

# Talisman-Dubbo Mining Company

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## The Karangahake Mines

### Karangahake School and District 70th Jubilee 1889-1959

The First World War proved a desperate challenge to the mines. In the first place men enlisted in great numbers and secondly costs mounted prohibitively. Cyanide had been imported mostly from Germany, and from costing 9 per lb. it went up to 1/6d and then 2/6d. The Crown Mine closed first, the Talisman struggling on till 1920 when the Company went into liquidation, having produced over £3 million worth of bullion. But small private enterprises continued and nearly 20 years later the Dubbo Mine, with Government assistance, was still giving results. It was managed by Mr McConachie (Senr.) and then by his son. The shift bosses were Mr Fred Dare and Mr Jack Bunting with later Mr B. Dunlop, and the Battery Manager, Mr Clifton. But the advent of World War 2 brought about the general abandonment of mining at Karangahake. The last prospectors were Dolph Schultz, Bill Greaves and Cyril Waynes.<sup>1</sup>

## Talisman Dubbo Mining Company

### KARANGAHAKE the years of the gold 1875 -1935

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The rise in the price of gold in the 1930s, and the availability of cheaper labour, as a result of widespread unemployment, gave encouragement to further mining activities. This led to the formation of the Talisman Dubbo Goldmining Company.

During the peak years, the great Maria Reef had been extensively worked by the Talisman Company, from near the summit of the mountain to over 500 feet below sea level. Part of this reef, however, had not been worked because it lay within the area held by the N.Z. Crown Mines Company, which had not exploited it because of the distance from their main workings on the Welcome and Crown Reef, although they attempted to reach it by means of the Rose Crosscut, driven in 1923-25. This attempt was their last, and their ground was forfeited by the Mining Warden in 1928, leaving the way open for other prospectors. (The Talisman Company had ceased to exist by 1920.)

The unworked portion of the Maria Reef lay in the area earlier known as the Earl of Glasgow Claim, by J.B. Morris. Prospecting resulted in favourable reports in 1928 and the Talisman Dubbo Company was formed with a capital of \$40,000, and registered in 1929. On 7 February 1930, driving was commenced in the Maria Reef from the Southern face of the mountain and by 11 November 1930 the Talisman Dubbo level had been extended 450 feet. Two tons of ore had been treated at the Thames School of Mines and returned a value \$18.50 per ton. Over 100 tons had been stacked at the mine entrance, which, being on the southern side of the mountain, was not very accessible.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.ohinemuri.org.nz/historic-texts/karangahake-school-70th-jubilee/the-karangahake-mines>  
The Karangahake Mines. Karangahake School and District 70th Jubilee 1889-1959

Reporting in November 1930, Mr John Smith, Supervisor of the Company, stated that he considered the old collapsed Talisman No. 1 level should be re-opened. It entered from the North West face of the mountain, 115 feet below the Talisman Dubbo drive. If this was done, and the No. 1 level connected to the Talisman Dubbo drive by a rise, then the ore could be passed down, and sent from the entrance of No. 1, down to the County Road, by means of an aerial tramway. But the old Talisman No. 1 crosscut was found to be so badly fallen in that a new level was driven alongside.

By November 1932 the level was in 517 feet, and the reef above was being stoped. The first ore was treated by the Golden Dawn Battery at Owharoa early in September 1932. (The Cartage Contractors were Forrest Bros, and the late Harold Moore was a driver for some years.), Amounting to 65.4 tons, it had been obtained whilst driving the No. 1 level and yielded gold and silver worth \$1092. Work on the erection of an aerial tramway was commenced to bring the ore down to the County Road near the Talisman No. 8 level. Costing \$740 it was 2160 feet in length and the first ore was sent down on 1 October 1933. Meanwhile the No. 1 level had been driven in under the Talisman Dubbo level, and towards the end of December 1933 work started on rising up towards it, reaching the Talisman Dubbo level in March 1934.

Soon after crushing commenced, a profit was made, and in December 1933 the Company declared its first dividend at 5%. Stoping at this time was being carried out in two shifts enabling about 30 to 40 tons of ore per week to be produced from the stopes above No. 1 level. Thirty-four men were employed under the management of Mr W.M. McConachie. (Shift bosses were Fred Dare and Jack Bunting.) During 1934-35 further dividends of up to 10% were paid. After completion of the rise, stoping re-commenced above the Talisman Dubbo level. The next stage was to open No. 2 level during 1935, and soon after a commencement was made on No. 3 level. This development work was necessary as the ore reserves above No. 1 and the Dubbo level were rapidly becoming exhausted. Up to March 1936, 6037 tons of ore had been treated and the production was at its peak, with 60 tons per week being produced. By September 1936 the No. 2 level was in 900 feet on a reef five feet wide. No. 3 level was in 800 feet, directly under a winze being sunk from No. 2 level. Early in 1936 the Company Directors met to consider building their own Battery instead of having the ore treated at the Golden Dawn Battery. At this time the ore cost \$6.15 per ton to treat. In May 1937 the building of the Battery commenced at the junction of the Ohinemuri and Waitawheta Rivers on the site of the former Talisman Power House. It was completed at a cost of \$24,000, and commenced to operate at the beginning of June 1938.

