekauri for horses, and most of the diggers still in the Ohinemuri were glad to gather at Mackaytown to hear the stories of those who claimed prior discoveries back into the early 1860s, at a long Warden's Court Session.

Some places were named, others merely indicated. Where Nepia te Ngarara and the Thorp lads found definite gold in 1863 was at Rotokohu. This was below the Gorge. Thomas Baird who came in 1868 said John Thorp told him "where he got gold in the Ohinemuri River above the Gorge, on the left hand side of the river." (Whether true left, looking downriver, or looking upriver, the first place to be able to find reef outcrops above the Gorge would be Owharoa.)

The earliest date was given by John Wullanora Thorp, April 1862, when he went with one of the "native owners to prospect, and found gold at Rotokohu. They also prospected Waitawheta, and subsequently he had natives prospecting all about the district. Kepia te Ngarara was one amongst others. They prospected in Rotokohu, Waitawheta, Waitekauri and elsewhere, and got some loose gold and specimens. The best they got at Waitekauri."

One "Long Tom," of a prospecting foray in the summer of late 1867, mentioning up the Gorge, "traced many reefs." Next place he mentioned was "the undulating table land of Waihi. Here we met with many prospecting holes."

At this stage in March 1875, Owharoa does not seem to have aroused any specific interest, of which there was plenty for nearby Waitekauri. It was, "Waitekauri Every Time," as the song sang. Even if only a few diehards were able and willing to stick it out there for the winter.

A reduced number of claims continued to be worked at Karangahake, and a much reduced Mackaytown therefore carried on. Supplies came through Paeroa with its river steamer landing. At the public auction on 27th February 50 lots had been sold. Mackaytown had been able to obtain 9 publican's licences under goldfield regulations, but not Paeroa, as being outside the declared goldfield. It was therefore decided to enlarge the goldfields boundary. The original hotel and store, which had prospered on raihana, was not affected.

On March 16 there was news that James Mackay had talked with Native Minister Sir Donald McLean. A road was to be started at once to connect "Tauranga with the Thames," and Sir Donald made £700 immediately available to cut a cattle track between Kati Kati and Tauranga.

"Captain Turner and party of surveyors are to be over this week to lay off the toads, and the work is to be let in small contracts. This will keep a large number of men in the district who would otherwise leave for lack of money."

(Gold was not yet yielding any returns, from the claims being worked.)

Dates refer to "Thames Advertiser."

March 19. Sir Donald McLean announced they had already commenced the survey. James Mackay met Captain Turner and the surveyors, who promised to have a Waitekauri track ready for the prospectors and gum

diggers.

March 22. Commissioner James Mackay and Captain Turner of the Armed Constabulary had arrived back from Kati Kati, having made a horseback reconnaissance re the most suitable place for a road, leaving the main track and examining. (The main track would be the long established back door from Kati Kati to the Ohinemuri, hitting the river in the Owharua area.) They were then examining what was existing from the Puke main steamer landing at the junction of the Waihou and Ohinemuri, to the Karangahake Gorge. (Smaller steamers could go up the Ohinemuri as far as the Paeroa landing.) "On the trip from Kati Kati Mr. Turner dropped on a 6 foot reef in mullocky formation."

This was possibly in the Owharua area, as there was talk later of Owharua gold in a clayey (or "mullocky") formation.

The pack track to Waitekauri was to be cut immediately, on a shorter route from Paeroa.

March 23. There was need for a mail service Tauranga-Ohinemuri, but it was put off for the time being by McLean.

March 24. Surveyors were to start that morning on the Waitekauri track, to start from a point between Paeroa and Mackaytown. (Thus well north of the Karangahake Gorge)

March 25. As regards laying out the main road between Paeroa and Tauranga, Mr. Turner had eliminated two river crossings approaching Mackaytown, going round a river bend by what became known as Turner's Hill.

The day before, McCarthy had also started to survey the pack track to Waitekauri, to enable Captain Turner to estimate the cost of making the track. (Which would involve a good deal of cutting and felling.)

March 26. Engineer McLaren had finished surveying 3 water races, one up the Waitawheta, one for the junction of the Waitawheta and Ohinemuri, and one on the Ohinemuri. It was understood the holders of the "Prospectors' claim," Karangahake, would at once "commence the erection of a crushing mill," or battery. (One of the Karangahake claims was called Rising Sun. It would not become a producer under that name, which would some years later be used at Owharua).

March 31. Roadmen had started operations on the new road section at Turner's Hill approaching Mackaytown from Paeroa.

April 1, 1875. James Mackay had with Captain Turner "laid off the dray route from Kati Kati to Ohinemuri." It would be "rather expensive to construct through the Ohinemuri Gorge. The line will connect with the Waitawheta and Waitekauri." (It was found more practicable to have a small spur road from Mackaytown to the Waitawheta, the main route by passing the main Gorge formation by going from Mackaytown over the Rahu hill and dropping again past the great cliffs, which would be conquered years later.) Mackay and Turner went off on route Thames-Hamilton. (Tukukino's obstruction at Komata would see to it that coaches did not begin to get through till 1881, affecting Thames-Tauranga for a similar period at the Komata obstruction point.)

April 8. 60 men were making the Turner's hill diversion near Mackay-town, which the two river crossings would otherwise make unapproachable in winter. (Have examined the two crossings, which show they carried much traffic when a thousand gathered at Mackaytown for the opening on March 3.)

April 10. "New Goldfield proclaimed. Rush to Tairua." (Meant what was soon called Neavesville behind Puriri and looking down into the Tairua valley, hence given official name Tairua goldfield for years.)

April 19. Getting on for two dozen claims remained at work in the Ohinemuri, while the "Prospectors' Claim" at Karangahake had the ground next to it formed into a Company.

April 22, 1875. The pack track was now cut (trees felled and underbrush cleared) to the claims at Waitekauri, some 7 or 8 miles, by "Mr. R.B. McCartrie, surveyor, and party of natives." "It requires to be widened and graded at several points.

There was suggestion of another route. "It would be a useful work to have the track cut from the spur at Mackaytown to the claims at Waitekauri. The miners believe the run of gold is in that direction, and the cutting of a track would promote prospecting."

(This would also run closer to Owharua.)

Meanwhile numbers continued to fall. "The exodus to Tairua still continues and is draining the place rapidly of all bone and sinew." This applied even to Waitekauri, which was becoming more and more muddily inaccessible.

April 24 saw the exodus continuing. A trial 2 tons from Karangahake sent as a trial to a Thames battery gave four and a quarter ounces of gold. Nothing immediate seemed to be happening re a battery for Karangahake. Some accounts say Karangahake produced no gold at this period, overlooking such test parcels. A second test at Thames got one ounce 8 pennyweights from 1 ton.

By April 29 torrential rain was driving miners from the heights of Neavesville down to Puriri. The four miles between Paeroa and Mackaytown stopped a bus service, and an official party had to walk through deep mud.

April 30, 1875. 19 miles of the Tauranga-Katikati road had already been done, the remaining 15 miles to Bowentown at the northern heads of Tauranga Harbour and the northern tip of Matakana Island being delayed to give work to Vesey Stewart's Ulster immigrants when they arrived around August or September. (Apparently Bowentown was to give at least small vessel water access handy to the KatiKati Ulster settlement. (This was really a branch off the part with which the new Ohinemuri goldfield was most concerned, between Kati Kati and said Ohinemuri.)

This was mentioned next on April 30. It was expected that Katikati-Mackaytown would be expensive to form, particularly through the Karangahake gorge, where there would be a large quantity of heavy rock work. Bridging would be trifling, and the whole distance was thought not to exceed 24 miles.

Re native difficulty, "Sir Donald McLean has caused these sorts of annoyances to vanish. Only a few short years ago it was matter of life and death to cross from Katikati to Ohinemuri, a man attempting it being stripped by the natives some years ago and sent back to Katikati au natural, it being thought he owed his life to a native of interest in the party."

(Evidently the Owharoa eastern frontier was not unguarded.)

May 1. Driven from the "Tairua" field by torrential rain on the hostile forested heights, some miners returned to Ohinemuri, where things had become fairly settled around Paeroa and Mackaytown and Karangahake, though it was the diehard type who were lasting out the winter at Waitekauri, where conditions were not much different from Neavesville on top of the ranges behind Puriri, where a few diehards were also lasting out the winter, in somewhat greater numbers due to one or two well organised companies formed and supplied by Thames, and already taking steps to bring in machinery, while the Ohinemuri was complaining about not having any batteries to process promising prospects, with some tunnels already in 100 to 160 feet. It was at and around Karangahake that there were the most diggers, while the greatest amount of publicity in Thames newspapers was for "Tairua" up in the ranges. However, May 7 reported more men returning from "Tairua" to Thames and the Ohinemuri.

May 10. The Ohinemuri prospectors met and appointed A.J. Thorp, J. Corbett and J. Smith to go to Thames with power to negotiate the purchase of a battery on behalf of the "Prospectors' Claim." The Meeting was chaired by Adam Porter, who was with J.B. Hannah and James Liddell on the Mazeppa, which Porter said was costing £60 a week to run, and other mines in proportion. (A battery would mean returns from processing and sale of gold.)

May 12 saw a party sluicing at Waitekauri "making wages," as that way they got flake gold in saleable form.

May 15 found the Ohinemuri in flood, cutting off horse and cart traffic between Paeroa and Mackaytown, as the Turner's Hill deviation round the big bend had not yet been finished.

There was talk of the Government starting the main road from the Puke junction of the Waihou and Ohinemuri to Kati Kati, to join the way to Tauranga, to be "ready for traffic next summer." The comment was, "I have no doubt that the work will be commenced as soon as the rainy season fairly sets in."

May 14. There was a report of a new gold discovery between Ohinemuri and Waihi. Gold in pipe clay had been reported earlier by Stewart and others. The locality was kept secret, it was thought due to it being on a "native reserve."

May 14 Building was going on at both Paeroa and Mackaytown. F. Lipsey was about to erect a substantial hotel at Mackaytown South, but delayed by uncertainty about the actual line the main road to Katikati (and Tauranga) was going to take in that vicinity.

May 22. The Waitekauri access had been given priority, but it was already so deep in mud that gold bearing quartz for processing at Thames could be got out only by packhorses with two hundredweight loads, and it was expected that soon this would be shut down for the winter.

May 24. Important battery owner Bleazard and two companions struggled through to Waitekauri and saw the reef of the original Dan Leahy. "Bleazard thinks very highly of Waitekauri district and the Dan Leahy line of reef." (He could bring finance and skill.)

May 28. A Mr. Foley rode from Tauranga along the telegraph line route, on the well beaten trail between Tauranga and Kati Kati and Whangamata and Tairua and Mercury Bay. Near Tairua he turned in towards Neavesville at the Upper Landing (now Hikuai), and up to the top of the range at Neavesville and down to Puriri. It was he who made the observation about this well travelled East Coast route that, "Accommodation can be obtained every seven or eight miles, native kaingas being very numerous." Things had been that way along the busy and co-operative East Coast, with its timber and gum, for quite a number of years now. Waihi remained a coastal settlement.

On May 31 with a gale a number of "calico houses," of canvas over wooden frames came to grief. There was flooding, but by now the Turners's hill deviation was already ready for packhorses. But J.B. Hannah, manager of the busy Mazeppa mine, had by now a stout slab hut with store and blacksmith's shop. Things were settling in at Karangahake.

June 10. There was a new rush of the spare population of Mackaytown to a fern flat 4 miles away in the direction of Waihi, for gold in pipe-clay. This was thought to be the secret place of Stewart and party, for which numerous parties had searched. Stewart had said that if he had had to peg out right away, he might not be properly on the lead for which he was searching. Frosts had had an apparently useful effect.

On the same date it was noted that the Auckland Provincial Government had thought at first the General Government in Wellington would pay for the way from Puke-Paeroa towards Tauranga, but it was told they would get the revenue from Ohinemuri gold, so they would have to pay for the road. Meanwhile men engaged on the work had been three months without pay. The Provincial Government had put £1,800 on the estimates, but then found they would need from £3,000 to £4,800. The men had been fed by promissory vouchers redeemable at Paeroa and Mackaytown stores.

June 11. The rush to Fern Flat was "on the other side of the Ohinemuri crossing on the Tauranga road," meaning Owharoa. The important "Prospectors' Claim was pegged there by William Moore, Robert Brown, B.H. Price and F.W. Hatch. They sent a test crushing of 95 pounds to the Tramway battery at Grahamstown (north Thames), getting 5 grains over half an ounce. (That meant a rich 12 ounces to the ton.) The quartz "leader" was 23 feet thick, of blue quartz impregnated with mundic (iron sulphide), and no visible gold. Now that there was likely to be considerable traffic on that part of the road, it was imperative and the duty of the Government for a wire rope to be stretched across the river. There had already been four accidents at the crossing in a week. (So Owharoa as such began.)

OWHAROA AND GOLD - FIRST OHINEMURI BATTERY?

June 14, 1875 A severe winter storm caused an exodus of most from the "Tairua" goldfield on top of the dividing range behind Puriri. James Liddell had been up there on a Consolation claim, while J.B. Hannah carried on as manager of the Mazeppa at Karangahake. That would be a frequent pattern for James Liddell, who usually preferred pushing on and making fresh finds, then leaving someone in charge or disposing of his interest outright. He would shortly appear in the Waitekauri area, and later at Owharoa.

Which was now getting some rather curious publicity in the Advertiser of June 14. Stewart, who had had tests made of gold in pipeclay from somewhere in the Ohinemuri, was able to get 105 ounces of gold, after disposing of which he shot off to Sydney, Australia.

"We cannot vouch for the truth of this statement, but he certainly sold two parcels, amounting in the

aggregate to about 120 ounces, to the Bank of Australasia. When the parcels of pipeclay were crushed publicly, with magnificent results, the police wanted the provisions of the Quartz Crushing Machines Regulation Act fully complied with, but Stewart obstinately refused to state the locality."

Plausibility was given to his not divulging the locality "from the fact that there are at present two floating native reserves over the Ohinemuri goldfield," the Mataora or the Waihi reserves.

(Beyond Owharoa as eastern frontier for Te Hira, the limits of the Ohinemuri goldfield as recently declared in early 1875, had included the lands beyond to the Waihi seaside settlement, where chief Kepa did a shrewd deal with James Mackay, raising no objection to a tidy Ohinemuri goldfield taking in the ultimate headwaters of the Ohinemuri and to the sea - except that there was a deliberately vaguely defined "native reserve" of some thousand acres - greatly more or greatly less, with continual niggling and shifting of pegs by Kepa and his people. Long before 1881 the "floating reserve," as the newspapers dubbed it, had somehow drifted inland some seven miles, to cover the great white outcrop of the Martha quartz reef, around which as early as 1875 there were many prospecting holes, as mentioned a little above.) (And Kepa had probably earlier considered up to the Owharoa frontier his own domain of empty lands or hinterland.)

On the other hand, the June 14 Advertiser said it had made its own enquiries about Stewart. Before the opening of the Ohinemuri (March 3, 1875), Stewart had been a shift boss at the Union Beach claim, Coromandel, "formerly the Green Harp, of swindling notoriety." (Gold "value" in what follows means proportion of silver, which was high in the Ohinemuri, from 3 or 5 to as much as 30 to one, and low at Coromandel, with gold around 700 out of 1000.) "It is a remarkable fact that the gold produced from Stewart's pipeclay crushings, and that of the gold produced by the Union Beach specimens, corresponds accurately."

