The Colours

The search for payable gold
on the West Coast from 1857 to 1864

Mark Pickering

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This Edition

This edition is only in digital format only (PDF file) and incorporates new corrections and revisions. It is important to realise that this book has not been edited by anyone else but myself, so mistakes and duplication of material are inevitable, and all errors are regretted.

The main alteration has been that 'The Dark Prospectors' chapter has been shortened and incorporated into Chapter 5. The 'Library Notes' have also been deleted. Some material not central to the story has been relegated to the footnotes, however very little material has been deleted from the original book.

As new research becomes available I will try and incorporate it in this book, for example the book by Hilary Low in 2010 on Jakob Lauper *Pushing His Luck*.

All the illustrations have been eliminated (apart from some maps) in order to keep the size of the PDF file reasonably small, and enable it to be delivered easily by email.

My previous history book on the West Coast *The Southern Journey* is also available in PDF format.

People who wish to offer corrections or additions are welcome to email me at:

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'If you know something that is not as it should be, and grumble in the background instead of coming forward, any such error passing into history becomes your responsibility' A. M. Isdale

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Also by Mark Pickering

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Brief Biography

Mark Pickering was born in England in 1953 and after serving his apprenticeship as a letterpress compositor and linotype operator, emigrated to New Zealand in 1974. He gained a Master of Arts degree in Religious Studies and his interest in tramping led to the publication of several tramping and walking guide books from 1986 to 2010. Lately his passion has shifted towards history and he continues to persevere with a writing lifestyle that remains satisfying, if unremunerative.

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Leading Characters

Robert Bain — surveyor
Captain Thomas Dixon — ship owner, publican, prospector, died 1865
J. C. Drake — surveyor
James Hammett — track-cutter, messenger, died 1864
Leonard Harper — explorer, solicitor, Member of Parliament, born 1837
Herbert Charlton Howitt — explorer, track cutter, prospector, born 1838, died 1863
Albert William Hunt — prospector, hoaxer
William Alexander Hunt — prospector, mine owner
Epapara Kahutuanui — prospector, born 1828, died 1884
Jakob Lauper — hired hand, explorer, prospector born 1815, died 1891
Samuel Meggitt Mackley — pastoralist, born 1829, died 1911, aged 82
James Mackay — explorer, government agent, warden, farmer, born 1831, died 1912
William Martin — prospector, carpenter, bailiff, born 1838, died 1921
Charles Money — prospector, adventurer
Francis Morris — chainman, gold digger, died 1865
John Peter Oakes — grubstaker, publican
'Elizabeth' Patahi — prospector, Haimona 'Simon' Tuakau's wife
William Horton Revell — policeman, government agent, born 1829, died 1893
John Rochfort — surveyor, born 1832, died 1894
Richard Sherrin — explorer, journalist
William Smart — prospector, miner, farmer, born 1830, died 1900
Ihaia Tainui — prospector, Member of Parliament, born 1930's, died 1885
Haimona 'Simon' Tuakau — whaler, prospector, born 1840, died 1890
Reuben Waite — storekeeper, entrepreneur, died 1885

Preface

In the epilogue of my book *The Southern Journey*, I mused that I would have liked to have investigated further the lives of Arthur 'Darkie' Addison and Albert Hunt. Having mulled over it for a few years I decided to put the thought into action and this book is the result.

The two men were linked in my mind in three respects. Firstly, it seemed that they were both present at the crucial Hohonu/Greenstone diggings in 1863 and 1864, which subsequently initiated the West Coast gold rush. Secondly, it appeared they were apparently successful prospectors, although Hunt later gained a more nefarious reputation. Lastly, they both displayed that characteristic goldfield's phenomena, restlessness, and made abrupt appearances and disappearances in the historical record. I was intrigued, and wanted to join the gaps together.

You will be able to judge for yourself how successful I have been, for unravelling their story has proved to be both rewarding and frustrating. I have closed some gaps and promptly opened new ones. Indeed, it has to be said at the beginning that I have largely failed in my self-appointed purpose.

Far from confirming that Addison was present at the Hohonu/Greenstone in 1864, I have left the waters a good deal murkier than when I started. In fact Addison dropped out of my story altogether, and I hardly expected the number of 'darkies', 'African negros' and 'blackfellows' that sprang up from my inquiries. As for Albert Hunt, he is a chimera, and his motives and movements are still obscure to me, and his claims to be a gold prospector of merit seem rather dubious.

In hindsight I can see that I used Addison and Hunt as an excuse to delve into the fascinating array of characters who were fossicking about in the rivers of the Buller and Taramakau in the early 1860's, and I had unwittingly set myself the task to try to answer this question: who could claim to be the discoverer of the West Coast goldfield, and did he (or they) walk away wealthy?

The answer is far from straightforward, and there were many claimants. It could be read as a detective story, but without the final satisfying denouement. Albert Hunt got the £200 reward (and the memorial), but his role seems

equivocal. William Smart's claim seems more plausible, and he was bitter he did not earn any reward for his and Michael French's work in the Hohonu in 1864. The ebullient storekeeper Reuben Waite hoisted up his claim banner rather late, by asserting he had initiated the gold rushes as early as 1861 on the Buller, and again in the Grey by 1864.

Then there was the furtive Swiss explorer Jakob Lauper, who managed a considerable track record of starvation and suffering in his travels, and made a highly inventive claim. Dixon and Oakes made a claim for the bonus in 1862, and found themselves trumped by a counter-claim by Ihaia Tainui, who was supposed to be working for them! Finally there are two Maori prospectors: Epapara Kahutuanui, who discovered the Lyell field in 1861 and Haimona 'Simon' Tuakau, who led Hunt to the Hohonu/ Greenstone diggings. They both had a good right to make a claim for the reward, but did not do so. Why?

Amongst these serious gold seekers there were people who had other business on the West Coast, but got caught up in the fray. Such was the indefatigable James Mackay, who was trying to buy the West Coast from the Maori, and Samuel Meggit Mackley who was in pursuit of grazing land but brought back some pennyweights of gold. The government surveyors, Arthur Dobson and John Rochfort, politely and studiously ignored the gold frenzy around them and got on with the job.

The leading Maori chief was Tarapuhi te Kaukihi, who seldom seemed to indulge in gold-digging, and spent most of his time giving assistance to the numerous and starving Europeans who presented themselves at the Mawhera pa. That quixotic duo of Charles Money and Rowland Davies had an interest in gold, but despite their hardships they appear more like schoolboys out on an extended hookey.