During 1937, at which time 37 men were employed, a new change shed was built to replace the old one which had been destroyed by fire. After the death of the Manager, Mr W.M. McConachie, Mr J.A. Bunting, and later Mr B. Dunlop were Acting Managers until Mr W.J. McConachie, son of the former Manager, was appointed to the position. By 1938 the ore in the upper levels was becoming depleted and ore from the levels, such as No. 7 (Hauraki), contained a high percentage of manganese, and was difficult to treat. The Battery, under the management of Mr Clifton, was also treating ore from other miners, mainly for Mr J.B. Morris & Co., whose own Battery could not cope with all his ore, and also for the men working the "New Talisman" Claim. At the beginning of 1939 only 16 men were employed underground, mainly

stopping on Dubbo No. 1 and Talisman Nos. 2 and 7 levels. Mr R.A. Rutherford, a mining engineer from Australia, was requested to inspect the mine and to give a report on its future prospects. He arrived at Karangahake on 29 March 1939, and commenced investigations next day. It was found that the ore was not payable, and a loss of \$300 per week was occurring. He made various proposals as to the development work which should be carried out in the hope of finding good ore. These included cleaning out No. 4 level, and rising to No. 2 Dubbo level. This work did not proceed for long before funds became exhausted.

The Battery, which had been closed, re-commenced on outside ore on 19 July 1939. For the year ended 31 December 1939, a loss of \$8320 was shown in the accounts, and by December 1939 all mining work by the Company had ceased. Work continued, however, by tributers during 1939. These included: J. Bunting, H. White, W. Arden, M.E. Fitzgerlad [Fitzgerald?], R.W. Brown, R. Fitzgerald and J. O'Brien. Most of these men were eligible for Government subsidy. All attempts to keep the mill operating on a payable basis failed, and it was dismantled, following the liquidation of the Company on 15 March 1940. The total production had amounted to 57,291 ounces valued at \$167,741.34. Dividends paid were \$5228.55 in 1934, and \$7670.60 in 1935. Gold duty paid to the Government was \$16,286. The machinery went to Fiji and the tanks to the Miranda Manganese Mines and to Puhipuhi in Northland. The Company's business was finalised by 1941, and all mining privileges had been struck off the register.

Gary Staples.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.ohinemuri.org.nz/historic-texts/karangahake-the-years-of-the-gold-1875-1935/talisman-dubbo-mining-co>

Talisman Dubbo Mining Company. KARANGAHAKE the years of the gold 1875 -1935

## 1930. Work starts

### 10 February 1930

WORK STARTED.

TALISMAN-DUBBO MINE. IMPORTANT OPERATIONS.

Work was started last week on the Talisman-Dubbo property at Karangahake, which was part of the Crown mines area, and lies across the strip of the Maria Reef. Immediate operations cover the clearing of the road from the battery to the mine, while the mouth of the intermediate level, which leads to the reef, has already been reached. Timbering will be needed to reach the face.

In addition to the Maria reef, to which operations will be first directed, Sheehan's reef and Morris' reef are outcropping on the western face. A five-stamper battery is owned by the company and is situated at the mouth of the Rose crosscut on the road up the mountain.<sup>3</sup>

## 1934

### J. F. Downey, Inspector of Mines<sup>4</sup>

Page 29

Talisman-Dubbo Gold-mines, Ltd., Karangahake (W. M. McConachie, Manager).—Work was carried on steadily for the period, an average of thirty men being employed...

During the year the company mined 2,034 tons of ore, all of which was treated at the Golden Dawn battery, and yielded 2,428 oz. 7 dwt. gold, valued at £14,228 11s. 3d., and 13,179 oz. 14 dwt. silver, valued at £1,057 2s. 9d...

Total output since commencement of operations 18,453 oz. 0 dwt. 5 gr. bullion, valued at £18,396 6s. 6d. Dividends to the amount of £2,614 5s. 6d. were paid.

## 1935

### 30 March

TALISMAN DUBBO YEAR

PURCHASE OF MILLING PLANT

The accounts of Talisman Dubbo Gold Mines, Limited, for the year ended December 31, show a net profit of £5733, against £915 earned in the half-year ended December, 1933, and a loss of £118 in the previous half-year. Interim dividends of 6d a share paid in March, May and July, 1934, absorbed £2614...

The treatment of ore by the Golden Dawn Company did not, by reason of the cartage cost and treatment conditions, enable ore under, say, £3 a ton value (on £4 an oz. gold value) to be profitably treated. There was a large tonnage of ore of a value of around about £2 a ton, which, assuming the company had its own treatment plant, could be profitably milled at the higher gold prices available today. The directors believe that, unless better conditions could be made for

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<sup>3</sup> <https://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/newspapers/HPGAZ19300210.2.32>