(In any case, gold had now been definitely uncovered, and work started, on the Fern Flat at Owharoa.)

June 17. Money had at last come for the roadmakers on the main road to Tauranga to cover what was owing. "All work has been stopped pending fresh arrangements. The road is not yet finished, and if left to itself will soon go to ruin. The banks are beginning to slip already owing to the late rains, and the water tables are choked. The expenditure of a little more money now would make a first class road. There is any amount of stone stacked, which only requires breaking, and a gravel bed abuts on the road." (Naturally delay took over.)

June 22. A party went over from Thames to Kati Kati to look at where Ulster settlers would soon arrive by Carisbrook Castle. Disembarked with riding horses at Puke landing, found Paeroa "quite a respectable township" by this time. Trusted to good horses to ford the Ohinemuri, and on the other side of the ranges, from Owharoa to Kati Kati (by the old back door with its long established trail) found "the road very good, the only obstacles a few creeks."

The Ohinemuri "Prospectors" at Karangahake had started to clear a track to a machine site for a battery. They intended to land the plant from Thames as far up the river as possible, then sledge it with bullocks to Noble's. Then it would be lowered down a steep incline with block and tackle, and the bullocks would then drag it a short distance along the bank of the river to the machine site.

June 28. There were at least half a dozen to a dozen parties of diehards up the Waitekauri, headed by Dan Leahy the original and party, "all in good spirits and ready to hang on." The roadway was "very bad in places."

July 2. The "Ohinemuri Prospectors" had got the machinery for crushing some 5 miles above Paeroa. "As far as weather and roads permit, every exertion will probably be made."

July 9. Arrangements had been come to between the shareholders of the Waitekauri Coy. and Mr. Bleazard for the latter to erect a 40 stamp battery on the spot. The machinery, it was remarked, would do much for Waitekauri and claims on the Dan Leahy reef.

July 10. Only two or three parties were now working at Karangahake, the others had got protection and the men had left. The Mazeppa had just been advertising in Thames for a mine manager to replace J.B. Hannah, but nothing more was heard. Karangahake was now pronounced disappointing - "could not have been foreseen." As for J.B. Hannah, by July 16 he was mine manager of the Young mine at Neavesville ("Tairua").

July 22. The "Prospectors" were pushing on work for erection of machinery (battery) The Mazeppa Gold Mining Company had a meeting in Thames, chaired by Adam Porter, to talk amalgamation with several adjoining claims, with a view to erecting machinery. McCloughlen of a Mackaytown store was a director.

“The Waitekauri claims have perfected arrangements for amalgamation and the erection of machinery. “With spring comparative inactivity ought to give place to bustle. The district during nearly 5 months has fallen short of what was expected.”

July 26-7 had from Aug. 3, 50 acre leases on Ohinemuri ceded goldfields lands for settlers on hills, the flats being in “native reserves.”

July 27. Thames battery owner Bleazard returned from Waitekauri after making arrangements for the erection of a battery, making a tramway connecting with the Leahy mine, constructing a water race and so on.

August 4. 41 applications had been made for 50 acre leases.

It was mentioned that on 3rd September the Ohinemuri goldfield had been opened 6 months, but with the exception of a few trial crushings, “Ohinemuri has not yet figured as a gold-producing district.” Of 1200 to 1300 miner's rights issued, not 200 were now being used on the Ohinemuri field. “Of the 20 or 30 licences taken out for public houses, not a tithe are now being exercised, and the buildings in which such licences were permitted to operate are now closed, monuments of the too confident nature of the owners”.

Sept. 28. Adam Porter, with prominent Thames contractors like Gibbons, Darrow and Souter, plus teamster “the immortal Harry Rawden,” went to revive things, going from Thames by steamboat and by land from Paeroa to Karangahake hill to examine reefs “re erecting machinery.” (The earlier attempt had been bogged down for the winter, with the mining enterprise it was for apparently abandoned.)

But the most important part of their mission had to do with Waitekauri, where the erection of the battery “was going on apace,” so far as could be done on the spot from the forest. The great bed plates for the stampers, of 3 great baulks of timber, each 44 feet long by 2 feet square, were ready to be placed in position. But the heavy iron machinery had to be brought in from outside, and an alternative to the existing road or whatever, with its steep and “very bad” stretches of deep mud was a barrier.

With the advancing spring, they found 50 prospectors at work on interesting prospects in the creeks between Mackaytown and Waitekauri. Also useful local knowledge. “An almost level track has been found between Macakytown and Waitekauri mill site, length about 7 miles.” It was to be immediately cleared for foot passengers, “and more than half of it will form the best and shortest route to Tauranga, avoiding the mountainous country about the gorge.”

Meanwhile some agricultural settlers had already arrived at Rotokohu and were planting potatoes.

October 6, 1875. “Arrangements will shortly be perfected for the erection of a battery at Karangahake.”

A meeting of the Waitekauri Gold Mining Company at Thames elected directors including Robt. Bleazard, and resolved that the only possible road to Waitekauri “to be available for the transit of machinery and heavy traffic is the road leading eastward to the Tarariki Creek and along the Puketea or coal track, about 5 1/2 miles.” Arrangements were made to blaze the route and get £300 promised by the Provincial Government to make such access. Committee set up.

Oct. 14. Committee sent out exploring party with a Maori, Watene, and found a route for a dray road which teamster contractor Harry Rawden went over and said if the bush was cleared he would be prepared to take a two horse dray with a ton along that route. A detailed description of the way from Mackaytown included:- “In the open country somewhere in the vicinity of the Owharoa Block will probably be found the best point for the divergence of an easy road over the Waihi Plains towards Kati Kati, the Stewart settlement (Ulstermen), and Tauranga.” (Owharoa was in a key position.)

(It sounded very much like the route the 50 prospectors had worked out.) It was, “generally very level, broken only here and there by small gully or watercourse.”

(So far work on the “main road” had been confined to between Paeroa and Mackaytown, especially the Turner's hill deviation, and perhaps Puke-Paeroa, with the prospect of going through the Karangahake Gorge dauntingly expensive.

October 16 reported men blazing the new track, while there was a heavy gold rush to Waitekauri, and heavier if there had been more people in the Ohinemuri. Quartz was reported running 10 ounces to the ton.

October 18. Telegram from Sir George Grey, Superintendent of Auckland Province, saying authority

would be given at once for the necessary expenditure to make the track to Waitekauri and enable Messrs. Brown and Bleazard to get up their machinery to the Waitekauri battery site. Sir George had got in first before deputations reached him.

October 22 reported little work at Karangahake, as claim holders were waiting to see what the battery folks were going to do. A rush continued to Waitekauri, with strangers as well as those already in the Ohinemuri. October 25 reported more claims taken up at Waitekauri. More reports came in next few days, of the find in the Nova Scotia, registered as the Young Colonial, in which Liddells seem to have had a hand.

October 26. "Mr. J.M. McLaren, District Engineer, has been instructed to proceed with the Waitekauri Track without delay." There were further reports of gold at Waitekauri, at a Welcome claim.

October 28 reported Waitekauri claims being pegged daily, "but "Karangahake languishing for want of machinery," By November 2 Waitekauri reported a population of over 100. Waitekauri was wanting its road from Paeroa along the existing 8 mile pack track, rather than the more level route from Mackaytown it said meant 14 miles. District Engineer McLaren was going by the Mackaytown route blazed to Waitekauri, returning by the pack track to Paeroa, to compare.

November 5. Negotiations for a battery for the Karangahake Gold Mining Company had been completed, with tenders for the conveyance and erection of machinery the following week, and levels to be taken meanwhile for a water race. Waitekauri miners were divided over road route.

(The Ohinemuri Company which had made an abortive attempt to get a battery through to Karangahake had run out of money and disappeared.)

November 15, 1875 At Waitekauri, sawyers on timber contracts for the big Brown and Bleazard battery now had 120,000 feet cut ready for use, all kauri. There was movement with all the new claimholders around.

November 20. Karangahake Gold Mining Company was having surveys made for carting and erecting battery machinery.

A reinforcement of Armed Constabulary was now expected to work on the construction of the main road from Mackaytown on to Tauranga.

December 18. There was news of a recent gold find 3 miles up the Ohinemuri from Mackaytown, the Prospectors' Claim being called the Smile of fortune. (A name that would long endure at Owharoa). Others pegged around it. "The Prospectors have taken up a machine site and intend to erect a battery, taking water from the Te Ari Creek, which enters the Ohinemuri at the back of the spur, on its southern bank." There were "visits by Thames notabilities," including Hunt and contractor Darrow, re erecting a battery on certain conditions.

Conditions at Owharoa soon became tough for "the recent Ohinemuri rush," as reported on December 22. "The weather has been awful, and a continuous downpour for the last two days has flooded the Ohinemuri and rendered the smaller creeks almost impassable. The few that had reached the site have had to take shelter in the Prospectors' camp, and those who after pegging out remained on the south side of the Ohinemuri are unable to recross to obtain provisions." (The brief Fern Flat rush a few months before had not resulted in the Government, General or Provincial, putting a wire rope over.)

"Besides the Prospectors' Claim, the Star of Ohinemuri (Thorp and party) is the only one on which work has been started. Peggers on the south side of the Ohinemuri on the line of reef include Cameron and party, Murphy and party, and Darrow and party."

"The greater part of the machinery for the Karangahake Gold Mining Company battery has been landed, and is awaiting conveyance to the site."

(The floods would make that difficult for the time being. A settler already established at the Waitawheta, Charles Franklyn, lost employee Nathan Partington by drowning in the flooded Ohinemuri.)

January 1, 1876. "The present track to Waitekauri is in a frightful state and almost impassable," A storekeeper, "Mr. Goonan of Paeroa, had to put men on to repair the worst places at his own expense. The Government is certainly doing its best to open a Mackaytown-Waitekauri track, but seems to have entirely forgotten the track leading from Paeroa to the mines."

January 5 reported a sudden downpour.

January 11. The foundation of the Karangahake Gold Mining Company's battery had been laid down and the bed log was ready to be placed in position, "but we think the water race will not be completed in time, as contract is not yet let."

A meeting at Karangahake passed a resolution to go to Superintendent Grey, that the Mackaytown-Waitekauri road needed to be finished a month from date, or they would be delayed a year. Also the present pack track needed to be repaired at once, as it was in "a frightful state."

January 17. Waitekauri access from Mackaytown was being pushed vigorously, with a number of men already put in and fresh contracts to be let immediately, and present contractors to be stirred up.

January 18. Teamster Harry Rawden, who had the "contract for carting machinery for the Waitekauri Coy. from the landing at Paeroa to the battery site, was ready to start as soon as the road was available, with a sufficient number of teams to complete the contract within a month.

January 19. "The weather broke and has been awful at the Ohinemuri." (The traditional "January floods." Which had been preceded by December ones.)

January 20, 1876. A Thames Advertiser correspondent visited the new find at Owcharoa. "The road or track follows the north bank of the Ohinemuri and about 4 miles. The first portion is cut through the forest, well watered by rivulets. We saw a party of Armed Constabulary at work on the road, the mosquitos a terror. The Government is clothing them in Mosgiel tweed, as thick as a deal board, with the thermometer 90 in the shade." (Fahrenheit, the uniforms thick blue serge.) Their coats are buttoned to their throats and they march in close order."

After one and a half hours they came to the new rush, and descending a bluff came to the Prospectors' Claim. "The Ohinemuri gambols down its tolerably steep bed within 70 yards of the almost naked rock that holds the reefs and leaders of the claim. It reminds me of the old Shotover. A small cascade tumbles down the water-worn face of the rock, on the left of which the men have laid bare a nice looking reef about 20 inches wide. Away to the left there is one about 10 feet wide, from which good prospects have been obtained." There was a band between one to four feet wide "from which excellent prospects were panned."

The Prospectors had commenced two adits, one on the side of the waterfall, "from which should judge 250 feet of backs may be obtained. There is scarcely a limit on available water power, and the quartz can be seen from the drive to the battery site. Several claims are pegged out around."

There was a marked contrast between the two banks of the Ohinemuri. On the south side there was "a wide expanse of fern, covering undulating plains and some low hills, with only an occasional patch of bush to break the monotony; while on the north the hills rise grandly, piled one above the other and covered with heavy timber to the river bank. Far away on the south coast the extreme point of the Kati Kati settlement is seen on the way to Tauranga - when will the road be finished connecting them with the Thames?"

January 22. Captain Newall was in charge of the Armed Constabulary party working on the Mackaytown-Waitekauri road.

There had been a seventh day of bad weather, and the Ohinemuri countryside was flooded, communications with Mackaytown being stopped.

January 27. The Ohinemuri still had unsettled weather. McNeill and party had finished blazing "the new Paeroa-Waitekauri track." The new line for the pack track avoided the old line's frequent crossings of the Tarariki creek near Paeroa, "which is impassable when flooded. The packers were unable to get out last Thursday and Friday, owing to a heavy fresh, and the men at Waitekauri were reduced to a state of semi-starvation." This was a somewhat altered route for the pack track, not the main road to Tauranga.

Mention was made of Owcharoa claims Star of Ohinemuri, Mint (Owcharoa No. 2, north of the Prospectors' Claim). The Smile of Fortune, Owcharoa, decided to form a company, with Mr. Horsbrugh of Thames legal manager, at Thames.

February 1. The Karangahake Gold Mining Company had erected its battery shed, awaiting the machinery.

February 5. The condition of Ohinemuri roads was improving with drier weather. "Mr. George Fisher has

started to run a bus between Paeroa and MACKAYTOWN. Between the Puke landing and Paeroa this is not possible, as there are some bad places in the road.”

February 7 “The road to the Karangahake Gold Mining Company's machine site is now finished, and the carters hope to get all the machinery on the ground if it keeps fine.”

February 11. A Warden's Court sitting for Ohinemuri had an application for a mining lease named Morning Light at Owharoa, south of the Smile of Fortune, on the opposite side of the river. The Smile of Fortune was taking in an old Mount Pleasant claim.

District Engineer McLaren was on the spot, and 120 men were now employed on the Waitekauri track to be a dray road, besides the Armed Constabulary men and existing contractors. “It is expected carting will be commenced in less than a week, if the weather keeps fine.”

(Brown and Bleazard of Thames were putting big money into the big Waitekauri battery.)

February 14, 1876. Owharoa had Warden and Magistrate Captain William Fraser, Captain Newall of the Armed Constabulary, and District Engineer McLaren prospecting for a track to the Prospectors' Claim. A number of men had blazed a line more direct than the present track, but McLaren condemned it as a large amount of side-cutting involved would be expensive earthworking. Captains Fraser and Newall then started from the camp towards the Waitekauri road in one direction, and Mr. McLaren in another, and the two parties came out about 10 chains apart. Both reported good tracks. Captain Fraser went in again, and after inspecting the two new lines, “he prospected the country between them, and hit on a line he considers an improvement on both.” Mr. McLaren was to leave instructions for work to be started on that line on the morning of Monday the 14th.

Of the Owharoa mines, the Smile of Fortune was doing underground development. The Annie had a magnificent show of rough gold, and 20 pounds of the stone mixed with sandstone (altered andesite) was to be tested in Thames.

The reporter mentioned catching New Zealand trout and cooking them at the junction of the Waitekauri and Owharoa tracks.

He also mentioned that the Mackaytown-Waitekauri cartage track was now ready for traffic, “but the carters have not put in an appearance.”