These people interacted with each other in intriguing and vehement ways. Money and Davies rescued Lauper from starvation in 1862. Smart and Hunt were both present at Tarapuhi's funeral feast, but whether they were on speaking terms is another matter. Mackley pops up and down like a yo-yo, fixing Mackay's knee, and then turning up as a sheep farmer in the upper Grey. Smart met Davies at the Lyell, and Money worked as a roadman for the efficient Arthur Dobson. Hunt caused a duffer rush at Bruce Bay and was lucky not to get lynched, and disappeared from

the coast, but who was the 'Hunt' in 1867 of 'Hunt and party' who made the first prospector's claim at the Thames goldfield? Albert's brother apparently, and the gold commissioner who signed the licence? Our old friend James Mackay again.

The discovery of gold on the West Coast is about all these larger than life personalities, and it is the intention of this book to flesh out the bare bones of the historical record and make sense of the sometimes hectic and confusing chronology that surrounds this early prospecting period. Information gleaned on these early prospectors was by it's nature sketchy and fragmentary, and much of it is incomplete. What biographical material I did locate has been inserted in boxes called Life Details as an aside from the main text.

What brought these men (and it is just about all men) to the West Coast in the first place? What part did they play there? and what subsequently became of them? They were an astonishing mix of society: remittance men, government surveyors, Maori prospectors, ex-ship's cooks, builders, publicans, hopers, triers and ner-do-wells, who by accident or design found themselves in the formidable, untracked, 'impracticable' landscape that was the West Coast in the 1860's. Their common public ambition would seem to be gold, but that often appeared an excuse for simply indulging in an adventure.

A few died on the Coast, many went away hungry and penniless, leaving a handful of place names behind them. They were mostly raw, young, men, inexperienced amateurs, living on fern roots and weka and hope, blundering around a landscape that allowed few mistakes. They were looking for 'the colours', but it often appeared in retrospect that they were themselves more colourful than the gold they sought. Even at a distance of a hundred and thirty years, the glitter of a man's soul is surprisingly bright.

Acknowledgements

I acknowledge the generous help and assistance given by several libraries, including the National Library, the Alexander Turnbull library, the New Zealand room of the Christchurch Public Library, the Canterbury Museum Library, the National Archives (Christchurch Office), the MacMillan Brown collection in the University of Canterbury library and the West Coast Historical Museum (Hokitika) library.

The Department of Conservation archives in Hokitika were a valuable source, and I am grateful to the archivist Anne Hutchison, whose previous research and transcription saved me a considerable amount of work.

My thanks also to Beverly Tatham for drawing my attention to the unpublished memoirs of her great grandfather J. A. McKenzie on the Slate River, and to Ross Wilson for access to his unpublished manuscript Patahi and the Whaler. Other people who have commented on parts of the text and have given helpful suggestions are Maika Mason and Paul Madgwick.

I am also grateful to those many authors who provide a good index and well-sourced footnotes, and a curse on those who provide neither.

Because my tale is multi-layered, and I often have to look at the same event from several different perspectives, there is a certain amount of repetition and to-ing and froing over certain key historical incidents. I have tried to reduce these repetitions to the minimum, or write them in such a way that they are still fresh to the reader and to keep true to the main rush of the story.

Dedication

I want to dedicate this book to two people, my partner Rachel Barker, who encouraged me throughout the long project; and to Phillip Ross May, whose massive work on the West Coast gold rushes inspired me to dig a little deeper.

Chapter 1

Getting the Colours

This chapter is intended as a scene-setter for the specific events on the West Coast between 1857 and 1864, including a broad survey of the history of gold rushes in New Zealand, and the particular geography of the West Coast.

Although romantically wild and isolated, the West Coast gold pioneering was not accomplished in isolation. It was a small part of a long sequential series of human migration that was spreading peoples to almost every corner of the planet.

Dispossession of lands, unemployment, hunger in Ireland, pogroms in Eastern Europe, feudal tyrannies, political oppression, or simply over-population, all played a part in this mad worldwide rush.

Gold may have been the excuse, but there were much deeper human matters driving the exodus. A good many things were off-colour about the old world society, so people were prepared to test the colours of the new.

The Most Precious Metal

There are enticing reasons why gold is valued by humans. On the purely pragmatic side, gold is easily worked and malleable and does not tarnish or corrode. On the emotional side, gold is rare and attractive, a bright lustrous yellow and particularly when fabricated into works of art like jewellery, maintains a high aesthetic and poetic value. Although distributed with a sparing hand, gold can be found in most igneous rocks around the world, and many different cultures were able to take advantage of it. This spread the vast lore and mystique about the metal, even into cultures that themselves did not possess any.

'It can be no great distance to the West Coast, but explorers report a mass of impenetrable forest on the western side of the ranges, extending hundreds of miles, and I doubt if such a wilderness will ever be colonised except through the discovery of gold'.

Henry Harper Letter from New Zealand p57.

Medieval alchemists tried to sublimate it from baser metals and notable adventurers sold their hair-brained schemes to princes on the lure of a promised 'El Dorado' of gold at the end. Christopher Columbus did not find it and lost favour, Francis Drake stole it and might well have bedded a queen.

Everyone is made familiar at an early age with the story of King Midas, but despite these customary warnings the culture of gold has filtered down into our own language in a variety of expressions and truisms, most favourable, some hostile, reflecting the ambiguity we still feel over a substance that promised such instant wealth. 'All that glistens is not gold', 'she has a heart of gold', 'it's worth it's weight in gold', 'the golden handshake', 'the golden rule', 'you're onto a goldmine'. Ancient cultures used gold as a symbol of power and creativity, whereas modern states have frequently based their currencies upon how much gold is stored in their vaults.

In chemical terms gold is highly stable, designated by the symbol 'Au'. It is the most ductile of metals, an ounce of which (28 grams) can be beaten into 300 square feet (28 square metres). Gold can be found on spacesuits and wedding rings, and because of it's high electrical conductivity and inertness, it is widely used in the electronics industry.

There is of course another and more crucial factor that has kept gold high in human esteem — the lure of easy wealth.

Stories are legion of people literally picking nuggets off the ground, or stumbling into a gloomy gully where, in Gabriel Read's famous metaphor, gold is seen 'shining like the stars in Orion on a dark frosty night'. This book

has it's share of prospector's yarns, some of which happen to be true, if exaggerated: brushing away moss on a damp waterfall to find the 'royal' mineral staring at them, or washing specks of gold off their boots. These stories would be told around numerous campfires and keep alive the hope in the prospector that tomorrow would be his lucky day. For the shepherd or clerk, toiling away in a demeaning and ill-paid task, very little incentive was needed to drop everything and rush hugger-mugger to the diggings and take their chances. And why not?