Hauraki Plains Gazette, Volume XXXXI, Issue 5535, 10 February 1930, Page 4

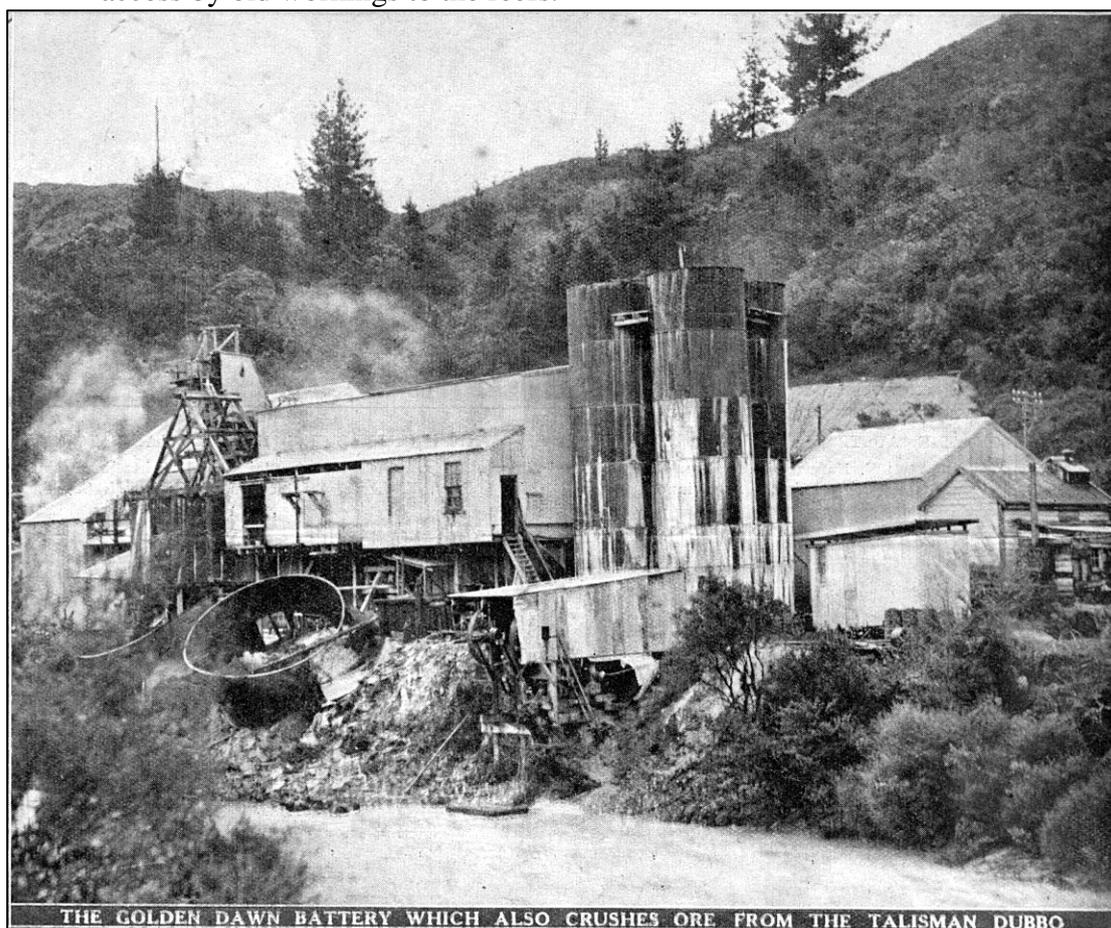
<sup>4</sup> <https://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/parliamentary/AJHR1935-I.2.2.2.3>

MINES STATEMENT. BY THE HON. C. E. MACMILLAN, MINISTER OF MINES., Appendix to the Journals of the House of Representatives, 1935 Session I, C-02

treatment in an outside plant than existed at present, the time had arrived for consideration of a milling plant for the company.

Samples of ore had been sent to England, America and Australia, for testing, with a view to selection of the most suitable and up-to-date plant. For this reason available funds were being conserved and not paid in further dividends. The mine manager had been instructed to survey and sample all ore available in the various workings in the property, to ascertain the amount of ore reserves available and whether the present erection of a treatment plant was fully warranted.

The directors during the year completed the purchase of the whole of the Crown mines S.Q. claim of 51 acres, and also applied for an adjoining area of 19 acres, making the total present holding 209 acres. The acquisition of the areas secured the extensions of a number of reefs traversing the mine, and also access by old workings to the reefs.<sup>5</sup>



Golden Dawn Battery, 25.09.1935. Auckland Weekly News.

**1936**

**29 February**

**TALISMAN DUBBO BATTERY**

(from our own correspondent) PAEROA, Friday

The Talisman Dubbo Gold Mining Company, Limited (Karangahake), is preparing a site for a 12-stamp battery at the junction of the Waitawheta and

<sup>5</sup> <https://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/newspapers/NZH19350330.2.20>

New Zealand Herald, Volume LXXII, Issue 22072, 30 March 1935, Page 9

Ohinemuri Rivers. In the past, ore has been taken to the Golden Dawn battery at Owharoa by motor-lorry. There will be an aerial tramline from the mine to the battery.<sup>6</sup>

**1937**

**26 February**

MINING REVIVAL  
PLANT TO BE ERECTED. KARANGAHAKE PLANS  
CONFIDENCE IN ORE RESERVES.

Karangahake mining is to come into its own again. A share list issued by Talisman Dubbo Gold Mines, Ltd., for subscription of £20,000 in 5s shares has closed, and the erection of a treatment plant capable of handling 25 tons of ore a day is to be commenced almost immediately.

An ideal site has been selected, at the junction of the Ohinemuri and, Waitawheta streams, and levelling work has already been carried out.

Treatment costs for ore, which up till the present has been transported to Owharoa, have totalled £3 1s 6d a ton. The costs at the proposed new plant are authoritatively estimated at a maximum of £1, including aerial transport. On the 2247 tons of selected ore treated last year this would mean a saving of £4775, or nearly two-thirds of the estimated cost of the new mill.