February 15. Meanwhile a second instalment of 20 tons of machinery for the Waitekauri Coy. had been forwarded to a landing above Paeroa, making 47 tons with 27 already landed. A third and last shipment was due that week on Monday the 14th February. Mr. Rawden had the contract for conveying the machinery from the landing to the battery site, and his drays had already been sent up, with the teams of horses to follow. An early start was imperative, as the contractor was bound by a clause that if the whole of the plant was not on the battery site by the end of March, “the Company will, at the contractor's risk and expense, put on extra teams for conveying it there.” The road was in good practicable order, but it was necessary to take the earliest advantage of the fine weather.

February 19. Rawden's carters had made a start to transport machinery to Waitekauri, but the first load was left about 5 miles on from Mackaytown “The men say the road turns too sharply and they cannot get the horses to pull together. Also the bridges are not strong enough. It is unfortunate that this discovery was not made a few days ago, when the road-men could have been put on to make the necessary alterations.”

The road to Waitekauri money had all been expended or was to be by February 17, and the Government had not signified any intention of a further grant, so men had had to be knocked off and the road left comparatively useless.

Mr. Darrow came up, and the battery for the Karangahake Gold Mining and Quartz Crushing Company was to be pushed on as fast as possible. The tramway to connect the mine with the battery had not yet been started. The contract for the water race went to Messrs. Fitzpatrick and Co., who had the contract for erecting the battery.

“The Waitekauri sawyers have finished a contract for sawing 200,000 feet. We believe another contract will shortly be let, as the first lot will not be sufficient to complete the erection of battery, tramway and water race.”

February 21. The Mackaytown-Waitekauri road had been found not fit for the transport of heavy machinery, "and Mr. H. Rawden had to give up, though not easily deterred, and he had accomplished many difficult tasks of a similar character at the Thames."

There was praise for the enterprise of Brown and Bleazard. Waitekauri was an untried field, but they had launched their capital on the prospects of some reefs, and had gone in for erecting "a 40 stamper battery, tramways, and other appliances, of which the total cost will be not less than £12,000."

"We are informed by Brown and Bleazard, that if the Government place 10 good men at their disposal they will themselves put on men, and will see that the road is not only made practicable, but kept in practicable order until the heavy machinery is transported - and notwithstanding delay already, have the whole of the machinery on the field by the end of March."

The men discharged from the Waitekauri road works had all returned to Thames.

February 22. "The deadlock re the conveyance of the Waitekauri Coy's. machinery has been resolved. Mr. J. McLaren (on behalf of the Government) has agreed to keep 10 picked men employed to alter and repair the road." "Under these circumstances, Mr. Rawden, the contractor for the conveyance of machinery, resumes work immediately, and 10 horses will be started to work to-day."

A correspondent returning to the Waitekauri road was surprised to see so much work so well done after so short a time.

February 24, 1876. "We hear the new road to Owharoa will form portion of the road to Katikati, and be shorter than the line proposed by way of Bein's farm." (New settlers, including Bein and Kinsella, had been taking up their 50 acre leases, and on February 22 a load of furniture had been taken by a carrier for his settling in.)

Also, Mr. Rawden's carriers had made another start, and would have reached the machine site at Waitekauri by the night of the 21st but for a large tree that had fallen across the track.

March 3. Two Non Commissioned Officers and 12 men of the Armed Constabulary had started work on February 28 to work on the Katikati road, commencing at a point on the Waitekauri road half way between Owharoa and Bein's section. "The track to the Ohinemuri machine site would have made a portion of the main road, but for a large bluff on the Annie claim," at Owharoa.

"Mr. Rawden is getting up more horses and will push on conveying the Waitekauri Gold Mining Company's machinery while the weather keeps fine."

The March 3 celebration of the opening of the Ohinemuri goldfield a year before was "mild."

"We cannot point to gold returns as there is no battery."

March 6. Principal results: "After the famous rush to peg on 3rd March at Karangahake, many were greatly disappointed that gold was not so plentiful as they had been led to expect, and miners and storekeepers cleared out in large numbers. A faithful few remained, with the result that Waitekauri has been brought into prominence, and new ground that has been lately opened at Owharoa bids fair to take the lead." Some miners and even storekeepers were returning from "Tairua."

"The Owharoa reef in the Annie is getting more defined."

March 10. Roading work had been finished to Waitekauri for its battery with 40 head of stampers. It was anticipated that "by the end of the month the whole of this machinery will be landed on site, and as everything is prepared the mill should be in working order the month after that." (Hopes)

The machinery for the Karangahake Company was already erected, and they only needed to complete the water race to be ready for work. "The company has engaged a competent manager, and the mine has been opened up to best advantage."

March 15. Rawden was using 3 horse teams and Dean had two horse teams and one bullock team at work, conveying the Waitekauri Coy. machinery. The road was getting bad in places, owing to the large amount of rain that had lately fallen in the ranges. "As soon as possible an effort will be made to take out the waterwheel shaft, the heaviest item of the lot."

March 17. At Owharoa the Smile of Fortune was cross-cutting to No. 4 Reef. No. 3, the Waterfall reef,

was a fine body of stone.

March 18, 1876. There was "frightful weather."

March 20. There was anxiety over the state of the Mackaytown-Waitekauri road. "If there is fine weather for another 10 days most of the Waitekauri Coy's machinery will be on the site, or at least the heaviest portions. The road at present is unfit for the transport of the waterwheel, shaft and other heavy pieces - without them the whole concern will "be at a standstill."

March 22. "The Provincial authorities have authorised the expenditure of £100 for repairing the worst portions of the Waitekauri machine road."

March 23. Equinoctial gales brought more rain, at Thames. The Ohinemuri had threatening weather. "Some slight showers, but not enough to do any harm as yet, and the Mackaytown-Waitekauri track is getting into pretty good condition. It is to be hoped that the parties concerned see the necessity of making a supreme effort to get out the waterwheel shaft and other heavy portions of the Waitekauri Company's machinery within the next few days."

"Should we get 3 days heavy rain now it is doubtful whether the roads would dry up again before next summer. In that case the consequences are fearful to contemplate, as very few here are in a position to hang out another winter."

"The last punt load of machinery has arrived, and as Mr. Bleazard says, "The last spike has been landed." By water from Thames further up the Ohinemuri than Paeroa.

The Karangahake Gold Mining Company's mine was now in a position to keep its battery supplied with quartz, but the battery was not yet finished, and not likely to crush for some considerable time, as the water-race was not ready.

March 28. News from Karangahake a couple of days before was that good gold in a 4 foot reef had been struck by the Karangahake Company, and "unsettled weather clears up."

Nothing was said about the March 31 deadline for getting the machinery through to Waitekauri - the Thames Advertiser would apparently have found it more interesting if Rawden had failed. The heat was now off keeping the Mackaytown-Waitekauri way open at all costs, and they could get back to thinking more of Thames-Tauranga, of which it had opened up a useful segment of route.

On April 3 it was reported that Captain Turner of the Armed Constabulary had been instructed to lay off the line between the Waitekauri route and Katikati forthwith. The men were to proceed with the actual work of road formation immediately on the arrival of Captain A. Crapp, who was on his way from Gisborne.

April 4. "The Ohinemuri district is going ahead very rapidly, and when the batteries start to work there will be a large number of men employed."

April 6. The Ohinemuri was to get a school, as to serve Paeroa and Mackaytown, "as the population has received a large accession of numbers during the past month." They included more 50 acre leasehold settlers for the 50 acre farmlets in the Waitekauri-Owharoa area, who were finding the Mackaytown-Waitekauri road way, on which so much money and effort had been spent, very handy.

"Things are looking better here. Cartloads of furniture are passing daily through Mackaytown on their way to Waitekauri, and mobs of cattle for the same place."

April 7. The Karangahake Coy. had made another good gold discovery. "The Company's battery has not yet started work, but probably will in the present month," Also:-

"Nearly all the machinery for the Waitekauri Coy. is now on the site and in a forward state for erection, and in two months a fine battery of 40 head will be reducing quartz.

On April 10 the timber for the Karangahake battery flume arrived. But it was impossible to say when the battery would be ready for crushing. "Mr. Cornes has finished construction of tramways and shoots to connect the mine with the battery."

April 14, 1876. Karangahake battery work was being pushed forward.

April 15. The Advertiser regretted 50 acre leases had not been extended to the flat lands (reserved for

Maori use), in view of what had been done on the hill sections in the past few months, "The inhabitants have 300 cattle and horses, and several hundred pigs, goats, fowls etc., while about 300 acres are ready for grass." (Which was making things much more like home in the Waitekauri and Owharua mining areas.) (From which news could take several days.)

"Mr. Rawden has completed the contract for carrying the Waitekauri Company's machinery from Paeroa to the machine site. This included all the heavy machinery. Amongst the last pieces was the heavy shaft of the water wheel. This required 8 horses, and there were bets that a larger number would have been insufficient. Though there still remain some minor portions of the plant to convey to the site, there is now no impediment to pushing forward the erection of the plant with all possible despatch."

The Welcome mine at Waitekauri decided to take up the terms offered by Mr. Wick to erect a battery rather than have 1,000 tons crushed for half the gold at the new Waitekauri battery.

April 18. At Owharua, work was going on at 7 claims, with others shortly. There was considerable underground development at the Smile of Fortune - some were waiting to see a good gold strike verified - and the Star of Ohinemuri of Thorp and party. At the Radical (Hosie, Woods and party), between the Smile of Fortune and the Annie, a good deal of work had been done, and they had tapped into a large reef near the Smile of Fortune boundary.

Annie was doing underground development, and it appeared the quartz was making. At the Morning Light Dickson and party were working. Cameron and party were driving in the Excelsior, and Turtle and party in Golden Hill, but the reefs had not yet been cut for which they were driving.

The Armed Constabulary men were camped on rising ground beyond the mines at Owharua, on the Waitekauri road. They were working on the Katikati road, and making a first class job. "They have cut the line laid out by Mr. McLaren and Captain Newall as far as the river, but since Captain Turner took charge have been brought back, as he found the gradients exceeded one in ten, which limit was fixed by the General Government. They have now started to make the road 18 feet wide, which will take a wider sweep, so as to afford easier gradients. The new line will necessitate a bridge over the Waitekauri Creek, but will save the creation of a number of smaller bridges. Making the road down to the river has been of great service to many of the agricultural settlers - Thorp in particular - so their labour has not been wasted. The men are working under Captain Newall and Mr. Crapp, Captain Turner's deputy.

At Owharua a correspondent met Mr. McNeill, foreman of works under District Engineer McLaren, who was going to point out to intending contractors work to be done clearing the bush on the Mackaytown-Waitekauri track. He was glad the Auckland Provincial Government had seen the necessity for this before winter set in. When the "unemployed" had been suddenly knocked off, the bush had only been cleared in places sufficiently to allow traffic, and as the branches met overhead, neither sun nor wind had much chance of getting at the road, which was therefore constantly soft, and soon would have been a sea of mud.

At the Waitekauri machine site work was being pushed ahead rapidly. The big water wheel shaft was on the ground. "We hear Messrs. Rawden and Bleazard have new hats at Mr. Mitchell's expense, but we fancy the latter does not feel at all sorry. Mr. Dean has only to pick up a few odd pieces of machinery which have been left in two or three places on the roadside."

The river steamer Pearl had "brought up about 4 tons of sundries - drag-balls, tram-points, belting etc, which will be taken out at once. The battery house is now finished, and windows and skylights will be fitted in a day or two. The bed-logs are in position and all the necessary morticing has been done. They are enormous pieces of squared kauri timber, resting on large rimu logs. One piece is 39 feet long by 3 feet by 3 feet 6 inches, and the other a few feet shorter and 3 feet square." "The water race is almost completed, but water will not be turned on for some time, to allow the timber to shrink well before caulking."

"There is quite a little township at the machine site," The correspondent called it Leahyville after prospector Dan Leahy.

"It was dark when I left Leahyville, but with a candle from Carmichael of the Pioneer Store, I reached Paeroa at 9 p.m." (He went "by the more direct and shorter pack track. "I could not see much of the work on the new track, but I judged it a great improvement. In one place on No. 2 section, where the bush had not been

cleared, I had to go over the old track, and after all the fine weather we have had, found it still as bad as ever, and had a nice time “mudlarking” by moonlight.” “I think we will soon have rain.”

On the 19th April, 1876, there arrived by the steamer Luna at the Puke Landing the Governor, the Marquis of Normanby (hence Normanby road at Paeroa), his party being met by George Fisher and Louis Dihars with horses to ride to Paeroa. They returned to the Luna for the night, to leave the Puke by horse bus at 8 a.m. for Mackaytown and Waitekauri. However, on account of the state of the Mackaytown-Waitekauri road they had to alter arrangements somewhat. The Governor and suite, with Magistrate and Warden Fraser, were taken to Mackaytown and an illuminated address, and then to Karangahake battery, with crossings of the river by punt, while Captain Fraser and the younger members of the party went on horseback to Waitekauri.

April 21. Henry Christian Wick applied for a machine site for the Welcome battery in the Waitekauri area.

April 21. Fine quartz “specimens” showing much gold were brought to Mackaytown from the Morning Light claim at Owcharoa, causing a considerable sensation, “undoubtedly the finest yet shown in the district.” They were from the outcrop on the big bluff in the centre of the claim. The reef appears to be at least 3 feet thick. Some consider it to be an extension of the Annie reef, which it much resembles.”

The Morning Light was on the south bank of the Ohinemuri, opposite the Radical and Annie, bounded on the west by the Hercules, “which is No. 1 south of the Prospectors’ or Smile of Fortune claim. We hear some of the stone is to be sent to Thames for exhibition.”

April 26. A letter came from Hohepa Kapene saying he had received a letter from Te Hira. “Te Hira does not like the road being made by the Armed Constabulary forces from Mackaytown to Katikati, and wishes it stopped until he has seen it and had a korero with Mr. Mackay.” The request was noted as not likely to be granted - Te Hira as always asking for more. “The Gold-field has been proclaimed, Te Hira signed the agreement, and he cannot now repudiate it.” (There was no longer a frontier at Owcharoa.)

“The news from Ohinemuri is, perhaps, the most encouraging. The reefs in that district are large, and have been traced for long distances. The best judges declare them to be a long way above the paying point.”

“A most important feature in this district is the progress of agricultural settlement. There is no settlement on the rich soil of the flats, which, as we think, there might have been if the Government had done its duty, but on the hills 4,000 acres of land have been taken up and are in process of cultivation.” (Meaning clearing, with a limited area so far grassed.)

“There was a rush to-day at Owcharoa to peg out a small piece of ground between the Morning Light and the bank of the river. We hear that three parties claim to have been there first.”

“Thirty Armed Constabulary are to be sent by Major Roberts of Tauranga to start operations on the Katikati road. They will begin seaward of Hikurangi and work this way.”

April 27. From the Morning Light, Owcharoa, there was rich stone. The block on exhibition was brown, but it had a narrow blue streak on one face, and through this gold was visible for a length of several inches. There was also coarse gold showing on one of the faces.

There had been incessant rain at Neavesville the last few days, and presumably elsewhere.

May 3, 1876, There was a meeting of shareholders in the claims at Owcharoa, “held in the Court House, Mackaytown, to consider a proposal that had been made for the erection of a test battery in that locality.”

It was proposed to erect the 6 head battery purchased by the Karangahake Prospectors, before they made arrangements with Messrs. Souter and Co., “and which is now lying on the bank of the river at Takerei’s. The gentlemen who propose to put up the battery will procure a small engine to drive it, instead of going to great expense in bringing in water. If arrangements are completed satisfactorily, the work will be pushed as quickly as possible, so as to be ready for crushing in about ten weeks time.”