The Gold Culture

It is important to remember that the gold rushes in New Zealand were to some extent a result of the previous great rushes to California in 1848-49 and Australia in 1851. Not only did these rushes attract great numbers of single males from Europe, but for those that survived, established a 'gold culture' of experienced and restless gold diggers. It became almost a cliche that the digger was never satisfied.

'Forty-niners' left California and headed to Australia when they heard of gold strikes there, carrying with them such customs as the wearing of the 'Californian sash'. On the Australian goldfields they mingled with men who had taken the tedious and sickening passage from Europe direct. By the early 1860's the diggers were hearing of gold being found in New Zealand and again they moved, arriving with Australian customs of shouting 'Joe, Joe' whenever a new chum or a policeman appeared on the diggings.

The range of nationalities that eventually made it to New Zealand was bewildering. English, Scots, Irish of course in large numbers, (one estimate of the number of Irish on the West Coast was 26%), and at Hokitika in the 1860's Julius von Haast identified the languages of German, Italian, French, and Greek. Scandinavian countries contributed a reliable percentage and there were small additions of Spanish, Portuguese and Swiss. The Chinese came in large numbers later and there are occasional references to such diverse peoples as Indians (or 'Hindoos'), Singhalese (Ceyon or Sri Lanka), Malay and Tongan. Indeed, at one time in the mid 1860's, it might have been possible to have found at least one representative from a

quarter of the countries in the world, tasting a 'nobbler' in a Hokitika pub.

It is worth pondering just how alien an environment the West Coast was for the European digger. Many of these young men would still have been teenagers when they left their local villages in England and Ireland, and all over the European continent, suffering the miseries of a long sea voyage, then plunged into the razzle of the Aussie goldfields. Some might have come via California, but most heard about New Zealand in Australia and probably worked through Otago before finally getting landed abruptly on the West Coast.

Their experiences had made them tough (almost the pick of the crop) but the West Coast was tougher than many were prepared for. Deep swift rivers, sudden floods, massive rainfall, biting insects, an oppressive jungle-like forest which was always wet, and disappointing returns. It's probable that several men lost their lives simply by getting 'bushed' in the strange tangled rainforest and rugged terrain of Westland.

> 'A man named John Stamp was found on the 18th ult. wandering about in the bush, and on the very verge of starvation. He was taken care of, and has, we are happy to say, recovered. It seems that he was lost, and for fourteen days managed to support life. At length, when found, he was in the last stage of weakness, and had fallen into a creek whilst attempting to drink'.

It was not the stuff of dreams and many young men lost their youth and their health in the process. Too poor to go 'home' (wherever that was), for many New Zealand turned out to be the last stop on the world-wide gold rush, so they stayed for a while, and swagged and laboured as petty workmen in New Zealand's back country, providing cheap and plentiful labour in a land that desperately needed men to build the infrastructure of a brand new colony.

What brought men to the goldfields? Adventure? Greed? Opportunity? Early accounts make it plain, indeed rather relish, the equality of the goldfields. Bankrupts, shady lawyers, ordinary clerks, classical scholars, runaways, remittance men, clerks, bakers, drovers, no class of men were absent from a gold rush. The diversity of background might be considered astonishing if one did not remember

that this is the time of the British Empire in the Victorian age, an age of social conservatism and snobbery, where 'background' was not just important, it was crucial.

If the colonies represented a breathe of fresh air to many English settlers, then the goldfields were a veritable hurricane of social idealism, a hurley-burley of 'mateship' and 'brotherhood', where the worst crime was to cheat on a partner. Of course if the digger did make his 'pile', he would no doubt return in haste to England (or wherever) and establish himself in a nouveau riche position somewhere in the fabric of the old society. This at least, was the great dream, yet it is surprising how few accounts there are of this actually happening. The 'piles' were made all right, but just as likely all spent. Charles Money met one acquaintance who had worked his way through three fortunes and was commencing on the forth.

One religiously minded digger was so sceptical of the value of gold fields, that he drew up a balance sheet of the Coromandel diggings between June and December 1867. General expenditure of all diggers (food, tools, licences, transport, etc) was £55,800, general income of all diggers was £20,000 — a deficit of £35,000. Perhaps Theophilus Cooper should have turned to accountancy, for he put his finger on an aspect of the goldfields that does not seem to have been seriously considered before, did the goldfields really pay their way? Or were they propped up by a hopeful supply of new diggers bringing in new energy and new cash, a sort of 'pyramid selling' system of the nineteenth century?

Another manuscript by Alexander Kerr makes interesting reading because it chronicles the life of an often unsuccessful digger, one of the many that struggled to make even half a living out of the goldrush. He went early to Gabriel's Gully in 1861 but failed to strike it rich, went to Dunstan with the rush but returned quickly, and broke. He had a crack at Nokomai but turned back, believing it to be a duffer. In between he worked in Dunedin, trying to raise the cash for another go. Then he and his father went to the Arrow River, built a stone hut for a store and saw it washed away in a great flood. He went back to Dunedin, got a dray load of goods and returned to the Arrow, setting up a tent where for two years they traded with some success — at last.

As the Otago rush waned he returned to Melbourne and shuffled back and forth between New Zealand and Australia, working in all manner of trades, as a storekeeper, shoemaker, whatever, eventually working as a sort of quartermaster on an unsuccessful goldmine in Western Australia. Meanwhile he had managed to father 10 children, and experienced two depressions (in Christchurch and Melbourne) often living for long periods away from his wife and sending money home. It was a good life, but hardly a romantic life.

As well as the courage and hard work that the digger displayed, he also showed off the restlessness, and fickleness of his newly chosen career. Rather like a gambler who is addicted to one last throw of the dice, the digger was always heading off for another rush, another fortune, another fabulous pile, just gleaming in tantalising heaps below the dark ground. We, who believe we lead a mobile life, might be rather surprised at how well travelled was the digger, although not necessarily by choice. If you did not work you starved, so you had to follow the opportunities around. Hope was the great motivating force.

The legend has it that the digger was a tolerant fellow, and perhaps most were. Certainly there was a persistent and nasty prejudice against the Chinese miners, who were largely restricted to old sites and had to work the 'cast off' tailings, which they did with such frugality and industriousness, that this annoyed some miners even more. It's less clear with the Maori.