Elimination of transport and reduction of treatment costs will permit the profitable working of lower-grade ores, greatly increasing the payable ore reserves. Embodying the latest technique in ore reduction and bullion saving, the plant is estimated to give from 91 to 96 per cent. extraction.

Many thousands of tons of ore are said to be available from the Talisman workings alone. In addition other promising reefs can be embraced in a development scheme, and the 209 acres owned by the company, with Karangahake peak in the centre, is confidently reported to be one of the most promising prospects in New Zealand mining.<sup>7</sup>

**22 June**

MINING REPORTS

Talisman Dubbo Preparatory work in connection with clearing the site for the new crushing mill and treatment plant to be erected by the Talisman Dubbo Gold Mining Company is now well in hand. The location is on the old Woodstock battery site [Talisman powerhouse site] on the south bank of the Ohinemuri River, nearly opposite the old Karangahake township. It is interesting to note that the first Woodstock battery was in operation fifty years ago. Meanwhile the ore from the mine continues to be treated at the Golden Dawn's mill at Owharoa.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> <https://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/newspapers/NZH19360229.2.21>

New Zealand Herald, Volume LXXIII, Issue 22356, 29 February 1936, Page 9

<sup>7</sup> <https://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/newspapers/HPGAZ19370226.2.18>

Hauraki Plains Gazette, Volume 47, Issue 2590, 26 February 1937, Page 4

<sup>8</sup> <https://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/newspapers/WHDT19370622.2.19>

Waihi Daily Telegraph, Volume XXXVI, Issue 9088, 22 June 1937, Page 3

## 1938

### 28 May

#### TALISMAN DUBBO MILL

#### WORK AT KARANGAHAKE OPERATIONS COMMENCED

Operations at the new mill of the Talisman Dubbo Gold Mine, Limited, at the junction of the Ohinemuri and Waitawheta rivers, at Karangahake, were commenced on Monday last. The mill is across the river from the Paeroa-Waihi highway and will operate on low-grade ore for a few weeks to "run in" the machinery and "cure" the plant.

All the machinery is new and of the latest type. It has been designed for efficiency and low running costs. The gold will be saved by cyanidation. Previous tests made in England, America and Australia have demonstrated the superior advantages of this system and according to the secretary, Mr. M. H. Wynyard, although the various components in the process have been well tried out in America and Australia, this is the first time they have been employed in New Zealand.

Electricity provides the motive power and the mill can be operated with a shift of two men. It is designed to treat from 125 to 150 tons a week and a large tonnage of ore has been broken out ready for treatment. The new mill is readily accessible from the various workings on the Karangahake mountain.<sup>9</sup>

### 1 August

#### Talisman Dubbo Gold Mines

Recently opened after costing the county £500 for construction and metalling, Scotchman's Gully Road, leading to the battery of the Talisman Dubbo Gold Mines, has been completely destroyed. Further slips on the Karangahake Hill Road have isolated the mine, which has been temporarily closed, as ore cannot be carted to the battery. Arrangements have been made to employ the disengaged miners on road repair work under scheme 13. It is expected that it will be several weeks before the mine can be reopened.<sup>10</sup>

### 9 November

#### Praise For Manager

The Dubbo plant is very well equipped and returns a high percentage of extract. Tributers state that the manager, Mr Clifton, treats them very well and they give him high praise as a practical miner. His advice is frequently sought and freely given...<sup>11</sup>

### E. J. Scoble, Inspector of Mines<sup>12</sup>

#### Page 29

Talisman-Dubbo Gold-mines, Ltd., Karangahake (R. B. Dunlop, Manager). —  
For the early part of the year operations were carried out by forty men, but by

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<sup>9</sup> <https://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/newspapers/NZH19380528.2.22>

New Zealand Herald, Volume LXXV, Issue 23049, 28 May 1938, Page 11

<sup>10</sup> <https://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/newspapers/NZH19380801.2.101.2>

New Zealand Herald, Volume LXXV, Issue 23104, 1 August 1938, Page 12

<sup>11</sup> <https://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/newspapers/HPGAZ19381109.2.2.2>

Hauraki Plains Gazette, Volume 48, Issue 2831, 9 November 1938, Page 1

<sup>12</sup> <https://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/parliamentary/AJHR1939-I.2.2.2.3>

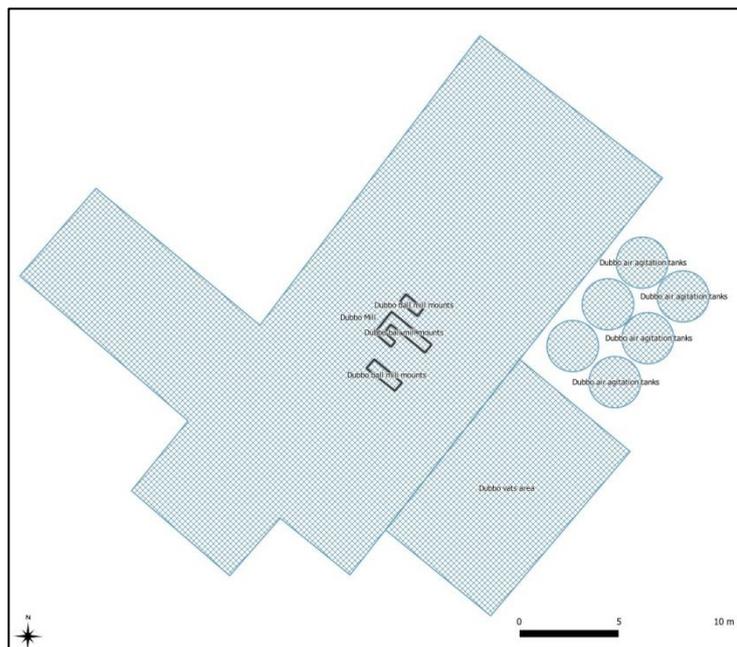
MINES STATEMENT BY THE HON. P. C. WEBB, MINISTER OF MINES., Appendix to the Journals of the House of Representatives, 1939 Session I, C-02