The claims proposed to be associated in the scheme were Smile of Fortune, Star of Ohinemuri, Radical, Annie, Little Dorrit, Golden Hill, Mint, Hercules, Bella, Excelsior and Morning Light. Financial arrangements were detailed, with assigning of shares etc. Regulations were to be agreed on re price per ton charged by the battery and time allowed to each claim.

The Smile of Fortune was doing underground development, “Mr. Thomas Arnold, one of the shareholders

has built a small punt capable of carrying 6 persons, to be used as a ferry boat, which will be of great convenience to shareholders on the south side of the river. Captain Fraser has promised to procure wire rope gearing for it.

May 8. "The shareholders of the Morning Light (Owharua) intend to go in for a small battery on their own account. Arrangements have been made with Messrs. Vaughan and Co. for a 6 head battery to be driven by steam power." Shareholders said the Annie was willing to join the Smile of Fortune for a test battery at Owharua, "but they do not care to go in with a crowd of outside claims, fearing the scheme would prove unworkable if a large number was mixed up in it."

There were a good many visitors, some to interview the pheasants (the best pheasant shooting in an otherwise disappointing Ohinemuri was at Owharua), others to inspect the mines.

The foreman of roading works McNeill was burnt out of his tent.

The Ohinemuri had better gold showing in many new claims than previously discovered. There were "no batteries in working order, but Waitekauri's 40 stamper mill and Karangahake's 20 stamper are both almost finished, and several in course of erection, and arrangements are being made for others. It will probably be two months before there are steady gold returns."

Good rock had been discovered at Morning Light, a comparatively new claim at Owharua.

Progress in the erection of the Waitekauri battery was not up to expectations, but the complaints of shareholders were at the dilatoriness of the Karangahake battery. There were arrangements for other mills and in progress. "The Ohinemuri field is still in a state of transition."

"Ohinemuri will be a rich mining district." (It has been initially disappointing, especially because of the rumours spread "when permission had been granted by the natives to European prospectors," which took place in a number of instances, as came out at the Warden's Court proceedings at Mackaytown during March, 1875, with many claims dating from 1862 re first discovery of gold.)

May 9. At Karangahake the battery contractor, Mr. Cullen, got the stampers into position, or rather those supplied, as of the 20, 4 were still to come. Mr. Cullen's contract re the water race was now in a very forward state, with a length of 1800 feet. One portion "required heavy rock cutting on an almost perpendicular face." There was also a good deal of trestle work, "and the whole being done in the most substantial manner."

The contract for fixing the turbine and cutting the tail race was being rapidly carried out by Mr. Coutts, and it was expected everything would be ready for crushing in about a fortnight.

May 12. On the 9th the steamer Effort brought to the Ohinemuri the small boiler and engine for Messrs. Vaughan and Co's. battery, to be erected on terms for the Morning Light battery at Owharua. With it came from Thames on a visit Messrs. J.R. Perry, T.B. Hicks, Wiseman etc., well known in Thames.

The 4 stampers and other machinery necessary to complete the Karangahake battery had arrived. The tail race would not be completed by the Queen's Birthday. Mr. Coutts put in three shifts, and was doing his level best, but the boulders were a terror.

He had to use gunpowder constantly. The reef was looking well in the south drive. He expected soon to the north to get out to the surface and do away with running stuff out by the existing circuitous route.

Mr. Wick's machinery was being taken to Waitekauri by the Paeroa-Waitekauri short pack track. It was remarked he was certainly favoured by fine weather.

Mr. J.R. Perry was prepared to erect a larger battery at Owharua. Negotiations were being carried on.

The Bella of Owharua formed a Company, at the All Nations Hotel, Mackaytown. The legal manager of the Company was D.G. MacDonnell. Directors were E. Cameron, R. McDonald, two Murphys and T. Carroll.

Mr. J.D. Wickham was taking up the L shaped Joker claim at Owharua, bordered on the north by Golden Stream (or Double Banker by opponents), going up hill from the river southwards between Morning Light and Hercules, and then westwards between the latter and the Bella.

May 15. "Surveyors laying off the main trunk road between the Ohinemuri and Tauranga have been stopped by natives under Kepa, an astute native chief of Waihi, a settlement on the East Coast, in a direct line with Mackaytown. Kepa and his men were some of the chief obstructionists at the opening of the Ohinemuri,

and not until the very last, and with liberal concessions, the wily old chief would sign the deed of cession. (Mackay wanted all what he considered the Ohinemuri lands included in the deed of cession he kept in his strongbox, even though Te Hira's frontier to the east was at the Owharoa landing. Kepa did not so much mind the Waihi Plains being included, though he would keep his eye on them, but he did not want what he considered his own territories around seaside Waihi involved in any way.)

“At his instigation a clause was inserted that a native reserve should be made at Waihi, to be excluded from the operations of the Goldfields Act. Another reserve of rather larger dimensions was made at Mataora, but the boundaries as usual were left undefined at the opening of the goldfield, and never fixed since, though some of the natives have sought to have them fixed”.

“Kepa and his people have kept a rigorous watch in their neighbourhood, and on several occasions when gold was discovered near their boundaries, they have shifted their pegs inland to include the new discoveries. At the same time, they jealously guarded their own section, as shows by their action some short time ago in destroying the trig station erected there. This was later restored when Native Agent Mr. Puckey made certain representations to the natives.”

“Since that time they have coveted a number of agricultural leases taken up on the plains near the northern boundary of the Tauranga district, and have extended the pegs of their reserve seven miles in one direction, right into the heart of the goldfield, and claim the land extending up to the Tauranga boundary now.”

“The surveyors, under the instructions of Captain Turner, were engaged in laying off the Tauranga road through the goldfields to Katikati.”

The Advertiser said the obstructionists had no excuse, and the Armed Constabulary should arrest the obstructionists.

“The Smile of Fortune shareholders of Owharoa have arranged with Mr. J.R. Perry, of the Thames, for the erection of a 16 stamper battery, and the shareholders of the Annie have the option of joining in the arrangement if they think proper. Details of the arrangements included for Mr. Perry to crush 500 tons for each company, at 15 shillings a ton. In the event of two mines not being able to keep him permanently employed, he was at liberty to crush for others, but on due notice the original two always had a prior right. If the battery force was insufficient for the amount of quartz, “Mr. Perry's engagement binds him to increase the force of the battery to the number for which water power is available.”

May 17, 1876. Nearing the Waitekauri works, at the Young New Zealand claim, Thomas Liddell was getting good quartz, and a number of packhorses had been sent to bring down his quartz - hoping for 5 tons if the weather would keep fine. Then there was news that Clotworthy had found something good between Liddell's and Owharoa.

Where the Morning Light battery was already on the ground, and no time was to be lost in the erection of a battery for the Smile of Fortune.

May 24. In connection with the recent road interference, it was mentioned that the original reserve for Waihi by the sea was about 1,000 acres, a mile inland from the East Coast beach, and about 2 miles in length. “The natives exercising the privilege which, it appears, is customarily accorded by the Government, have since claimed the whole of the Waihi Plains, extending their lines inland something like 5 miles, and southwards to the boundary of the Tauranga block. We believe most of this will now be granted to them, notwithstanding the great loss to European settlers. Agricultural leases have been applied for within these boundaries on the understanding that they were open for selection, and the road to Tauranga was apparently many miles away from the native reserves.”

Mr. Puckey, Native Agent, had been on a visit to the Waihi natives for arranging matters regarding the road. “He appears to have been successful, though on what terms the natives have been induced to withdraw their opposition we are not aware. One thing that has transpired is that the extent of the reserve originally designed for the natives at Waihi is to be greatly enlarged, so as to allow 50 acres for every man, woman and child in the tribe. Regarding intending settlers who have marked out, surveyed and applied for agricultural leases - undoubtedly they will come to the Government for compensation.”

May 27. There was reference to Miss. Ratcliffe's new hotel at Mackaytown

May 30. It was expected that the Morning Light's little 2 stamper battery would be ready to start the following week.

May 31. Rich gold specimens from the Morning Light, Owharoa, were on display at the National Bank in Thames. The stone was brown, in a conglomerate formation, with a very large proportion of the quartz in small veins, similar to the usual cap of a large reef. Many of the stones were thickly strewn with coarse gold, superior to anything yet seen from the Ohinemuri district.

Thurs., June 1. Morning Light had good stone and expected to start crushing on Monday.

The Waitekauri Company's battery was a fine substantial plant with 41 stamps, "no gingerbread work." The fluming was finished and Mr. Corbett and his men were putting the great waterwheel together.

A Thames Mayoral party (J.E. Macdonald) was delighted with Tom Liddell's Young New Zealand claim in the Waitekauri area.

"Natives" as selling not so much to the highest bidder as to the person preferred selling to, a good neighbour, in their estimation, being of great importance, and money only one factor. With pre-emption, the Governor Hobson had come as a friend, and to protect the native titles to their land, and on no account to take it from them. "We cannot induce the natives to see the friendship of the Government buying land from them for 2 shillings an acre and selling it for 10 shillings."

June 2. At Owharoa rich gold was being got in several claims, the most recent being the Morning Light. Two crushing mills were in course of erection.

The Karangahake Gold Mining Company at Karangahake had the principal mine, with reefs very promising, and a 20 stamper battery now almost ready to start work.

There was reference to "the natives now claiming 7 times their original reserve. Mr. Puckey, Native Agent, visited the Waihi natives, and arranged matters so far as the road was concerned, but they still insist on their right to the land which they claimed."

June 5. There was an engineer's start of the Morning Light battery on the 3rd.; crushing commenced on Monday the 5th.

A new claim, pegged by Smyth and party back of Noble's, was to be called the Daylight. The stone was a conglomerate, which had yielded very good prospects when crushed.

June 6. The reserves were colloquially termed at Thames the "floating reserves," The "natives" were shifting and "bringing in" their pegs, not only encroaching on the agricultural land, "but actually pegging out gold mining claims which are the property of gold-mining companies."

June 7. "In the Ohinemuri the Morning Light battery started on Monday the 5th and Mrs. McCloughlen broke a bottle of No. 2 on the fly wheel and christened it the Pioneer." (She was the wife of the principal storekeeper at Mackaytown.)

The driving wheel split before they could get to crushing, but repairs would be made without delay.

June 9. On the pack track between Paeroa and Waitekauri the machinery for the Wick battery was scattered along the roadside, some having reached the machine site.

At the Waitekauri Coy's mine, it was expected by the end of the following week the monster water wheel would be in position and the whole battery complete in 6 weeks.

"From there to Lilliput - the Morning Light two-stamp at Owharoa. The engineer's start had been made on Saturday, June 5, and the shrill steam-whistle awoke the echoes amongst the hills and valleys of the Ohinemuri goldfield for the first time - just exactly 15 months after the opening of the district for gold mining,"

"On June 5th the battery was started and christened, before between 70 and 80 persons, including several ladies from Mackaytown and the agricultural settlements. Two driving wheels went, as they were bad castings, with only one stamp operating pro forma. Mrs. McCloughlen, of Mackaytown, christened the battery, as being the first European lady on the goldfield, as the "Pioneer."

"Mr. H.D. Johnson made a speech bringing in a jocosely context the names of other claims - the Joker next door. Smile of Fortune, perfect Radical. Annie, Bella, Little Dorrit, Mint, Golden Stream."

The battery was given 2 or 3 hours' run, as the first fruits were to go to the Thames Hospital..

Mr. Johnson coupled in names of miners concerned for toast to success -Messrs. P. Holes. H.R. Burt, John Dickson. "The latter's reply was cut short by a jet of steam from the engine, directed by another shareholder as engineer at the nape of his neck, then protested re keeping his steam to himself and went on.

Mr. McCloughlen gave a toast to "The Mining Interest of Ohinemuri," coupled with the name Adam Porter. He said many of the shareholders in the Morning Light were the original prospectors of Owharoa, having pegged out the Smile of Fortune, and three were amongst the original prospectors of Karangahake.

Others who spoke were Messrs. J.W. Day, Bollock, James Horne, J.Barrett, Johnson (to reply to toast The Press), Henry McKay, Robert Cashel, Vaughan (toasted as the enterprising contractor, he apologised for the mishap and said he was going to the Thames at once to get repairs done,) and Davidson (the Engineer). "Mr. Davidson said they need not expect a speech from him, as he was not in a good temper. The breakage was no fault of his, everything else was in good order."

There was eating and drinking, with the weather delightful, till shortly before sunset. There was quote of, "a bad beginning makes a good ending." Large specimens showing gold had been mined the day before, and small pieces were given as souvenirs to the ladies.

Before the end a Maori, Tenerehu, began a speech, which was interpreted as - if given grog he would drink the company's health. So he was given grog amid much laughter, and wished them all good luck.

Men had started to clear J.R. Perry's machine site below the Radical. The Sunnybank people were driving for the Annie reef.

June 12, 1876. The Smile of Fortune was now beating the Morning Light at Owharoa, though the latter was good too. There was heavy rain and a fresh in the river, with the roads in a frightful mess.

June 13. There was a monster meeting of Ohinemuri people at Hayman's Hotel, Paeroa, using the large room, to petition the Government to define the land reserves at once and prevent encroachment by the natives on the goldfields boundaries.

At the Smile of Fortune, Owharoa, the lode was 3 feet wide, of sandstone (sic) with gold-bearing quartz ramifying through. The Morning Light was on good gold. The quartz at the Smile of Fortune had gold sticking in lumps as well as being distributed through the stone.

Mr. Graham the surveyor had come in. He would not take the responsibility of what the natives demanded, until Mr. Puckey came up.

June 14. The Morning Light, Owharoa, had started crushing (after repairs) on June 12. Mr. Bawden said stuff from the Joe Dwyer reef gave good shows, and they had now started on the main reef.

Karangahake would be ready to start its battery on Monday the 19th of June - could possibly be delayed till certain shareholders had paid up their calls or their scrip had been forfeited.

June 25. Valuers were sent to value the battery erected by Darrow, Stewart and Co. for the Karangahake Gold Mining Company, being John Brown and Alexander Dewar. This was a proper valuation before the battery was taken over by the Company. The battery was now finished and ready to start work.

June 30. The Karangahake battery had just been completed, with a large supply of quartz on hand.

But the 2 stamper battery for the Morning Light at Owharoa proved a failure, getting through only 2 tons, which gave a rich 8 ounces of gold. (More tonnage in the time would have been very welcome.)

The Smile of Fortune had a 10 stamp battery in course of erection.

July 6. "The road now in use is a sea of mud nearly the whole distance". The Mackaytown-Waitekauri track was in a "fearful mess. We are afraid Mr. Perry will have some difficulty in getting out his machinery to the site at Owharoa. The Radical people have cut a good reef just behind the machine site, and they think Mr. Perry may have to increase the number of stampers."

The news was brought into Mackaytown on the night of July 4 that rich gold had been struck in the Annie claim at Owharoa. They had been cutting away the surface for a tramway, and cut a reef in the solid, with rich gold showing in the stone.

The Karangahake battery was not starting yet, for lack of brass castings not on the ship.

Over at Waitekauri, Mr. Wick expected his battery to be working in a fortnight, probably the first crushing would be from the Young New Zealand mine of Tom Liddell.

July 7. The Karangahake battery had started and gone for an hour, long enough to shake off its old stamper shoes.