There were several notable Maori prospectors on the West Coast and the tribes were also the crucial providers and helpers for early European diggers, a fact widely acknowledged at the time. At first one constantly comes across newspaper accounts mentioning successful Maori digging parties, but later the general opinion became less favourable and the popular verdict of the late nineteenth century took it for granted that the Maori were a clever, if declining race, doomed to white men's diseases and social ills for which they had no resistance. The term 'stone age' was freely used to describe all things Maori, rather than just their technology.

New Zealand Gold Rushes

The earliest known account of gold being seen in New Zealand comes from A. M. Isdale, who suggests that sailors on board the ship *Coromandel* noticed gold at Preece's Point in Coromandel Harbour in 1820. J. H. M. Salmon mentions two other early gold reports. When Captain Wakefield landed in Golden Bay in 1842, a member of his party called McDonald noticed gold. Also, according to Von Hochstetter, some gold had been reported by a man named Griffe in the Coromandel area in 1842. Philip Ross May mentions that in '1843 a surveyor's chainman, James Spittal, was supposed to have picked up a bean-sized nugget in the bed of the Collingwood River'.

In October 1852 a group of Auckland businessmen had offered the sum of £500 to the discoverer of a goldfield in their area. As always, a claimant popped up, one Charles Ring, who claimed to have struck gold at Kapanga Creek in the Coromandel. This so excited the Auckland gold brokers Connell and Ridings, that they published a map in December 1852 'shewing the Position of the recently discovered Gold Fields'. However, the gold was imbedded in quartz, and the Maori, who were not especially pleased with this golden opportunity on their land, imposed a hefty licence fee of 30 shillings a month. New Zealand's first gold rush never got out of the blocks, and in fact, Coromandel had to wait another fifteen years before it's promising surface was more than scratched.

Wellington had caught the gold cold however, and in November 1852 a public meeting also offered a £500 reward for any discovery in the lower North Island. Christchurch did the same for their area, though the Canterbury Plains was definitely the wrong place to start looking. The 'colours' were reported widely (and wildly) in Otago throughout the 1850's, but nothing payable was found. But by now, experienced fossickers and prospectors from Australia, were drifting over to New Zealand and this seemed to provide the vital trigger, for in the end it was Nelson that got the rush ahead of everyone.

Payable deposits were found in Collingwood at Golden Bay in 1857, and this was the first genuine gold rush in New Zealand. The rush however was modest and interest waned when it was realised how small the goldfield was. But it had quickened the pulse of gold prospecting, and in May 1861 there was a small rush to the Whangapeka.

But this field was completely overshadowed by the almost simultaneous announcement of the discovery of Gabriel's Gully in the same month. The Otago panic was on. So despite the gold discoveries in the winter of 1861 at Waimangaroa River (eight miles north of the Buller River mouth), and up the Buller itself, all eyes remained on Otago. By mid 1863 the Mangles, Owen and Matakitaki Rivers had all been prospected and were yielding small results, and because they were convenient to access from Nelson, they provided another drain and another distraction on the Buller. However, it is doubtful if the population on the Buller-Lyell area ever exceeded two hundred, and probably more like a hundred, of whom a third at least would have been Maori. The last rush in the Nelson Province was at Wakamarina in April of 1864, and this proved a lucrative if short-term field.

Finally, as the Otago rush lost momentum, the West Coast got it's turn. The build up to the gold fever had been slow, and occurred in two locations: the Buller, Waimangaroa and Lyell goldfields, and the Grey, Hohonu/Greenstone and Taramakau goldfields. Rumours would switch from one area to the other. Sometimes one goldfield would look brilliant, sometimes the other, and both gold areas were at times roundly condemned as duffers. In large part the two areas developed separately, and it was only really the spectacular discoveries along the Paparoa coastline, and in the 'parkees' around Charleston of 1865 and 1866, that finally joined these two disparate gold rushes together.

The gold rush on the Coast lasted approximately from 1865 to 1868, and stretched from the Mohikinui River down to the Haast River. Coromandel had it's second, and this time successful rush, in 1867, and Kumara saw a resurgence of activity in it's gold rush of 1876. W. F. Heinz called this the 'last gold rush' in New Zealand, but perhaps this honour goes to the small rush to Preservation Inlet arguably the country's most isolated spot at the south-west tip of Fiordland, between 1890-1894.

A lot of factors were interdependent before a gold rush would eventuate, and just because gold was being prospected, did not mean that it would be taken seriously, or that a rush would automatically happen. Timing was everything.

It had to be payable gold first of all. In other words, when all expenses had been deducted, such as food, transport,

accommodation and stores (not forgetting the essential grog), the digger could still end up ahead — a 'tucker' claim at the least, and hopefully a 'wages' claim. During the 1860's gold was worth anything from £2 to £4 an ounce depending on it's type and quality and many diggers might only average an ounce a week, so often earnings could well be less than a weekly labourer's wage in the Colony.

The ground had to be workable by the digger on his own, or at least in small parties, and this implied alluvial or surface gold. Most miners were of independent spirit, and although they often combined to exploit deeper gold, these associations were usually explosively short-lived. The miner cherished the freedom and adventure that came with just one man, a dish and his knife — what was known as 'the poor man's diggings', not because the ground was necessarily poor, but because the poor could dig it out! This of course was the undoing of the Coromandel rush, for it became obvious that large machinery would be needed to separate the quartz from the gold, and was virtually a 'Company' field from the start. Even the alluvial fields such as Otago and the West Coast, quite quickly became dominated by larger companies.

The third criteria was access and this was primarily why the West Coast was so late in the running. Collingwood and Wakamarina goldfields were relatively accessible, and with more reasonable weather. Just when it seemed a rush to the Buller would inevitably take place, in 1861, Otago jumped up. The intractableness of the Buller Gorge could not compete with the ease of getting to Gabriel's Gully in the Tuapeka River — there was already a dray road to the latter's diggings.

Later, as the Otago miners fanned out across the bleak tussock peneplains, the gold-getting got a lot harder. The deep gorges of the Shotover and Arrow were incredibly rich (perhaps the richest goldfields in New Zealand) but they were desperately cold places, and there was nothing to burn except patchy scrub and tussock. After two severe winters and some tragic floods, the Otago diggers heard of the rumours about what was happening on the West Coast, and it did not take too much self-persuasion to move on. They had heard there was plenty of firewood at least and water for sluicing!

The coincidental introduction of steamers around New Zealand's coastal waters made the sea voyage to the West Coast quicker, safer and more dependable. By late 1864 and early 1865, all the factors in favour of the West Coast goldfields were right, and the rush came like a fury.