the end of February, owing to the anticipated early completion of the company's own mill and other factors, ore-breaking was more or less suspended. The number of men underground was reduced to fourteen, just sufficient to keep the mine in repair and to carry on developmental work at Nos. 4 and 7 levels...

The company's battery was completed during the year, and crushing commenced in same. It comprises the following items of plant: One Telsmith-Wheeling jaw crusher driven by a 25 h.p. motor; a 16 in. Challenge feeder; a Head-Wrightson ball mill, 5 ft. in diameter and 4 ft. long, worked by a 50 h.p. motor; a Dorr-Duplex classifier; one Doreo diaphragm pressure pump to deliver classifier overflow to Dorr thickener tank; eight agitators (B. and M. tanks), each 20 ft. deep by 6 ft. in diameter; and an Oliver filter 5 ft. 4 in. in diameter by 8 ft. in length. The air for the agitators is supplied by an Ingersoll-Rand type thirty automatic compressor. The vacuum for the Oliver filter is supplied by a 7½ h.p. Thompson vertical pump. The filtered solution is delivered by a 1½ in. centrifugal pump to a Merrill-Crowe precipitation plant, and the barren solution is returned for wash by a similar pump. The Merrill-Crowe plant consists of a clarifying unit, Crowe tank, and Merrill bag-type filter, operated by two 1½ in. and one 1 in. water-sealed centrifugal pumps. Precipitation is obtained through a zinc-dust emulsifier and a feeder driven by a ½ h.p. motor.

The average number of men employed was twenty, for the year the company mined 1,667 tons of ore, which yielded 318 oz. 8 dwt. of gold, valued at £2,913 2s. 11d., and 1,370 oz. 10 dwt. of silver, worth £155 3s. 5d. No dividends were paid. The total output since the commencement of operations is 57,291 oz. 15 dwt., valued at £83,870 13s. 4d.

The foundations of the battery are at western end of the suspension bridge which crosses the Waitawheta Stream at Battery Flat. No map or plan has been found, but the two known images of the plant help to make sense of the foundations. Particularly prominent are the concrete supports of the air agitation tanks. The Inspector's report above says eight tanks, but the photograph shows only six. Easily identified are the foundations of the ball mill, which have characteristic tube mill mounts.



The plan here is from the GIS, and approximates the outline of the buildings.

A proper survey would be useful, as would the removal of the concrete added when the walkway suspension bridge was installed.

## 1939

### 1 May

It was stated that the conference was in connection with the closing down of the Dubbo battery at Karangahake, the miners' union endeavouring to secure further employment for the men.<sup>13</sup>

## 1940

### 8 February

The monthly meeting of the Thames Valley Power Board was held today... The Talisman Dubbo Gold-mining Company, at Karangahake, wrote asking the board to disconnect the battery, as the company was closing down.<sup>14</sup>

### 6 March

#### MINING NEWS. TALISMAN DUBBO FUTURE

An extraordinary general meeting of Talisman Dubbo Gold Mines, Limited (Karangahake), will be held on March 14, at which a resolution for voluntary winding-up will be proposed. Incorporated in 1929, the company has a nominal capital of £20,000 in 80,000 shares of 5s each.<sup>15</sup>

#### **MINES STATEMENT BY THE HON. P. C. WEBB, MINISTER OF MINES.<sup>16</sup>**

##### APPENDIX A.

##### REPORTS RELATING TO METALLIFEROUS MINES AND STONE-QUARRIES.

The Inspecting Engineer of Mines to the Under-Secretary of Mines. Sir, — Wellington, 6th May, 1941. I have the honour to present my report on metalliferous mines and stone-quarries, together with statistical information, for the year ended 31st December, 1940.

Page 29

Only one small tribute party is now working at the Talisman-Dubbo Mine. In 1940 they produced 105 oz. of bullion, valued at £254. The up-to-date battery, erected in 1937, has been dismantled and sent to Fiji.