Mon., July 10. Official start for Karangahake battery was to be on Wednesday the 12th. Several people from Thames were going. Meanwhile it was having another start.

July 15. The Waitekauri Coy's. battery was in a forward state, but it would be fully a month before it was ready to start.

The heavy stamper box for Wick's battery had arrived at last, using 10 bullocks and 2 horses, which with the very bad state of the roads looked thoroughly done up and the men nearly as bad. It would probably be the first battery to start at Waitekauri.

The first battery for the Ohinemuri had been the "pepper mill" at Owcharoa, to actually get started. As for the Thames Advertiser calling it a failure, it had been intended for testing, and got good yield from good ore.

OWHAROA GETS GOING AS A WORKING GOLDFIELD?

July 27 1876. The Karangahake battery turned up again in the news as "to be ready to start in a few days," after considerable alterations to the flume to give ample motive power. Recent floods had caused only slight damage to the props of said flume - easily repairable.

In the Waitekauri area. Wick's battery was to be ready to crush by the end of the week.

July 28. Battery delays in the Ohinemuri were attributed to bad weather and the wretched state of the roads.

August 1. The roads were "a frightful mess." The first Ohinemuri school at Paeroa was therefore unlikely to have pupils from any distance.

August 5. At Owcharoa work was going ahead steadily on quartz reefs of the Smile of Fortune, Radical and other mines, prospecting, and trying to intersect reefs further on. In the Annie the men were making a tramway. "The Morning light has sent to Grahamstown (North Thames) for a competent engineer to report on the engine and boiler now on the ground, to ascertain its capability for driving a larger battery than the useless appendage now attached to it." If there is sufficient motive power, a 6 stamper battery will be erected as soon as possible, to carry on till a more powerful plant can be procured."

At Waitekauri, Wick's battery erected for the Welcome mine had not yet had a fair start. The pipes were never corked, and when the water came on it squirted in all directions. The pipes were now being corked.

August 10. The Karangahake Gold Mining Company's battery with 12 head of stampers started crushing on Thursday the 3rd, though only on the 7th could the full force be utilised. "Serious mishaps and delays almost destroyed public confidence in the district. The contract for the removal of Clarkson's battery from Thames and re-erection at Karangahake was signed on 22nd November last." 7th of August meant 8 1/2 months till the first effective start. Now they were crushing continuously in 3 shifts.

With a spell of fine weather - but it had begun raining again - men had been repairing the bridges between Paeroa and the Waitekauri.

August 12. A correspondent left Hayman's hotel, Mackaytown, and made a stiff 3 hour walk to Owcharoa by Karangahake and Taukani. A friend informed him the dray road was a sea of mud, and very heavy travelling, so he took the other route via Karangahake as above, and though there was some still climbing, yet it was clean.

He visited the Excelsior, above the Morning Light, mostly owned by E. Cameron, with a 200 foot drive to crosscut to catch the Morning Light reef.

The Morning Light, 10 men's ground (3 1/5 acres), two stamps, nicknamed a battery, but now disused. It had 5 very good reefs, been worked from the bank of the river. The directors held a meeting on August 9 to

decide what was to be done to utilise the engine and boiler already on the ground - the engine and boiler could work 6 stamps.

The Radical, 15 men's ground (5 acres). Wondered at the name, and thought "must be a strong political party here," but "when I saw Mr Joseph Woods, the principal owner, I was not the least surprised at the name." Driving was being done, with good test prospects. The bottom level was only 10 yards from feeding door of Perry's battery, and was 90 feet in. The upper level, 100 feet above, was 50 feet in.

Annie, 15 men's ground (5 acres), about 200 yards from the machine. Was preparing tramway to battery - getting timber and surveying. They had an "immense reef, the very same formation as the Morning Light reef."

Smile of Fortune, or Prospectors' Claim, 5 acres. Great deal of work being done to get mine opened up before battery ready, with 2 contracts, altogether 14 men employed.

Star of Ohinemuri, 13 men's ground. (4 1/3 acres), adjoining Smile of Fortune on the northern boundary. Drive in 300 feet, cut 3 reefs, supposed to be these of Smile of Fortune. A company to be formed at once.

Perry's Machine, 20 stamps, various claimholders anxiously awaiting its erection. To be driven by water power, turbine wheel, water to be brought in from Stoney Creek [Taieri? - E], on the opposite side of the river, by a 40 chain race (half a mile), the whole of the cutting and levelling for which is completed, and ditching, 5 feet wide at the top, 2 1/2 feet at the bottom, and 20 inches deep, rapidly proceeding, Messrs. Bates and party are the contractors. Sufficient to carry 10 heads of water, equalling 100 horsepower. The turbine, with 150 feet of fall to it, to be connected across the river to the battery by a wire rope, 110 feet across. About 14,000 feet of timber required for fluming and bed of battery. Expect bullock sledging of the machinery by Perry next week - best method with the state of the roads and gradients. "The sledges are of iron."

Many other claims taken up and registered, but not working, the owners awaiting erection of the battery. Been hoping may see results, "and endured hardships to retain possession of their claims, but have been at last obliged to give in. We do think, and those with practical experience of prospecting, especially in heavy bush, agree, that every latitude ought to be given to such men by the Warden and other officers, who have no practical experience. They are deserving of Protection till there are practical means of testing the value of their claims."

"Various buildings are going up, principally of weatherboard. Mr. Delaney, of Grahamstown, is erecting an iron store, which will be an acquisition. At present stores are packed out from Mackaytown, we believe at a cost of a penny a pound, this, from the present state of the roads and steep grades, we consider very reasonable."

Re agricultural settlers, as of 31st March there were 33 50 acre leases under cultivation and 37 applied for. The Goldfields Warden, under whom these goldfield leases were made, reported, "The opening of the new road from Mackaytown to the Waitekauri machine site, for the purpose of enabling machinery to be conveyed there, has been of great value to the agricultural settlers located in its vicinity. It has induced many persons to apply for agricultural sections who would not otherwise have done so, owing to the difficulty of access," This was by Warden William Fraser, Resident Magistrate.

August 14. Waitekauri battery to commence crushing permanently this day week.

August 15. A school opened at Mackaytown on the 14th.

A correspondent went from Owharoa to Waitekauri by a short cut across the hills to the main road to Waitekauri. "On this route you cross the farms of Messrs. Thorp, Bein, Kinsella and others. The whole aspect is indeed a change to what it was some 5 years since when I last visited it. You see farms dotted here and there, on which are houses, now sufficient, which I hope are forerunners of more substantial buildings." There were many houses, "the majority whitewashed," at Waitekauri.

On his return to Paeroa, he added, "Paeroa must be the starting place for Waitekauri, and its depot, as Mackaytown must be for Owharoa." He was critical of the engineering of the roads between Mackaytown and Owharoa, and Paeroa and Waitekauri - wondered how the machinery was conveyed to Waitekauri. On the road to Owharoa there was "the deep gully." He suggested to Mr. Perry he have crane and tackle to convey the machinery from one side to the other.

Leaving Kinsella's farm for Waitekauri through the bush, he came across a number of trees blown down from one side to the other, making it very dangerous for horses or anyone on foot in the dark. "Who is looking after these roads? No one knows. The settlers talk of complaining to Grey."

(Sir George Grey was Superintendent of Auckland Province, now in its dying months, the Abolition of Provinces Act taking effect on November 1, 1876)

August 17, 1876. A contractors' start of the big Waitekauri battery was to be made that day.

Crushing was going on at the Karangahake battery, with some difficulty in keeping plates free of scum.

August 18. There were more encouraging reports than earlier.

A report of August 16 showed the Welcome battery (Wicks) 9 stamps doing well at Waitekauri, but the big Waitekauri Battery, with 40 big stamps and a specimen stamp had not yet got going, with all hands working overtime - hoped to-morrow or the next day, with proper start expected Monday August 21.

The Karangahake battery snapped a stamper rod, but was carrying on with the remaining 15 stamps. The proportion of silver was high, "sickenning" the mercury, and associated with scum.

August 21. Big Waitekauri battery was to start Wednesday next. A correspondent wrote that the credit for the track from Mackaytown to Waitekauri was due to the engineer, not to Bleazard and Brown, who were there to make money, and took advantage of what was done. The present track was explored and pointed out to the Government by a few people of Mackaytown, difficulty was afterwards experienced regarding the necessary funds to utilise it. Superintendent Grey and the Auckland Provincial Executive gave District Engineer McLaren as much money as they could spare.

A coach road would cost not less than £9,000. The gross outlay did not exceed (including some £300 frittered away providing work to unemployed some months ago) £1,100, less than £140 per mile or 35 shillings per chain. This was the whole expense to the Provincial Government for a track of 8 miles, through difficult, broken country, requiring a great many bridges, two-thirds of it through dense forest. It was performed within 6 weeks, within a day or two of the time fixed by the District Engineer, some time in February last. That delay in the transport of machinery till the winter rains made the road impassable was not the District Engineer's fault. Still, Mr. Prerry, who is erecting a battery at Owharoa, sees no difficulty in transporting his materials over the very worst part of the road.

August 25. The Karangahake Coy. had knocked most of its men off, as the battery was not saving the values with the scumming, and not getting the same good results as similar stone sent to Thames batteries.

August 24. Owharoa seemed to be lying back on its oars, awaiting the completion of the Perry battery.

Aug. 28. On the morning of the 26th the first shipment of gold from the Ohinemuri went from Paeroa to Thames by the river steamer Effort. It was from the Welcome mine by its Wicks battery, being 150 ounces from about 70 tons. Revised to 151 ozs. 6 dwts. from 58 tons.

The wheels of the great Waitekauri battery started to turn on Thursday, August 24, and worked very smoothly. Crushing was to start early the following week.

The few men working for the Karangahake Company were to be knocked off that day, and the mine was to be closed till after a meeting of shareholders on September 5.

At Owharoa there were good prospects at the Smile of Fortune. Perry's battery-house was finished, and the timber for the foundations etc. of the battery were ready. Timber for the water race was nearly ready, "and the bullocks will start taking out the machinery without delay."

August 29. There had been a meeting of shareholders of the Annie Claim, Owharoa, in Mr. McCloughlen's store, Mackaytown. Directors were Wright, Ehrenfried (Thames brewer), Mordan, Bawden and Vaughan. Legal manager would be decided later.

At the same place, on Friday the 25th, there was a meeting of the Star of Ohinemuri, directors being J. Bates, E.T. Wildman, D.R. Gellion and Adam Porter. T. Horsbrugh of Thames was legal manager, as he was of many Thames and other mining companies.

Karangahake had been a regular damper since the failure of the battery to save the gold.

At Owharoa, the best show was in the Annie mine. The gold was in white quartz seams, a tenth to a quarter of an inch thick, running through boulders of sandstone. As would have to crush the whole of the boulders the return in pennyweights or ounces per ton is conjectural. It would be stretching a point to call it a reef.

“When gold is found in this district it is generally in blue and in some instances white quartz embedded in sandstone, beginning anywhere and ending nowhere, without any indications of a walled reef. At present things are at a standstill, as the miners are waiting for machinery, but Mr. Perry is waiting for the mines to open up a little more.”

At Waitetauri, an immense quantity of stone awaited the battery, but what could be delivered by only 4 teams, 70 tons a week, was only enough to keep 5 stamps going out of the 9 of the Wicks battery.

The big Waitekauri battery looked ready for work, “and it is believed that about a month's crushing will determine the value of other claims contiguous to the Waitekauri Coy.

August 30. Golden Hill, Owharoa, formed a company, headed by J.R. Perry, with W.C. Wright, D. McNab, J. Gillespie and Smith. The usual T. Horsbrugh was the legal manager.

The Annie met to form a company, but the proposal was opposed.

In the Ohinemuri, while shareholders were forming companies under the 1872 Act, for better working, work had been suspended at many of the Karangahake mines. At Owharoa, the Radical was the only claim now at work. The Morning light was expected to set to work again after a meeting on the 30th of August. A great deal of new ground was being pegged out at Waitekauri.

The grand flourish of the Waitekauri big battery was not expected for a month. “If the Welcome, Young New Zealand and Waitekauri would arrange to send down gold together, it would warrant an Armed Constabulary escort.”

August 31. It was denied Perry had been losing time on the erection of the battery at Owharoa - things were well forward.

At 4 p.m. on the 30th a reporter found the big Waitekauri battery in full swing. The detailed arrangements were “superior to anything yet seen.” Everybody jubilant.

Very little at Owharoa, except the Radical, and the construction of Perry's battery.

The Morning Light, Owharoa, had an extraordinary meeting of shareholders in the big Pacific Hotel, Thames. Adam Porter was in the chair. There had been only partial response to a “call,” and funds were inadequate for the proposed works. They had had to let go an opportunity to purchase a 6 stamp battery at Paeroa landing from Perry, Perry was now offering a trial crushing, and then if that was satisfactory to erect a battery on equitable terms. The meeting then went into a good deal of procedural matter and rules. They elected new directors:- T.L. Murray, H.C. Gillespie, Charles Curtis (American proprietor of the big Pacific Hotel), Adam Porter, James Smythe. Of those proposed, Bawden, Vaughan and Bennett were not elected. It was resolved that the directors take steps to amalgamate with the Excelsior and other adjacent claims for better working of the lodes.

September 1. The shareholders of the Hercules claim at Owharoa met at the Pacific Hotel in Thames and formed a Company, with Thomas Horsbrugh legal manager.

At Mackaytown, one Watson had recently met his death watching tree felling in a forest clearing being made by McCloughlen, the tree being a large tawa on rising ground. (A tawa can be treacherous. In recent times one even split in half and sat dangerously on the stump.) A day or two before Sept. 1, a correspondent went to Owharoa.

He “scarcely could have chosen a more inappropriate day. With the exception of a carpenter at Perry's battery, a few bullock drivers, and 2 miners, there was scarcely a person left in the district. Those not at the funeral of poor Watson were in Grahamstown forming companies.”

“The two working were Joe Woods, and his mate Hosie, in the Radical. The reefs, where they existed, had very little underlie, either in the Radical or Smile of Fortune, where the principal work has been done.”

The reporter had one Arnold to show him and his companions around. The workings at the Annie were of limited extent. (Description as before). The face of crushing stuff was 15 feet wide, same in shaft 12 feet lower down - and some gold in the face, but dish prospect not rich. “The general appearance of the country, the distribution of the stringers, and the conglomerate appearance of the whole remind me more forcibly of the old Shotover than anything else I have seen.” Continuation of Morning Light reef.

“There was not time to cross the river and see the face opened in the latter, and the coffee mill called a crushing plant.”

He went to the Radical instead, and at last there was something substantial, a good reef 18 inches wide, opened in two levels. “Looking across the river at the Morning Light I saw a small iron chimney protruding from a cliff, with closed doors outside.”

“After the Radical came the Smile of Fortune, the premier mine of the district. Certainly it had the most work done, more than all the other put together. It is said one can see gold in the reef.” There were 2 levels, connected by a winze, on 4 lodes. Except for the Radical and Smile of Fortune, the reefs were only outcrops, “which may lead to good lodes. I believe from what I have seen that the reefs will be payable, the prospects good, and Mr. Perry's battery will be profitable. The battery is not far advanced.”

“The building has been erected, and the bed log and foundation logs are being laid. The class of stone looks peculiar to those used to Thames, it has a flinty appearance.” There was fine country rock.

He reached Waitekauri by midday. “Long before we came in sight of a clearing, we could detect the familiar sound of falling stampers. The battery absolutely started to work at its full capacity without sound of trumpet or beat of drum. Without exception it is the best battery of 40 head of stampers working in the bush.”