There was a culture of gold and a language of gold. A 'duffer' was a dry claim, a 'duffers rush' was where no gold was found and the prospector who led it was likely to be in for a hard time. 'New chums' were the new arrivals on the goldfields. A 'hatter' was a digger who worked alone and several suggestions have been made for the term. Perhaps their isolation made them 'mad as a hatter', or because his whole world and goods could be kept 'under his hat', or the unlikely 'if they had nothing else to wash in they washed in their hats!' 'Surfacing' or 'beaching' was looking amongst the beach sands after stormy days to see if any gold had been thrown up. 'Tucker ground' produced enough money for food only, a 'wages claim' comfortable, a 'riser' definitely a good ground maybe even a rich ground, and a 'piler' or 'homeward bounder' the best of all, where a man could make his 'pile' and head 'home' for Ireland or England.

Gold was measured in rather vague and old-fashioned weights. Twenty-four grains equalled 1 pennyweight, and twenty pennyweights equalls one troy ounce. Twelve troy ounces equal one troy pound. A troy pound equals about 13 ounces of a standard pound.

Whereas most of the other gold rushes in New Zealand occurred on the back of the pioneering efforts of settlers and runholders, and so some sort of infrastructure such as roads and accommodation houses were already established, the West Coast pioneers were the diggers.

A digger's attitude was as different to a settler's as chalk to cheese. The settler was static, the digger was mobile; the settler was long term, the digger was only here for the quick profit; the settler had a family, the digger was single; the settler looked for stability and security, the digger thrived on a 'stoush', a bust-up and the excitement of a wild gold rumour; the settler tried to put something back into the landscape, the digger only extracted it. It is tempting to suggest that because of the gold digger, many subsequent West Coasters have inherited a temperament that was peculiarly geared to extraction, exertion and alcohol.

Mapping the West Coast

The West Coast had the honour of being the first part of New Zealand charted by European explorers, yet for a long time it remained the most obscure. Till well into the late 1840's, the early maps of New Zealand reveal how little known the West Coast was, particularly the hinterland.

Abel Tasman in 1642 arrived somewhere near the Paparoa Range and skirted the coast north, turning the corner of Farewell Spit where he had his famous contretemps with the Maori in 'Mordenaers' Bay.

The next European arrival was Captain Cook, whose standing as an explorer has at times been overstated, but his cartography was superb. His map of 1770 looked like New Zealand, and so well authenticated with soundings and bearings that no one could seriously question it. His finished chart was not just a very good map, it was a political document as well, and his political masters could (and eventually did) make decisions based upon it. However, with no sheltered anchorage the West Coast only received a few brief notations, 'Mistaken Bay' [Big Bay], 'Cascade Point', 'Open Bay' [Jackson's Bay], 'Cape Foulwind' and 'Cape Farewell'.

Tuki Tahua's map of 1793 shows only one feature on the West Coast, that of a branching 'shrub' marked 'Poanammao'. Because the Maori usually highlighted the features that were important to them, Tahua's drawing might be a visual description of the several branches of the Arahura River, with it's all important greenstone. A second Maori chart of 1841 (identity of author unknown) shows plenty of coastal detail on the West Coast, particularly in regard to the good anchorages, but no inland facts.

A 'blue-back' chart of 1817 has a tantalising notation 'Eastern Coast was known to the Portuguese, about the year 1550', but otherwise follows Cook. Sealers and whalers seemed to have influenced the 1820-29 chart of J. Norrie, which tidies some of Cook's mistakes, linking Banks Peninsula to the mainland, and creating a separate Stewart Island.

The Thomas McDonnell map of 1834 marked the coast between Hokitika and Bruce Bay as 'unexplored coast' and 'thinly populated'. Two new features were marked on the coast 'Bold Head' and 'Barred Harbour', and the latter may be a reference to the sealer Dick Barrett's anchorage in the Big River estuary in about the early 1830's. This

map added the first significant inland detail (apart from the usual mountains) a lake approximately matching Lake Brunner, but not named.

In 1838 the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge brought out a map that largely copied the McDonnell version with anecdotal statements written over the outline including such gems as 'remarkable fissure' and the 'white spot' on the West Coast, and a small point somewhere south of Banks Peninsula called 'Cape Ortegal (the antipodes nearly of Cape Ortegal in Spain)'. Neither map shows any inland tracks crossing from east to west and in some ways the coastal information is worse than Cook's because it shows too many unreliable and hearsay features.

The 1841 'Map of the Colony of New Zealand' by John Arrowsmith is notable for giving the South Island three names: 'New Munster', 'Tavai-Poenammo' [Te Wai Pounamu 'the water of greenstone'] and 'Middle Island'. 'New Leinster' or the 'South Island' was Stewart Island, and the North Island was 'New Ulster' or 'Eaheinomauve'. Several new features appear on the West Coast coastline all of which seem unreliable and have disappeared, including 'Barrier Harbour' [instead of 'Barred Harbour'], 'Looking Glass or Narrow Bay', 'Grono Point', 'Point Tahi' and 'Black Bay'.

This 1841 map also includes a new large inland lake with the words 'indented sumt.' inscribed beside it. This rather mysterious notation (probably 'summit') must refer to a distinctive mountain and the 1853 Wyld map shows a peak called 'Kaimatau' close to this position, south of the unnamed lake, which is beginning to look like Lake Brunner, though it is drawn to an abnormal size. The peak is probably Mt Alexander, now part of the 'Kaimata Range'. This is a double peak, with a low peak at 5800 feet and a long rugged ridge leading to the high peak at 6400 feet. From Lake Brunner this peak is very distinctive, rising over five thousand uninterrupted feet, and does indeed look 'indented'. For Maori travelling to and from the coast via the Harper's Pass, Mt Alexander or Kaimatau was probably used as a 'marker post', particularly when coming down the Taramakau River and picking up the inland trail to Lake Brunner.

Curiously, Thomas Brunner talked about this inland lake in his journal:

> 'In most charts of New Zealand, there is laid down, about the middle of this island, a large lake called Lake Kora. No such lake exists'.

This seems rather odd. Brunner suggests that 'kora' was confused with 'Waihora' (Ellesmere) and transplanted inland. He never seemed to notice that 'Kora' might be a reference to Lake Brunner, which he visited, and which bears his name!

Barry Brailsford in his book *The Tattooed Land* discusses the significance of Lake Brunner, and indicates there was a well known and well-used pa site on 'Refuge Island' on the lake. It was an important food source, refuge, and part of the route over to the east coast. The 1853 Wyld map shows Refuge Island drawn to an abnormal size, probably because it was based upon Maori information. W. A. Taylor gives the Maori name of the lake as 'Te kotuku whakaoka (the darting heron)'.