## 1941

### AJHR 1942

For the year 1941

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<sup>13</sup> <https://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/newspapers/HPGAZ19390501.2.20>

Hauraki Plains Gazette, Volume 48, Issue 2897, 1 May 1939, Page 4

<sup>14</sup> <https://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/newspapers/WT19400208.2.143>

Waikato Times, Volume 126, Issue 21033, 8 February 1940, Page 13

<sup>15</sup> <https://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/newspapers/NZH19400306.2.23>

New Zealand Herald, Volume LXXVII, Issue 23598, 6 March 1940, Page 7

<sup>16</sup> <https://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/parliamentary/AJHR1941-I.2.1.4.3>

MINES STATEMENT BY THE HON. P. C. WEBB, MINISTER OF MINES., Appendix to the Journals of the House of Representatives, 1941 Session I, C-02

**MINES STATEMENT BY THE HON. P. C. WEBB, MINISTER OF MINES.**<sup>17</sup>

ANNEXURE A. SUMMARY OF REPORTS BY INSPECTORS OF MINES.  
NORTHERN INSPECTION DISTRICT (E. J. Scoble, Inspector of Mines).  
Quartz-mining.

**E. J. Scoble, Inspector of Mines**

Page 11

Talisman-Dubbo Gold-mines, Ltd. (in Liquidation), Karangahake.—All privileges have been struck off the Register and the company should shortly be dissolved. During the early part of the year, tributers (one subsidized) won a little bullion from the property.

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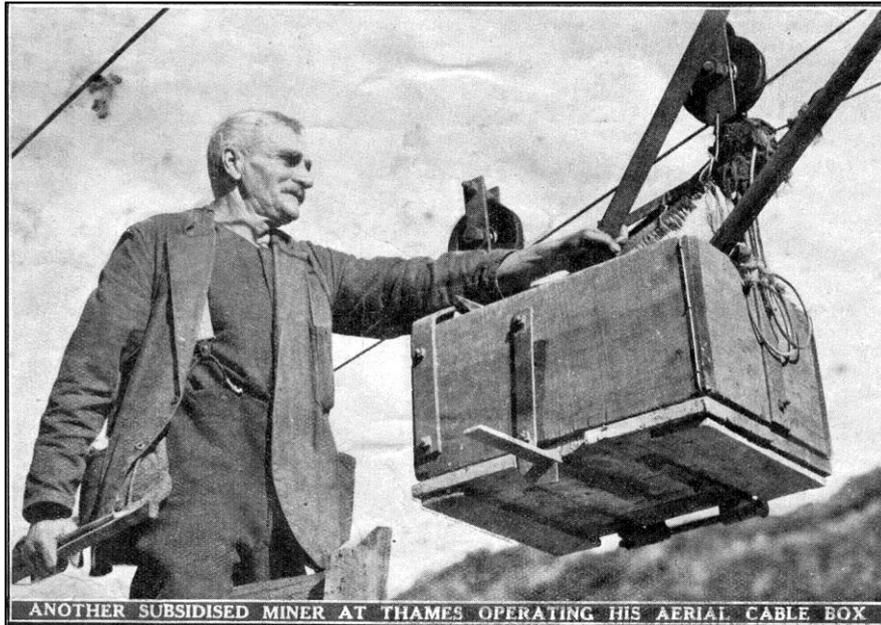
<sup>17</sup> <https://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/parliamentary/AJHR1942-I.2.1.4.3>

MINES STATEMENT BY THE HON. P. C. WEBB, MINISTER OF MINES., Appendix to the Journals of the House of Representatives, 1942 Session I, C-02