September 4, 1876. At the Waitekauri battery the speed of stamping was being increased, and the tramway was working well.

A correspondent complained of the indiscriminate way mining leases were being pegged off in the Waitekauri and Owharua districts by speculative individuals, purely for disposing of and gaining an immediate profit. One person had taken up and pretty well disposed of 12 leases.

The Armed Constabulary appropriation was down to £30,000 from £40,000. At present there were 676, in small bodies in various places in the North Island.

At Owharua owing to the fatal accident very little work had been done during the past week. The miners had now returned from the funeral in Thames, and were starting work on Monday the 4th. Bullocks were taking out Perry's machinery. The patent iron sledge was acting well for taking Mr. Perry's machinery, though the weather was bad. (Bullocks were far more suitable than horses for such conditions.)

“Roads even in good weather were no joke,” in the Ohinemuri. “It is quite painful to witness the struggles of poor dray horses tugging along between Paeroa and Mackaytown.” On the back track from Paeroa to Waitekauri, “in a dreadful state,” a horse died of fatigue.

Sept.7. There was a new find in the Owharua district - new country rock, fine looking reef with gold visible through the stone. Understood to be somewhere in the neighbourhood of the police (Armed Constabulary) camp. A few parties started out from Paeroa on the morning of the 6th to visit the place.

Sept. 8, 1876. The Morning Light at Owharua decided not to amalgamate.

A correspondent witnessed the steamer Pearl arriving at Paeroa, 4 hours upriver from Thames. “A stranger would be quite astonished at the quantity of goods of all kinds constantly arriving by the steamers, but they seem to disappear to different parts of the district as if by magic, and the cry is, “Still they come.” We hope the time is not far distant when our local farmers will supply us with all kinds of farm and dairy produce, thereby keeping the money in the district, which now finds its way through Auckland to Canterbury and other parts of the Colony.” The big consumers were the miners and their servicers, who greatly outnumbered the farmers.

There was a rumour of a new find at Owharua.

The Evelyn shareholders were meeting to form a company, some being expected up by steamer. This was a claim resulting from Liddell prospecting, possibly going quite a while back.

New ground, as being a continuation of the Annie reef was taken up by Stead, Naysmith and party, near Mr. Allom's clearing, “but nothing at present to cause any excitement.” (And also could be an Annie at Mackaytown.)

Messrs. W.A. Hunt (of the Shotover bonanza at the beginning of Thames) and co. had organised another prospecting party, “and this time they intend to try their luck in the Owharua district. Mr. J.M. Russell and others took out a number of miner's rights and operations are to be started at once.”

“Business has been pretty brisk at the Warden's office lately, owing to a number of new claims being pegged out. Companies are being formed galore. There is ample room here for investment of capital, but if ground is pegged out indiscriminately there will be a collapse.”

Sept. 9. Annie of Owharoa had just formed a company at a meeting in Mackaytown. Directors were Messrs. Wright, Louis Ehrenfried, Vaughan, Riordan and another Vaughan. The usual T. Horsbrugh was legal manager.

Good Owharoa specimens came from loose stuff on a spur, and a claim of 5 acres was applied for, to be surveyed at once by Mr. Bayldon. If they found the reef, they were very sanguine as to the outcome being the best find in the district, as the gold was coarse and of good quality. It was just under Perry's water race, only a short distance from the battery site. This was “the latest find, at 8 o'clock this morning (8th.)” The claim had been named Echo. (It would not echo down the corridors of time.)

Sept. 11. Owharoa new discovery was by Charles Bowman. Solid blue and white quartz, not intermixed with sandstone. It was thought by some to be a continuation of the run of stone found on the other side of the river by Messrs. Stead and Erasmus.

Good stone was also brought to Mackaytown by J.R. Smith from a claim adjoining the Annie, which was to be called the Buona Ventura. (After a current river steamer or large launch. La Buona Ventura.) Gold was plainly visible, and the stone resembled that of the Annie.

“In consequence of the late finds a large number of claims have been pegged out and prospectors will have to go further afield.”

“The two batteries now working at Waitekauri have now discoloured the Ohinemuri River.”

Sept. 14. In the Ohinemuri, just as it was thought the weather was clearing to improve the roads, the rain came down in torrents and they were deep in mud again.

At Owharoa E. Cameron was showing the Buona Ventura claim. The cap had been stripped, showing good stone. Leaving the Annie, the City of Melbourne had a good show of getting the reef. Smyth was the prospector for the Echo near the waterfall, on the Ohinemuri River. With prospector Bowman, first class stone had been picked up on the surface. Several leases had been taken out in the district during the last few days, “and as a number of men are prospecting between Waitekauri and Owharoa, getting a good show of loose gold, we may expect to see a rush at any moment. Perry's battery is getting on slowly.”

The building was finished, and some of the machinery in place. Several pieces of machinery were on the road “between Mackaytown and Owharoa,” but as the roads were bad the contractor had to get more bullocks before he could get through. The road was in a bad state. Impossible for prospecting.

Sept. 16, 1876 With bad weather, there was a very heavy fresh in the Ohinemuri River. “Karangahake seems to be a thing of the past, and you seldom hear the name now.”

“The late gale has played the deuce with the roads in all directions, and made travelling a work of great difficulty and danger. Trees of considerable size, with roots and branches, take to the creeks without any persuasion, when, if they only stop for one moment in their mad career, they are reminded in no very gentle manner by a mass of rock bumping against them to move on. Sometimes a few of these trees get jammed in a gorge. They soon form an impediment to boulders and driftwood, damming the water back for a considerable distance, then the dam bursts, and the gorge is stripped of its timber.”

Sept. 25, 1876. Weather clearing in the Ohinemuri and prospectors turning out. Prospecting was going on the hill watershed of the Mangakara Stream.

T.A. Dunlop was getting going on Smile of Fortune and Morning Light underground stopes etc., “and arrangements will at once be made for the construction of a tramway from the workings to Perry's battery.” There were very encouraging reports of the prospects of both mines.

The Echo had been started on a different principle to most of the mines in the district. All monies paid for shares go towards working and prospecting the ground, operations start Monday.

La Buona Ventura was taking out good stone. “Golden Hill and Star of Ohinemuri and several others will start operations shortly.”

Sept. 26. Roads getting in good order at last, so that a person can get about without going up to his knees in mud. "The population of Waitekauri has had a considerable addition during the past week, in consequence of several leases starting to work."

Sept. 28. Report of another reef struck in Smith's claim at Owcharoa, gold showing plain similar to the Annie. Was Buona Ventura, now renamed the Champion Lode. W.A. Hunt and Co, prospecting party, including J.M. Russell, into Mackaytown for more prospecting tools, as ground hardening - good show of gold-bearing quartz.

Sept. 29. T.A. Dunlop had wages men on the Morning Light and contractors at the Smile of Fortune. Perry's battery was rapidly approaching completion. A September 26 report showed new finds at Owcharoa increasing. That of Smith and party was the most important, with reef running towards the Morning Light. Bowman's discovery was of gold-bearing floaters. Erasmus and party had just uncovered a large lode, its full extent not yet stripped. Huntly's find gave good panning. Several others had pegged on the strength of these finds.

Sept. 30. At Owcharoa there was more activity, with near completion of the battery and new finds. Smith's Champion had good stone showing gold. "The Annie has had levels taken for a tramway to connect with the battery and will lose no time laying rails, to send stone to the mill. " Rowe (surveyor), and Tetley, shareholders in the Nut, "have inspected and are to report." They recommended work where the original prospectors "were working with splendid prospects." It was proposed to lay down wooden rails from the main tunnel.

Hope and Echo, which were adjoining, and immediately opposite the Nut on the south side of the river, were about to call tenders and put a joint drive through the spur.

"The battery will be completed soon, and if more energetic measures are not taken to grass stone, will not have enough to do."

Quite a village was arising at Waitekauri, including Topping's new restaurant.

Oct. 2, 1876, The Mint claim at Owcharoa had just formed a Company.

Owcharoa was very quiet on the 28th September. There was little work, everybody waiting for the battery to start. "It will be just as well if some of them get to work and get some quartz ready." The battery was expected to get going in about 3 weeks. Then they would start with 15 head of stamps, though they had framing for 20.

At the Morning Light the small battery erected on the ground had been taken down. Men had been put on to drive in the mine. Mine manager T.A. Dunlop informed that there would be a tramway constructed along the south side of the river to a point opposite the battery, and then across the river to the mill.

The Smile of Fortune was driving in the mine, and the manager had put men on to prospect No. 2 reef, "to have stone ready for the mill when it starts.'

"It has been raining and blowing the last two days, and the roads are "back to their original bottomless condition."

A correspondent wrote that Mackaytown ought to have been on the other side of the main range, to suit the Owcharoa and Waitekauri districts.

October 3. More rain, with a heavy thunderstorm.

Scarcity of mining news, some small activity J.R. Smith, at the Champion, Owcharoa.

October 5 A large number had left Thames by the steamer Ruby for the first gold escort from the Ohinemuri (Waitekauri) that day.

October 6. Long description of the first gold escort with 1,354 ounces, being 924 from the Waitekauri Coy., 106 from the Young New Zealand, and 324 ounces from 321 tons for the Welcome Coy. 924 ounces was from 1700 tons.

October 7. Riders and walkers went from Paeroa by the pack track to Waitekauri, where they had luncheon and were shown round the mine and battery, both on a very big scale.

They went back from Waitekauri by the Waitekauri-Mackaytown road. The gold was taken by the

Company horseman Fisher and escorted by Captain Newall and two men of the Armed Constabulary. The road was noted as an improvement on the Paeroa-Waitekauri pack track, though longer.

On the way to Mackaytown, a number of visitors called at Owharoa, and found it quiet compared to Waitekauri. Perry's battery was getting on - "Perry says he need not hurry, as claims not getting much stone ready, and he would be ready without extra pushing by the time they are."

T.A. Dunlop had done a good deal of work since he took charge at the Morning Light and Smile of Fortune. Re plenty of payable stone for the battery. He said Annie and Radical were to start work in a few days.

Water was turned on in Perry's race, and found to act most satisfactorily.

Between Waitekauri and Owharoa and Mackaytown the new farms were noticed. The road "passes through some good patches of level country, and signs of cultivation are not wanting, amongst the lessees of the various agricultural sections which skirt the roadway. We understand that every acre has been taken up along the line of road, and fencing is being done in many places. The view is one of the most charming. The undulating country can be seen stretching as far as the eye can carry, with the cool stream of the Ohinemuri threading its tortuous way along the foots (sic) of the hills and through the open country until lost in the distance."

At Mackaytown there was "an excellent cold collation in Mr. McCloughlen's gaily decorated store." Toasts included pioneer prospectors of Waitekauri James Liddell and William Goldsworthy.

"The townships of Mackaytown and Paeroa present a greatly improved appearance to visitors. The hotels are assuming an air of comfort which can scarcely be expected in a district so young. At Mackaytown, Mr. Marshall the draper (of Thames) is about to open a branch establishment for general business under the management of Mr. Thos. Kitchin, and other places are being enlarged and improved. At Paeroa Mr. Phillips, late of Pollen Street (Thames), has opened a hardware business, and possesses all the machinery for doing a large trade, in tinware, galvanised iron, zinc work, chimneys etc. Mr. J.M. Robson has opened a large grocery and general store in a central situation, opposite the Criterion Hotel, and possesses facilities for doing a good trade. Mr. Jas. Reid, draper, late of Brown Street, is in the commodious premises erected at the end of the township by Mr. Alexander Hogg, Mr. Lipsey, Mr. Coote and Mr. Power are here, with well-conducted hotels. Mr. G.H. Hagin, an old Thames publican, conducts a boarding and refreshment house."

October 10, 1876. "The Morning Light of Owharoa directors meet and decide on a bridge over the river to convey quartz to the new battery Mr. Perry is erecting, now fast approaching completion. The span required over the Ohinemuri is 70 feet, and needs to be a considerable height for floods. The level workings are 17 feet lower than the battery hoppers, but gearing is to be attached to the battery, by which loaded trucks will be drawn up the incline."

October 15. "Waitekauri now seems fairly launched....At Waitekauri things have brightened up wonderfully, miners putting up comfortable houses, and clearing ground for gardens."

(There were also nearby 50 acre leases with cleared ground and at least temporary housing, between Waitekauri and Owharoa. Away to the South, the Ulster settlers at Katikati had now been there 9 months or more, "during which upwards of 50 substantial homesteads and farm offices have been erected, and about 1500 acres laid down in permanent grasses.)

(But there was still a great deal of forest on the northern side of the Ohinemuri, including along most of the Mackaytown-Owharoa road, which was why trees had to be cut down on each side of the roadway to give it a better chance to dry out, at least in fine spells in summer.)

October 18. In the Ohinemuri with better weather roads were getting in first class order.

October 19. "We doubt if there will be much stir in the Ohinemuri till Mr. Perry's battery at Owharoa is started."

"It was hoped that trial crushings of stone from the Main Lead and City of Auckland would have helped to resuscitate Karangahake, but the results only deepened the gloom in that district."

Oct. 23. Owharoa was "improving." "Mr. Climo has taken charge of the Annie, and is busy making a tramway to Perry's battery, 5 chains in length. The Morning Light is making a cutting for a tramway. The Smile of Fortune is driving on No. 4 reef and gold is frequently seen; it intends to commence stoping in a few days, so

we think there is no fear of scarcity of quartz if the battery is ready to start now.”

“A number of men prospecting about here report loose gold and specimens; there is no doubt that a rich reef exists between here and Waitekauri, as good prospects can be got in any of the branch creeks, of which there is a number.”

October 26. At Owharoa works were being pushed ahead in the Annie, Smile of Fortune and Morning Light, under the superintendence of Climo and Dunlop. It was expected Perry's battery would be ready to crush in a month's time.

October 28. “The beautiful weather lately has been quite changing the appearance of the Country; everything is beginning to look green, and the horses and cattle, which, a month ago, could hardly pick up enough to sustain life, are now beginning to look quite sleek and well fed. The roads are in good order, and what a month ago was quite an undertaking – getting to Owharoa or Waitekauri - is now simply a pleasant walk.”

November 1, 1876.

Abolition of Provinces took effect. Coromandel had its own County to the north. Thames County took in both the Ohinemuri and the Great Swamp that would become the Hauraki Plains, and went as far south as Mount Te Aroha. On the eastern side of the range, the Katikati lands were in Tauranga County, which began not far south of Owharoa, though it did not come as far north as the Ohinemuri River.

Nov. 2. Karangahake Gold Mining Company meeting lapsed for lack of a quorum.

Nov. 3. There was depression in Waitekauri, assigned various causes. (Gold yields were falling off rather than climbing, and certainly not up to the expectations of ever increasing returns following the first escort.)

Nov. 4. Owharoa visit - found the road vastly improved. This was not altogether due to the fine weather. A certain amount of credit was due to the roadmen, although they were few.

“Natives on the flat between here and Mackaytown, on both sides of the river, are very busy ploughing, harrowing, sowing etc., which gives a lively appearance to the place. Some of the Europeans who have secured farm sections within the goldfield boundary have put their shoulders to the wheel, and it will be a good thing for the district if those who have not yet done so, but nevertheless have secured sections, were to follow the good example.”

“The same remark applies to a good many of the gold mining leases. A few willing men prospecting the country, for others retaining ground hoping some other claim in the vicinity will strike something to increase the value of their property.”