The 1841 Admiralty map 'The Islands of New Zealand' from the Admiralty Surveys also shows an inland lake, and for the first time indicates two trails into the inland regions, one starting from the east coast and stopping halfway across the island, and suggesting some sort of mountain pass. The other also starts from the east coast and travels vaguely down to an inland lake opposite Bruce Bay, and might perhaps suggest the Lindis Pass. However the placement and position of all the lakes and trails is rather conjectural, and apart from the coastline one gets the distinct feeling that the map makers were floundering.

The Vincendon-Dumoulin map of 1842 tidies up the coastline based on d'Urville's work, but shows no internal South Island details. The A. K. Johnston map of 1847 was no more detailed but adds the most peculiar inscription 'South Durham' to the area of the Buller catchment, an area today we would call North Westland. 'North Durham' ran in a line from Taranaki to Manawatu in the North Island.

John Arrowsmith's 1850 chart is the fullest inland detail yet seen, an indication that the observations of Heaphy and Brunner have slowly filtered onto the maps. Brunner's trail to the lake is marked, so are lakes Rotoiti and Rotoroa. This information almost certainly came directly from Charles Heaphy's 1848 map. In three places a track and 'Pass to W. Coast' is marked, which might plausibly

indicate Lewis, Harper's and Arthur's passes. The peak Kaimatau has shifted south of the Taramakau.

By 1863, the James Wyld map suddenly shows considerable inland detail, and Lake Brunner has shrunk to a more agreeable size (reflecting the work of Mackay, Haast and others), and the 1864 Stanton map shows such up-to-date features as 'Howitts Canterbury Bridle Track' in the Taramakau River, Harper's Pass 'saddle', the town of Westport, and the word 'gold' optimistically located someway up the Buller River.

To sum up: the early maps reveal a discouraging and uninformative picture of the West Coast, even up to the start of the 1860's. Considering that the Canterbury colony was established in 1851, the inland regions were simply terra incognita as far as the Europeans were concerned, and the information they gleaned from the Maori was not encouraging. The first pakeha explorers who did reach the West Coast seemed to be bedevilled with hunger and suffering. The passes were hard, the weather poor and food difficult to obtain from the land. It is not at all an accident that Samuel Butler used this landscape as an apt metaphor for his mythical 'Erewhon', for the West Coast seemed a futile and unproductive part of New Zealand. It was even suggested in one newspaper editorial it would make a good site for a penal colony, though, it was added as an afterthought, Stewart Island was probably better.

Administratively, by the 1850's, the South Island was still often called the 'Middle Island' (as if Stewart Island counted for something) and the West Coast was split between three provinces. North of the Grey and Arnold Rivers, it was part of Nelson Province, south of the Grey it was part of Canterbury Province, and usually referred to as West Canterbury. South of the Awarua River, that drained into Big Bay, it was in the jurisdiction of Otago. Actually the Haast River was known to the Maori as the 'Awarua', and shifting the boundary down to the small Big Bay stream was the result of an administrative muck-up, that gave Canterbury an extra part of Otago.

The administrative divisions along the West Coast were only convenient as long as nobody (except the Maori, who did not count) lived on the coast and no useful mineral wealth or grazing country was found. As soon as gold was uncovered, the artificial divisions became an administrative nightmare, and the digging communities were quick to look upon themselves as a different community

and 'separation' became a hot topic in the goldfields newspapers. Incidentally, the name of 'Middle Island', was still in popular usage up to 1900.

Generally, the name 'West Coast' is the accepted title today for the stretch of country between Karamea and Jackson's Bay, but this is rather a late comer. 'West Canterbury' and 'Westland' were earlier names, and the latter is still used somewhat, though usually in relation to 'South Westland' or confusingly 'North Westland'. However more explicit local names such as 'Karamea', 'Buller' and 'Haast' also define specific areas, and will be frequently encountered and fiercely insisted upon. At least few people object to the popular individual expression of calling someone who resides on the West Coast — 'a coaster'.

Geography of the West Coast

Gold Discoveries

In general, the initial gold discoveries on the West Coast occurred in two areas: the Buller River and the Grey-Taramakau Rivers area (see maps).

The first substantial parcel of gold at the Buller was found at the river mouth, some 11 ounces by a Maori party. Two weeks later '27 ounces' turned up, then three weeks after that some 52 ounces of gold was forwarded to Nelson from the location that became known as the 'Old Diggings'. This is approximately where John Rochfort saw the 'royal mineral' and is three kilometres above the Blackwater Creek, about a kilometre short of the present day Berlins Hotel. The distance from the river mouth was some thirty kilometres.

Map of the Buller River and the locality of Berlins, also known as the 'Old Diggings'.

The Waimangaroa River diggings developed at much the same time, in a minor creek fifteen kilometres north of the Buller. The Waimangaroa later became much better known for it's 'black gold' and the famous Dennistoun incline, and never seemed to produce substantial amounts of the glistening variety.

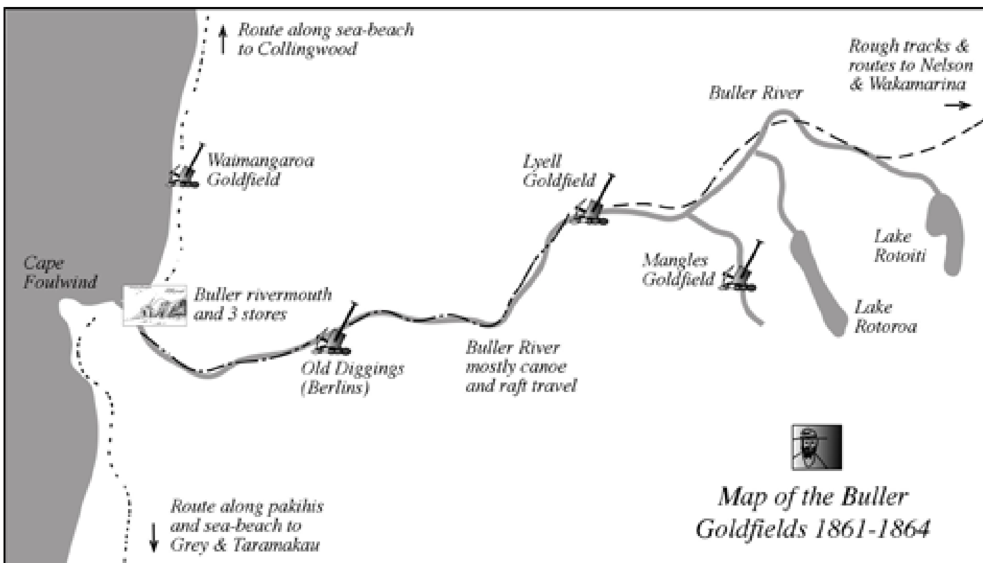
The Lyell goldfield was richer and further, some twenty-eight or so river kilometres above the Old Diggings, sixty kilometres from the river mouth. Later still there were rushes to the Matakitaki and Mangles Rivers, both technically on the West Coast, but serviced more easily

from Nelson than via the jade cold, treacherous waters of the Buller Gorge.