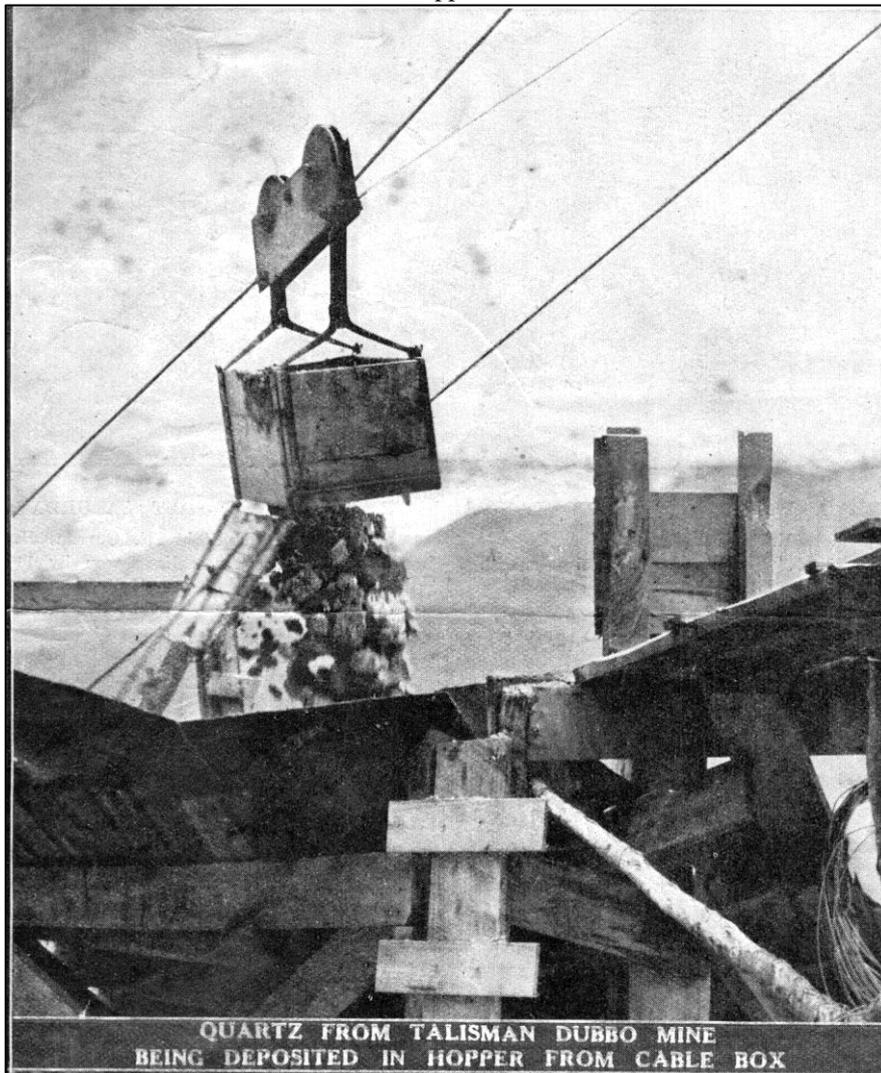
**Images**

The Auckland Weekly News published a series of photographs on 25 September 1935. Several are presented below, from the Staples Collection. They can now also be accessed on-line.





Note the lever under the box. It would allow the automatic discharge of the contents at the lower hopper.



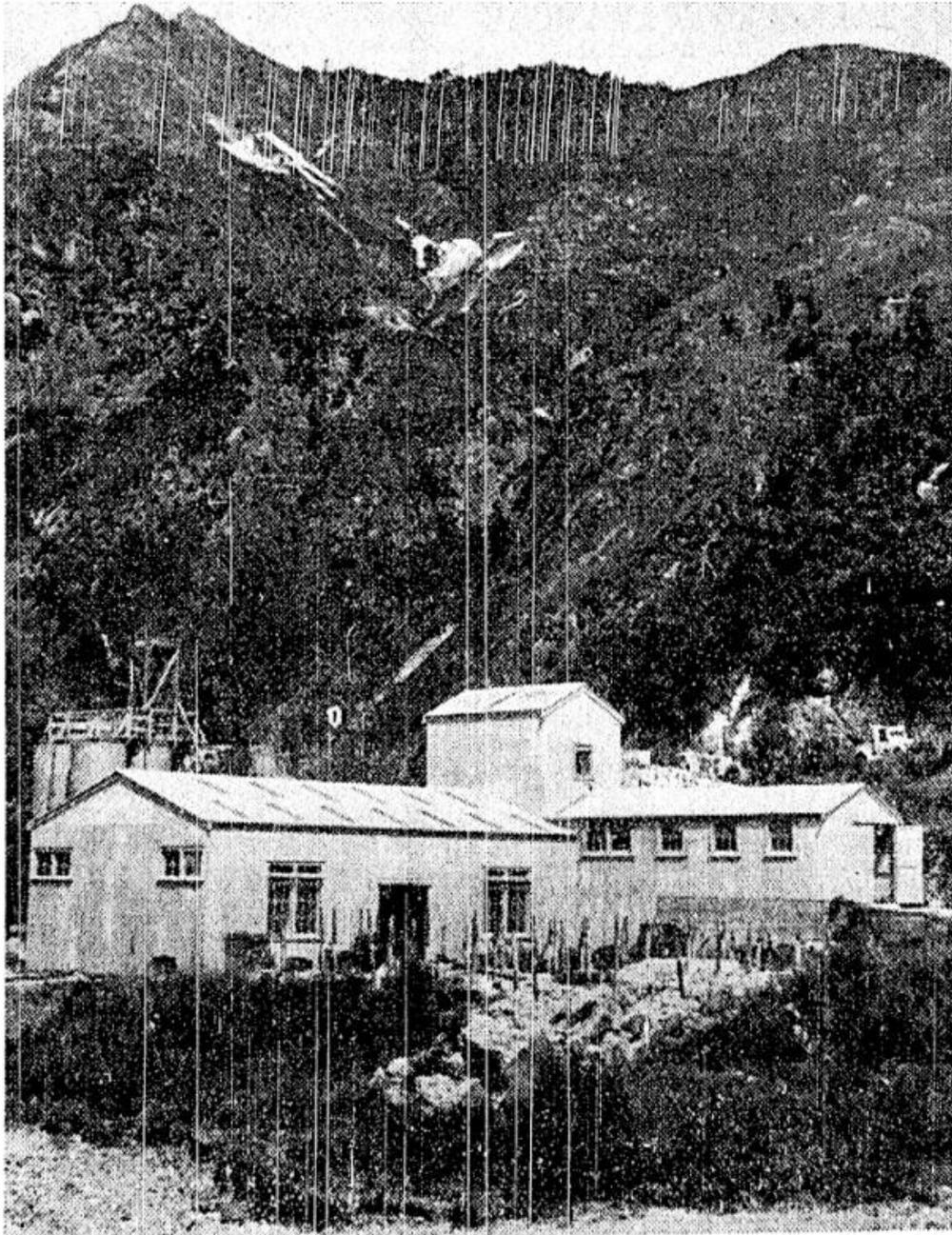
The cableway was erected earlier, in 1932 or 33.



Terminal hopper of the Talisman Dubbo cableway. Staples collection. Jan. 19 1932.  
The No. 8 road (or County Road) is to left, with three ore chutes for loading ore on to a light truck.