Visits to the mines. Morning Light, old coffee mill been cleared away, giving space for a quartz paddock. To start breaking down big face in which gold visible. Tramway nearly completed, and new BRIDGE be finished in a week. It was a workmanlike job, the mine manager being the designer and supervisor.

At the Annie all hands were building the tramway, “which seems intended to last, and shows confidence.”

Champion was next the Annie, with the lode apparently still there, and the shareholders so decided to remain.

The Nut was next, doing some work.

The battery was well forward, thought would be ready as soon as the claims were ready for it. “A great many shareholders do not agree - they want dividends before Christmas, and they begin to think they will not get them till after.”

November 7. Visit to Owharoa from Waitekauri. The correspondent got there drenched by rain and the miners gave him “calamity water” (rum).

“On the agricultural sections of Messrs. Bein, Kinsella, Earl and others, the grass is growing splendidly, and if mining looks dull at present, the farmers have nothing to complain of, as the weather is all they can desire.”

“A meeting of the residents of this place was held at Bein's, when it was proposed by Mr. Elliott, and seconded by Mr. Bein, ‘That the district from the police camp to the edge of the Waitekauri bush, should, for the

future, be known as the Waitekauri Valley, and that all correspondents should address their letters for that place.' Carried unanimously."

"I have been requested to state that any communications for Messrs. Bein, Elliott, Kinsella, Erle, Brown and others, should be addressed Waitekauri Valley, as letters and papers are in the habit of going to Owharoa and being delayed there."

"Perry's battery is in a very forward state. The stampers are in position, the table and blanket strakes laid, and 3 berdans on the ground, which will be fixed next week. There are 450 feet of galvanised pipe from the end of the race to the tank, then 72 feet of wrought iron pipe to the turbine, the fall therefore 60 feet; the turbine is already in position on the south side of the river. It is intended to drive the stamps by an endless wire rope across the river instead of a belt. The battery will be ready to start in less than 5 weeks, on Morning Light and Annie material as a trial."

"The Morning Light is getting a tramway along the south side of the river and erecting a BRIDGE to connect with the battery - substantial to stand against the heavy freshes to which the river is liable.

"The Smile of Fortune is stopping and driving on good prospects.

"The Annie has completed a tramway to the battery," first class, iron rails, "looks to last some time. To drive 50 feet to intersect predecessors' winze on a fine big reef." Some visible gold seen in stone. Costs of breaking out and sending to mill trifling.

"The Nut has 6 men putting in a tunnel from the creek level, loose gold gives good prospects."

Expecting activity from lease parties with battery soon and prospect of mine inspector.

November 11. Owharoa. "Mr. Dunlop has succeeded in throwing across the stringers for the tramway from the Morning Light to Perry's Battery, and a few more days will see the work completed. He has had the honour of erecting the FIRST TIMBER BRIDGE across the Ohinemuri. The span is about 70 feet, the stringers single lengths of sawn heart kauri. There is little left to be done at Perry's battery, the wire rope to connect the turbine with the battery is expected up daily."

There was a proposed amalgamation of Golden Hill and Radical. The Nut was to erect a battery if satisfactory results. Mr. H.T. Rowe the surveyor was up to make a proper mining survey of the claim. Some new ground was taken up adjoining the Nut and Owharoa claims.

November 15. Weather at Waitekauri causes creeks to be deep and roads deeper.

November 18. "The shock of the unexpected poverty of the gold returns from Waitekauri has quite driven these stocks out of the market." Expected thousands of ounces instead of hundreds. District sound progress.

November 21. Ohinemuri bad weather, roads in winter uniform of mud.

November 22. Owharoa good progress in the leading mines. Perry's battery almost complete. Smile of Fortune stone to be the first crushed - in about a fortnight - 9 men at the mine under T.A. Dunlop, extensive underground development. Good prospects, about 100 tons of crushing stuff already on hand. Morning Light on the other side of the river also under his management, recently completed substantial BRIDGE to the battery, much underground development, 40 tons broken down.

Annie connected mine to battery by strong permanent tramway. Driving to winze, 112 feet yet to go.

Bella had 6 men employed to reach the Morning Light reef.

Cameron was pushing on in the Excelsior.

November 24. Perry's battery at Owharoa to start crushing early next week. Wire rope which to connect battery with turbine on Morning Light side of the river arrived at Paeroa on the 23rd, and being sent on to Owharoa. Reefs in Annie and Morning Light opening up splendidly.

November 25. Owharoa final preparations battery, wire rope arriving soon. Expect difficult to drive by wire rope in summer.

Morning Light finished substantial BRIDGE connecting with battery, with 75 feet span, girders fifteen inches by six inches, with 3 trusses and iron tension rods, strong diagonal braces between girders to stop swaying from side to side. Tramway from battery to face including bridge 385 feet.

Trucks to be drawn across river by friction gear worked from pinion shaft. Smile of Fortune and Nut good underground development and prospects. Annie has laid tramway to battery and from face of tunnel to tip.

November 30. 1876. Annie made its first Company "call," of sixpence on each share.

December 5. The Owharoa battery had not started on account of a landslip into its water race, but repairs would be completed in a few days. There was very excellent stone from the Morning Light.

December 7. (Recent progress on the "main road" to Tauranga was summed up by verses on local Member of the House of Representatives, Billy Rowe.

"Now, Billy my boy, what's this you're about?

Some more of your scheming and dodging no doubt.

What of your fine promises - vanished like air.

What of the fine road from Puke to Kati?

Just in the same mess as 'twas left by Mackay."

The Nut mine of Owharoa had a small test parcel tried in Thames at Greenville's battery, Karaka Creek, average of 1 1/2 ounces to the ton. (Good).

December 9. Owharoa was ready to start crushing "with the 15 stamper battery erected by Mr. Perry, when a portion of the water race gave way where the flume was carried round a sharp curve to avoid a short tunnel, but the latter is now adopted. The contract has been left to Mr. E. Cameron to make this surface tunnel, 150 feet in length. The mill had gone up slowly, because the mine proprietors could not see the force of accumulating material till the mill was ready to crush, and the mill proprietor was in no hurry till he saw a good prospect of being able to proceed - both valid reasons no doubt. The plant was formerly at work up the Karaka (Thames) till removed to make room for Mr. Perry's tailing machine. It has 15 stamps, and room left on the bed logs for another 5." Erected on the North bank of the Ohinemuri, water race brought for a distance of nearly a mile on the opposite bank, with heavy fall for turbine erected on the south bank. Geared to battery by wire rope, extends across the river to a wheel 7 feet in diameter, grooved, drives battery by spur wheel which works cam shaft and stampers. Ropes led over pulleys attached to large kauri tree which grows on bank of river, to prevent snagging and decrease the friction. Distance between turbine and driving wheel of the battery about 140 feet. Novel appearance. Plant, stampers, tables on the most approved principles.

Greater amount of energy in mining with approaching start of mill. Bridge provides good crossing - connects Morning Light claim with mill. Carries tramway to face about 15 feet in length and probably the same height: mainly sandstone with innumerable quartz veins, from knife blade to one inch. These carry the richest and possibly all the gold - sandstone therewith reducing average. Shareholders sanguine. Generally look on as richest mine in the district. To be the first to crush. On its results depends to a considerable degree the future of this district.

Face been worked a short distance above the river level and some distance beyond, higher upstream, crosscut being driven for prospecting purposes. Similar formation been cut through not far from entrance and in this gold also been found. Manager T.A. Dunlop, formerly of the Bird in Hand etc. at Thames.

Annie on other side of river similar formation. Winze, and drive with 50 feet of backs being made to meet winze. In charge of W. Climo, of Tararu. Have laid nearly 500 yards of iron tramway to connect with battery and secure mullock tip towards creek. Still driving to winze, further levels can only be obtained by sinking.

Smile of Fortune fairest semblance of defined lodes have seen in the district, also more developed, with more work actually accomplished. No. 2 lode carries in its casing a dark gritty quartz, or mineral mixture similar to that which contained the richest class of gold in the old Yankee Doodle claim, Tararu. Work being done on 4 reefs.

Few others working. Bella on Morning Light side putting in prospecting drive, but nothing yet payable. Nut said to have large reef, but not time to visit it.

December 11, 1876. The Waitekauri Battery of 40 stamps was down to 10 hours per day, while, "a large number of mines adjacent to the Waitekauri Coy. are altogether idle."

Account of trip on horseback from Thames to Katikati and Tauranga. Only really bad bit between Thames

and Tauranga 1 1/2 miles through the Komata," positively dangerous for man and horse."

"Many have walked as far as Owharoa knee deep in mud – thanks to fine weather we were able to get along at 5 or 6 miles per hour."

"On crossing the river at Owharoa, and rising the hill on the opposite side, I was much struck with the signs of civilisation." (This would be largely looking back across the river.) The pioneer settlers in this locality mean work, and have already fenced in and laid down in grass, a considerable portion of their holdings, besides having erected comfortable houses (in some cases whares) to live in. Altogether the glimpses one gets on riding along this portion of the road induces the belief that this is the nucleus of a thriving farming community."

"Descending by an easy gradient, the traveller finds himself on the Waihi Plains, a great portion of which is still in the hands of the natives, and adapted to carry a large number of sheep or cattle; the soil I should think was hardly good enough for farming purposes." The plain goes on for 12 or 13 miles, low range, view of Mayor Island, etc.

"On descending to the beach, Waihi is reached. This is a Maori settlement of considerable size."

Good impression of the energy of Katikati settlers, monotonous road to Tauranga.

December 15. A Waitekauri return was only 318 ounces from 1,000 tons. Battery at Owharoa completed, and fair start at end of holidays. For the rest of 1876 Owharoa was out of the news.

1877

1877. January 1. Heavy rain New Year's Eve and midnight.

January 9. Report Owharoa battery starts up.

January 12. New battery at Owharoa been working on stuff from Morning Light and Smile of Fortune with very satisfactory results. To continue on these for a fortnight, then Annie.

January 15. Owharoa battery proceeding splendidly.

January 15. Ohinemuri district revived by good returns just before holidays. And now Owharoa battery showing good payable returns.

Mr. Perry's battery at Owharoa had 10 head of stampers on Smile of Fortune ore, 5 on Morning light, known to be yielding payable returns, though not yet a cleanup.

January 18. The Waitekauri track was now impracticable for getting machinery to the mines, and instead of getting goods up by drays had to be by packhorses. The Thames County Council was informed that in one part of the road the bottom could not be touched with a 15 feet pole. The County Engineer was empowered to repair the tracks between Paeroa, Owharoa and Waitekauri, at a cost not exceeding £50.

January 29. Four crushings by Perry battery at Owharoa not up to sanguine expectations, but giving substantial evidences that in some of the claims at least gold in payable quantities. No. 2 reef, though not large, said to be the only properly defined one at Owharoa - probably go three quarters of an ounce to the ton, judging by the amalgam. Morning Light from 12 tons got 18 ounces of amalgam. The Annie from 20 tons got 17 ounces of amalgam. The Radical from 5 tons got 4 ounces of amalgam.

January 30, 1877. Owharoa found that a good deal of amalgam had remained in the stamper boxes, and the amalgam itself was high in gold. The Annie's 15 ounces of amalgam gave 7 ounces 13 pennyweights of retorted gold, "a proportion believed never reached on this field." A most efficient battery was now erected, and with gold proved to exist in payable quantities, there was no longer any excuse for the whole ground to be unmanned.

Jan. 31. Owharoa retorting exceeded the most sanguine expectations. The 61 ounces of amalgam from the Smile of Fortune melted to 29 ounces 8 pennyweights, losing only 7 dwts. in the melting after retorting. From 27 tons, this was over an ounce of gold to the ton. The gold was inferior, only worth £2-7-6 per ounce (pure gold £4) but a good payable return. It was from the upper level of No. 2 reef - and where intersected at the bottom it has a much more promising appearance.

Morning Light 12 tons gave 8 ozs. 3 dwt. of melted gold. The amalgam had a higher percentage of gold than anticipated.

Feb. 5. Waitekauri also exceeded the now more modest expectations, not more than 500 tons giving 610 ozs. 10 dwt. melted gold.

Feb. 6. Thames County was looking into the state of the Paeroa wharf and who was responsible. It was urgently required for the trade not only of Paeroa, but also the whole of the other districts - Mackaytown, Owharoa and Waitekauri. A flying survey of the Thames County, headed by chairman Alexander Brodie, and with engineer McLaren, included the road to Waitekauri from Paeroa, via Owharoa, going from Paeroa via Mackaytown. Near the Owharoa-Waitekauri junction they were met by Wilson the Waitekauri mine manager, Waitekauri director Kelly, and two Armed Constabulary. The County got "gold duty" percentage, so the County people were glad to hear the latest Waitekauri yield was 621 ounces.

They turned from the junction the short distance to Owharoa, where they "found little and the battery idle. The shareholders pointed out the reefs and prospects and explained the dispute with the battery proprietor re his charge for crushing. There were no doubts about the payable nature of the claims, as indeed shown by the returns from recent crushings." They had no applications to make re roads etc.

The battery being closed, and the manager in town, they were unable to examine it, so turned to Waitekauri, taking a short cut across a number of the agricultural settlements, instead of going back towards the junction. They also used a portion of a new road towards Tauranga.

They went back from Waitekauri to Paeroa by the still difficult pack track.

February 7. There was a hopeful feeling from the good Waitekauri crushing and a projected tramway to connect the big battery with the Welcome and Young New Zealand mines, in spite of the stoppage at Owharoa. The tramway would also give access to the big Waitekauri battery to a number of other mines along its way.

February 19. Waitekauri roads better and out of mud with finer weather.

February 20. Report of meeting of shareholders of Smile of Fortune and Morning Light of Owharoa. A joint meeting of 7 Sept. 1876 had appointed Thomas A. Dunlop mine manager. On the 6th of January, 1877, trial crushings from the different reefs worked, totalling 28 tons, gave 29 ounces 8 dwt. of gold selling for £2-4-10 an ounce. The funds being exhausted, and a balance due to the Bank of New Zealand, the directors resolved to call the present extraordinary meeting to place the state of affairs before the shareholders and to consult as to the best method of paying off liabilities and devising means for the future workings.

Trial crushings as proving a very valuable lode. "A fresh call is necessary, but it is confidently expected it will be the last," wrote Adam Porter, Chairman of Directors, in his report read to the meeting. T.A. Dunlop gave report of development, paddocked ore - could crush for small profit - and where best to get profitable stone, and what underground development was recommended. The Smile of Fortune directors empowered to let on tribute such portions of the mine as they might think advantageous to the interests of the company.

Directors were to "be enforced (sic) to dispose of shares, now the property of the company, or such as they think best for the advantage of the Coy".

Morning Light directors took office by appointment of an extraordinary meeting of 30th August, 1876, then appointed joint mine manager as above, and joint store for custody of company property and residence of mine manager. The BRIDGE was completed in December 1876. Crushing trial took place 6 January, 1877, inferior to expectations, owing to the state of finances owing to dilatory payment of calls, had to stop work till calls accrued. 20 tons gave 8 ozs. 3 dwt., £2-7-0 per ounce, total £19-3-0. Since then the Company was sued by Stone Bros., who have obtained a judgment for the amount of their account, and there being no funds in hand to discharge that liability, provision must now be made by the shareholders.

Account of work done and income and expenditure and liabilities - Stone £33-17-4. In Bank £6-4-7, in hand £13. Unpaid calls £95-17-6.