About ninety kilometres south of the Buller River is the Grey River (Mawhera), and ten kilometres south of that is the Taramakau. Between the two, about twenty kilometres inland is Lake Brunner, which exits via the Arnold River into the Grey. Between the Grey, Lake Brunner and the Taramakau, is an obscure side-creek called nowadays the Big Hohonu or Greenstone River, which drains into the Taramakau about ten kilometres upriver from the coast.

Waimangaroa River mouth.

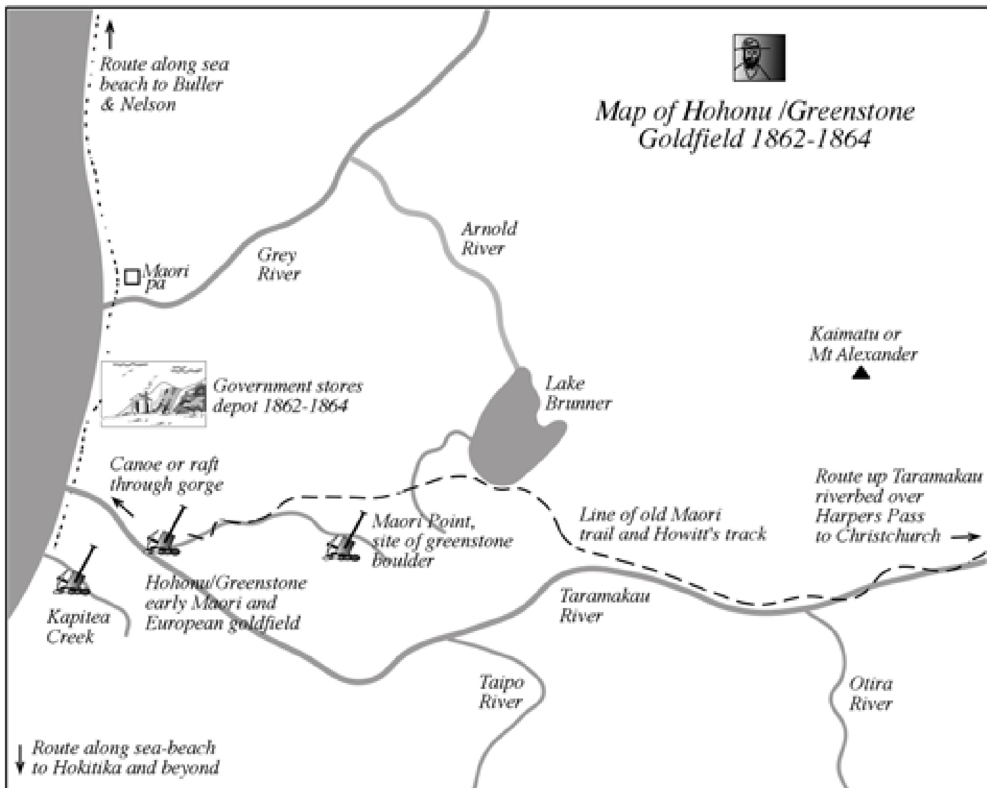
Most of the first European and Maori prospectors worked at the mouth of the Hohonu/Greenstone River which is now a ruinous pile of tailings left by the great gold dredges. Ten kilometres higher there is a minor north fork with the Little Hohonu River, but the main stream turns south and rises as it climbs into the Hohonu Range. About five kilometres upriver from the Little Hohonu forks is the famous 'Maori Point', about fifteen kilometres from the Taramakau River. This place has been identified as the rough location of the original greenstone boulder under which Haimona 'Simon' Tuakau found gold, and guided Albert Hunt to it. However, early accounts in the Hohonu/ Greenstone River talk of 'forks' and 'side-streams' with a



such vagueness that it is sometimes hard to be sure where exactly they were. For convenience, in The Colours the Greenstone or Big Hononu River are always referred to as the Hohonu/Greenstone River.

Small amounts of gold were also initially recovered at the Taramakau mouth, and in Kapitea Creek, which is a piddly stream six kilometres south of the Taramakau.

The Maori trail over Harper Pass followed a line up the Taramakau River, up the Hohonu/Greenstone River and Little Hohonu, and over a low bush saddle (200 metres) into Eel Creek, down to Lake Brunner. Then it went across pakihi land into the Orangipuku River back to the Taramakau. At first glance, it seems hard to know why Maori took this circumlocutory trail via Lake Brunner, when the Taramakau River looks generally easy travel on open shingle beds. But a sidestream of the Taramakau, the Taipo River (sometimes translated as Devil, also known in the 1860's as the 'Hopeoka'), was notoriously difficult to cross, and there were probably better food sources by the lake.

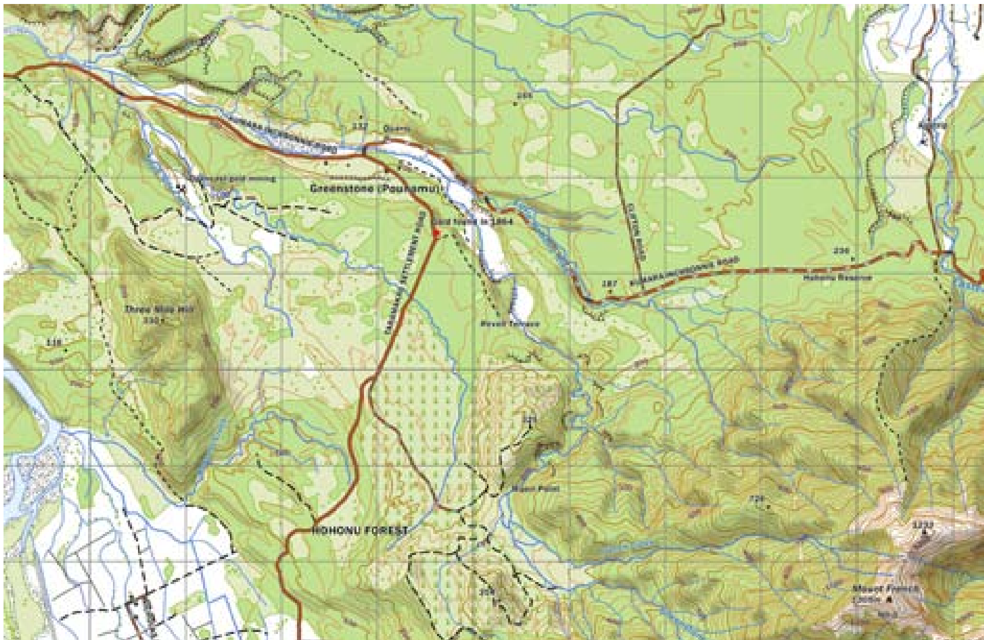


Wherever possible, Maori used canoes to travel, and Pah Point on Lake Brunner was used as a fishing station and potato garden, and Refuge Island indicates some use as a retreat pa.