“Old coach Road” 1940s.  
A view from across the valley (on the side of the Woodstock Blow) showing the termination of the cableway, chute and hopper. The upper road is the County Road, the lower the road to the Talisman No. 8 level. Ore was loaded to a small truck, which made its way to the battery via Scotchman’s Gully.  
Staples Collection.



**NEW BUILDING AT A WELL-KNOWN KARANGAHAKE GOLD MINE**  
The new battery which has been built to deal with ore from the Talisman  
Dubbo gold workings on the hill in the background.

**NEW BUILDING AT A WELL-KNOWN KARANGAHAKE GOLD MINE.**

The new battery which has been built to deal with ore from the Talisman Dubbo gold workings on the hill in the background.<sup>18</sup>

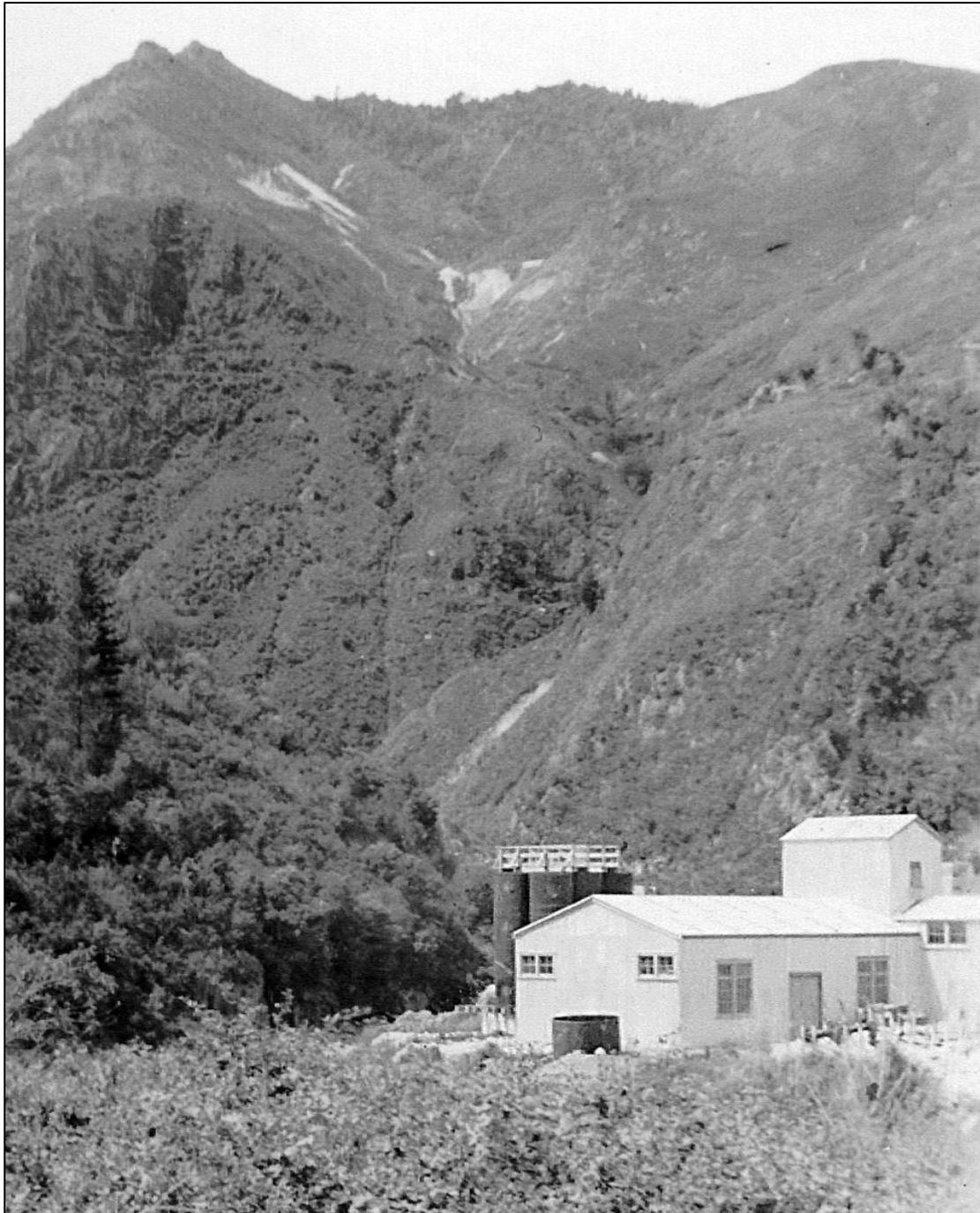
New Zealand Herald image, published 2 April, 1938.

The taller section of the plant would have housed an ore hopper and the Telsmith-Wheeling jaw crusher. Air agitation tanks at left.

<sup>18</sup> <https://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/newspapers/NZH19380402.2.196>  
New Zealand Herald, Volume LXXV, Issue 23003, 2 April 1938, Page 19

## Talisman-Dubbo Mining Company

Photograph taken from the bridge over the Ohinemuri. Note the mounting bolts from the massive Talisman compressor machine mounts, which we still see today. Is that a vehicle on Scotchman's Gully road?



Photograph taken from across the river. The scars on the mountain indicate where the mining has been taking place (some the original Talisman workings).

It appears that when constructing this mill and stone work, concrete from the old Talisman compressor machine mounts has been recycled.

Date: 1938-39. Staples Collection.