The BRIDGE was the property of the Company, and if any company came in would receive satisfaction for the £100 spent on the bridge. The amount spent actually working the mine was only £180. Mr. Vaughan said the Government provided £100 towards the cost of the bridge. The Chairman explained that this sum was not spent, because they did not erect the bridge where the engineer wanted. The sum of £40 was all that was allowed, because the engineer did not consider it would be of so much use to the public if erected where it was. Mr. Vaughan said it was a mistake on the part of the engineer, for the public were largely using it, and it was

never intended for carts or heavy traffic. (De facto way to Katikati and Tauranga across the Ohinemuri River.)

If the last call was paid up the company would have a balance of £20 in hand. 14 days grace was given, then all shares unredeemed were to be sold.

Smith said not more than 19 tons had been crushed, and he believed that this had either been picked over before crushed, or the best had been washed away. This Mr. Vaughan denied. It was decided to put on men to work the mine after the sale of the forfeited shares, "providing funds have accrued, and that the directors be empowered to let portions of the mine on tribute should they think it advantageous."

February 23. Two directors had visited Waitekauri and decided to shut down the big battery for a month and shorten hands at the mine.

At Owharoa, the Annie was busy getting a crushing out of the upper portions. Had 50 tons at present at the battery, the intention being to keep the mill going for 2 weeks, be a fair test. The cost of breaking out etc. was low, would pay at 6 pennyweights to the ton. Sandstone and intermingled gold-bearing quartz.

The Nut was also getting out 50 tons.

Re road, would suggest between Owharoa and Mackaytown making deviations to avoid Break-neck Hill and Sloppy Hollow.

"These days meetings of goldmining companies, when they consider the prospects, there is an almost invariable resolution to wind up as quickly and cheaply as possible. The Annie Company of Owharoa is a cheerful exception."

Immediately after the crushing took place, and before the retorting, the directors held a meeting, so they were discouraged at the probable result, with instructions to convene an extraordinary meeting on January 21st, "to consider the advisability of winding up the company or otherwise."

Retorting took place - the effect was magical - no more was heard of the extraordinary meeting, operations being actively carried on, and arrangements were made to crush quartz, of which there was said to be an almost unending supply, at Perry's battery.

February 26. Populations were Paeroa 156, plus around 150 "natives," "always shifting about," Mackaytown had 67. Karangahake had 36. "At one time there was a large population here, but in consequence of the falling off of the gold return there was a general clearing out. The Karangahake Coy. had a 16 stamp battery, worked by a water turbine. The mine was at present on tribute.

Owharoa had 48, miners 36, women 3, children 6, storekeepers 3, Battery Perry's, water power, turbine, 15 stamps.

Agricultural sections, 50 acres each, 15, residents 6, area cultivated 250 acres, grass, cattle 120, horses 61. Mining at present depressed state, which has the effect of reducing the population one fourth, but things improving, population beginning to return. "A good deal of bush is being felled by settlers for sowing grass."

Waitekauri district. Miners 135, sawyers 4 pairs, storekeepers 6, hotels 2, women 21, children 53. Batteries 2: Waitekauri Coy's. 40 stamps, driven by water wheel, on Waitekauri Stream. Wick's battery, on Mangakara Creek, 9 stamps, water power, turbine, not working, in consequence of not having tram communication with claims. 32 50 acre agricultural sections, residents 12, acres cultivated, 290 in grass and potatoes. Large quantity of bush trees cut down ready for burning off. Mining slack, but in 2 months expect great activity by miners, as be tram communication between the mines and the Waitekauri battery. Cattle 300, horses 25 (including mining).

Waihi Plains, 17 50 acre agricultural sections, residents 4, cattle 50, horses 6, 175 acres in cultivation, grass. Next year to double the amount in cultivation.

Feb. 28, 1877. Government extending road across the Waihi Plains, and Thames County hopes there will ultimately be good communication thereby to Tauranga.

March 8. Annie at Owharoa started to send stuff to the battery a fortnight ago. Intended to keep the full force of the battery at work on stuff from this mine and give it a fair trial. Morning Light and Smile of Fortune were expected to start work in a week or two, and some tributes would be let at once.

March 13. The Annie was showing up some good ore for a payable return from crushing.

March 15. Government goldfields votes included £250 for the road between Paeroa and Mackaytown and Owaharoa.

March 26. 6,000 ounces a week from the Moanataiari mine at Thames started off some big production of gold, making 1877 the best gold year at Thames since the "palmy days." This meant more venture capital available for outlying districts. Waitekauri was getting on with its tramway, and there was some small encouraging gold production from tributers at Karangahake.

March 28. The Nut at Owaharoa took out a 10 ton parcel to take to Thames to be crushed for a test.

March 29. But shareholders wanted the Owaharoa road extended to the proper right bank of the Ohinemuri and 18 chains east of Perry's battery, as a means of getting quartz to the mill. This would benefit a number of claims, and make a portion OF THE MAIN ROAD TO TAURANGA. Referred to Thames County Council's Works Committee.

April 2. An improving Annie reported through its manager Riordan that it had got 28 ounces from a crushing at Perry's battery, manager Fisher. The Smile of Fortune got 4 1/2 ounces from 5 tons. The Nut got 2 1/4 ounces from 5 tons.

The roading projected by the County would enable the Nut to get quartz to the mill and make it a valuable property. The battery was going better. By working the wire rope at a slow speed it "goes first rate, at 35 miles per hour. The battery at 55 strokes per minute not fast enough for poor stuff, so will have to make alterations so the wire rope will still travel slow and the battery fast, at a trifling cost."

Thames was having a gold sharemarket boom with rising production.

April 10. Owaharoa crushings showed 3 lodes of the Smile of Fortune to be payable. No. 1, 6 dwt. No. 2 1 ounce. No. 4 12 dwt. No. 3 not yet known, but not so good. Trial crushing at hand for Morning Light. Annie had temporarily ceased operations.

April 12. 1877. From Tairua there were good roads along the coast to Whangamata and Katikati.

April 13 found Waitekauri and its big battery busy, as further sections of the tramway were pushed ahead.

April 16. At Owaharoa the battery had ceased to work for the present, but had completed a crushing for the Smile of Fortune, 30 tons giving 16 ozs 10dwt., the result of several trial crushings, some payable. The Morning Light got 3 1/2 ounces from a trial crushing.

May 3. Good results continued at the Waitekauri, with the tramway rejuvenating things, "There are a large number of good, substantial weather board houses erected during the last few months, and several men have brought up their families, giving the place quite a settled appearance."

May 5. Waitekauri was paying its first dividend.

May 8. "Should like to see some attempt to resuscitate mining operations." Good battery standing idle alongside several reefs which have yielded 10 to 27 pennyweights per ton."(20 dwts. = 1 oz.)

May 11. Thames County meeting. Mackaytown to Tauranga - Bridge much required across the Ohinemuri River, beyond Kinsella's farm, to connect the Tauranga main road with the Thames district. "As advantage would at once be taken by parties interested to bring cattle and sheep from Napier to the Thames market, it would prove a work of great public utility."

Paeroa to Mackaytown and Owaharoa. "Small contracts have been let for repairing all the worst portions, but no more to be spent than absolutely necessary to keep the road open for traffic, as the surveyor has been instructed to lay off a new line of road."

May 12. "For some time interest in the Owaharoa district has abated, but now negotiations are promising to resuscitate it. Gold was certainly obtained from several of the claims, and at one time good things were expected from the Smile of Fortune, Morning Light, and crushings at Mr. Perry's battery demonstrated that the reefs of the two mentioned claims contained payable gold, as well as in others to a less degree. But these were not sufficient to induce either directors of companies or battery owners to incur the responsibility of properly working the properties." Led to several offers; led to offer by battery proprietors to give up the battery with all its rights and appliances for a moderate sum, with a stipulated number of shares in the Smile of Fortune Gold Mining Company. "Will be accepted, and activity will prevail shortly, including to the district generally."

May 18. Ohinemuri last few weeks brighter aspect, population having increased and material wealth therewith. Principal cause success of Waitekauri mine. Battery pounding away full force.

May 19. Owharua. Smile of Fortune has purchased Mr. Perry's interest in battery for £300 and 1,000 shares. Will enable Coy. to crush low grade at small cost, and there will be no necessity to keep 2 managers and 2 distinct staffs of employees. The men, when not engaged in the mill, will find plenty of work in the mine. Morning Light had a meeting; intends to start work again. The Nut drive is being pushed ahead to prospect their mine. Bruce, Blaine and Corty have got some good prospects in loose stone and intend to drive to intersect the "reef."

Karangahake was getting some small returns from tributers.

May 24. Waitekauri had intersected its biggest and most continuous reef yet, with a splendid 40 stamp battery to work it.

May 25. "The Owharua bridge at the crossing between the Morning Light and the battery stood the flood all right. It would take a higher flood to damage it, though the flood on Monday (20th) was the highest for some time." Been several landslides between Mackaytown and Owharua.

June 6. The Waitekauri escort brought down 1,650 ounces for the month. Wet and stormy weather.

June 7. Owharua, Smile of Fortune had recent arrangements for the Coy. to have a half share in the 15 stamp battery and berdans erected by Mr. Perry and Co, for £300 cash and 1,080 shares in the Smile of Fortune. The remaining half now been transferred to the Coy, for 2/6 per ton of quartz crushed as a royalty.

June 21, 1877, found at Owharua only a few prospecting parties, with bad roads, and queries when the battery was going to start.

Towards the end of August, there was better weather, and Mine Inspector Goldsmith was succeeded by a Mr. Aitken. It was suggested he go to Owharua, with its idle mines and battery, on a work or forfeit basis.

Meanwhile Mackaytown was breaking up. Brought to Thames was the furniture from the Government offices, which were being dismantled. "Ichabod, the glory has departed." (The back door pack track from Paeroa to Waitekauri, being much shorter, was used a great deal to take supplies to Waitekauri, while Mackaytown had depended to a great extent on supplying Owharua.)

Progress at Waitekauri was continuing. The big battery was now served by 3 miles of tramway. The back track from Paeroa had been improved, with obscuring trees cut down, and it took two and a half hours from Paeroa, on foot, to McCombie's hotel, which also had a store, with nearby Cloonan's store.

It was reported at the beginning of October, 1877, that the Morning Light mine at Owharua being moribund, the Thames County Council purchased the BRIDGE over the Ohinemuri, as being useful for the road to Katikati and Tauranga, (For which it had already been a great deal used de facto.)

(Whether Owharua mining would revive was now in question.)

However, during October, some men were being put off at Waitekauri, including the Waitekauri Coy. mine manager Wilson, while an accident caused damage to the big water wheel, bringing the mill to a temporary standstill.

But there was some revival at Owharua, and the tramway connecting the Smile of Fortune with the battery was in process of being finished.

Meanwhile there was quite an exodus of Maoris from the banks of the Ohinemuri above Paeroa, which they had once densely lined. It was suggested they did not like becoming surrounded by Europeans, necessitating "compliance with the fencing Act, of which they have a holy horror."

(However, over two years since the opening of the Ohinemuri. there had not been the thousands of diggers paying a pound a year for Miner's Rights, which had made the Thames "native owners of the soil" wealthy. Raihana had gone, and while debts against land had been quietly let drop in view of the cession of the goldfield, though the good flat land had been left to the Maoris, there was no market for produce that might be surplus to subsistence, as in the days when the Thames Valley and the Waikato fed infant Auckland. It had been recently noted that the Ohinemuri lands and around Kerepehi, had once had an industrious people producing much produce, they had in more recent years become lazy and dissolute, and looking to land sales for money. Which

reduced the holdings they had been left with on the flats.) October saw the exodus at its height, “bag and baggage.”

November saw Corbett now both mine and battery manager at Waitekauri, but the battery needed new shoes, which needed horse and dray, not the pack track. But the road via Mackaytown was now impassable for vehicles too. No dray could use the “dilapidated channel, dignified by the name of a road”. And ex manager Wilson could not get out with his family and possessions - Corbett suggested the only way out might be by balloon.

(However, summer drying was coming on.) After a record production for some years, during much of 1877, Thames gold production began to fall off again, and attention turned to the Ohinemuri for a possible revival there.

This meant the battery at Owharoa actually got going, and came in strongly with a good return for December, 1877, with 135 ounces, which was at least something like production. 11 ounces came from the Owharoa, formerly Morning Light, and the rest from the Smile of Fortune.

Waitekauri gave 414 ounces, a pale shadow of former yields.

1878

The new Year of 1878 brought welcome news from a new Government that had just come in. The Premier was the Member for the Thames electorate, Sir George Grey. He “informed the County Chairman that the vote of £5,000 for new roads through to the Ohinemuri country, with an additional £1,000 from thence to Katikati, which could be expended at once on these very necessary works.”

(The Thames County Council had already bought itself a bridge at Owharoa, over the Ohinemuri River.)

In spite of tailing off toward the end of the year, Waitekauri for the half year ended December 31, 1877, got 2,378 ounces of gold, receipts being £9,129. (It remained to be seen whether Owharoa could not only get going, but keep going.)

The last days of February, 1878, saw mining at Owharoa continuing to improve, and the place was becoming more active than at any time before. Waitekauri was at least keeping going, the Young New Zealand mine coming in to bulk up a shipment by the river steamer Piako from Paeroa to Thames, in all 429 ounces.

At the beginning of March, the four surviving companies at Waitekauri, the Waitekauri, Welcome, Young New Zealand, and the Shannon and Fergus, began to consider either amalgamating or jointly putting in a low level tunnel.

Roading activity with the Grey largesse soon began to show itself. On March 25 a party of Maoris started in around Mackaytown.

At Owharoa both mining and prospecting were livening up further, and “the contracts for the Owharoa deviation of the Katikati road are getting on well.” (The attraction was the Bridge already in being) (For the time being the route would be the old Maori back door from Katikati lands into the Ohinemuri - or vice versa.)

At Waitekauri, however, having to make a decision whether to amalgamate or co-operate was apparently too much for the Waitekauri, Welcome and Young New Zealand, which downed tools, leaving only the Shannon and Fergus, in a small way. “Some of the hands have gone prospecting.” Lee and McCombie mentioned 1878 as when they started the first proper test of the often chipped at great quartz reef sticking up in the Waihi Plains, by way of an 80 foot tunnel, apparently in the summer of 1878-9, the first battery test of their quartz being in early 1879. And that was at Owharoa, which obviously was still keeping going.

For March, 1878, it figured in the gold returns, with 97 ounces.

At this time the total European population of the Ohinemuri was 917.

But during April, with the great Waitekauri battery continuing to stand idle, people were leaving, and it was feared “more would be clearing out.” Only 7 children were left in a once well attended school.

Owharoa did not figure in the April gold return, its battery being held up by want of water. All that was happening at Waitekauri was that a committee was trying to get the big battery by paying £5,000 on £15,000 owing.

However, the dry weather was good for roadmaking, and was over by May 10, when County Chairman Alexander Brodie and party went to Owharoa, “and rode along the new Katikati road as far as the Owharoa battery.” The mining there looked well, including the substantial tramways and the carefully and energetically worked battery. The County Engineer laid out a new and better deviation from the Owharoa road “on to the old Constabulary Tauranga road,” and “Mr. Aitken also laid out the line of road from the Waitekauri Stream to the Hikurangi Gorge, which, when completed, will shorten the distance to Katikati by thirteen miles.”

(The bridge had put Owharoa on the developing main road to Tauranga for the time being - which guaranteed continually improving communications for Owharoa, an advantage not shared by Waitekauri, on a side road.)