Because Charlton Howitt followed the line of the Maori trail, the first European track nicely delivered the prospectors to the Hohonu/Greenstone catchment, and ultimately this is the prosaic reason for the early success of the Hohonu/Greenstone.

For when the general rush developed, there proved to be gold just about everywhere between the Grey and the Hokitika Rivers, every sidestream carried gold, the Arnold, the New River, Kapitea Creek, Waimea River and the Kaniere River, and each of these might have started a rush — but they did not have a track to them.

Hohonu and Greenstone River, with Maori Point.



The Settlers' Reaction

The discovery of gold in New Zealand was perceived by many at the time as a most mixed blessing, and it was not by any means welcomed wholeheartedly by the early European settlements. It introduced a wholly new and wayward element into their settlement plans. It encouraged all manner of 'riff raff' and 'speculative types' into the new colony, and tended to seduce even the most reliable settlers away from their small holdings. Gold fever made men excitable, and planning difficult.

For example, Frederick Teschemaker was trying to manage the Haldon station in the remote Mackenzie country in March 1865.

> 'Saturday 25th. Showery on hills... Heard that McLennan [a shepherd] had given a weeks notice & was going to the West coast-diggings. Slept at Fords. Old Cooper is off & also Jim (Fords cook). A regular gold fever going on, never saw such a rush here before'.

This pattern persisted, because a year later in 1866, Edmund Norman, one of Teschemaker's boundary keepers, had been fossicking around streams near his hut and thought he might have found gold. Two diggers who were passing by came and had a look, but were obviously not convinced, because they continued on. But Norman had got bitten, and he left for the goldfields shortly after.

Engineering projects that were never seriously entertained before, such as the Arthur's Pass road, suddenly were demanded and drained a huge and unwarranted amount of money away from the settlement's funds. It played havoc with prices and created labour shortages, or labour gluts. It undermined the structured Christian ideals that were behind many of the first European settlements and introduced the unpleasant prospect of instantly rich gold diggers, swagging it about on their streets.

The Wakefield ideal had been 'to transplant English society, with it's various gradations in due proportions, carrying out our laws, customs, associations, habits, manners, feelings — everything of England, in short, but the soil'. Early newspaper accounts frowned at the goings-on over in Victoria, Australia, and urged their readers to 'devote themselves laboriously, patiently, and perseveringly to the cultivation of the soil'.

Some hope. For if gold was a threat, it was also an opportunity and it was gold that gave these fragile provincial settlements a much needed economic boost. Overnight there were new markets for their sheep meat, and high paying markets too. The Australian goldfields might well have rescued New Zealand pastoralism, because for the first time, and before the advent of refrigeration, live sheep could be exported profitably to the booming populations.

In New Zealand, the diggers demanded all manner of new services, transportation, clothing, equipment and accommodation, that it was in the settlers interest to provide. The same provincial government members who condemned the unstable aspects of gold rushes, were also the businessmen who saw profitable opportunities. It is amusing to note that when Gabriel Read's strike at Tuapeka was publicised, how quickly quite senior and stalwart members of Otago society rolled up their sleeves and got stuck in with their shovels — 'Whangapeka, Tuapeka, bright fine gold'.

J. H. M. Salmon believed that New Zealand conditions would have undermined the coloniser's ideals in any case, without the help of gold, and Philip Ross May agrees.

> 'The planned settlements, conceived in England, shed many of their hereditary traits in the raw colonial environment. The forelock-touching labourers of Wakefield's imagination underwent a sea-change during the voyage out and, when they landed in New Zealand, called each other 'Mister'.

Something like a permanent gold fever was prevalent in New Zealand from the mid-1850's to the 1870's. The *Lyttelton Times* as early as the 9 August 1851, was happy to report.

> 'Some excitement prevailed the early part of the week, from the report that gold had been found close to the Sumner Road. As far as we were able to learn, something having the appearance of the precious metal was visible in a specimen of quartz rock found about the locality mentioned, but in such minute proportions as to leave no ground for enthusiastic anticipations'.

Of course men were already leaving for the new Australian diggings, and this heightened the mania for spotting

real or imaginary gold everywhere in New Zealand during the sixties. Take for example this short item printed by the *Nelson Examiner* in June 1863 about a gold strike in Wellington.

> 'Gold! Gold!! Gold!!! — We have just examined some quartz thickly impregnated with gold which was shown to us by Mr Haybittle, which he informs us was picked up this morning, by a lad named Clout, on the sea-beach, opposite the premises of Messrs Johnston & Co. The gold is of a dark colour, rough and nuggetty, and resembling that discovered at Terawiti. The specimen is in possession of Mr Haybittle, and plenty of similar appearance can be found on the beach and on Mount Victoria'.

Throughout the sixties Canterbury had gold 'strikes' in Oamaru, Oxford in 1863 (or 'Kenricktown'), Ashburton, Christchurch, Taumutu, Banks Peninsula, Mount Somers and the Mackenzie country, despite the fact that, as Julius von Haast impatiently and repeatedly explained, it was unlikely for payable gold to be found east of the main divide. The greywacke gravels were simply not auriferous. Nobody listened, nobody cared.

Yesterday and Today

It's one of the great pleasures of the West Coast gold trail that a good deal of the original goldfields still look very much as they did over a hundred years ago.

You can scramble up the Hohonu/Greenstone River to Maori Point, and imagine that any of the big boulders might be 'chokka' with greenstone. The steep bush sides, the guzzling creek, the alarm notes of the bellbird, were exactly as Haimona Tuakau and Iwikau te Aika would have experienced it in 1864.

The Lyell slopes are still densely clothed in beech forest and on a misty Buller morning, it is not an impossible fancy to hear the 'nobblers' being clinked in the canvas grog shops. The Fox River still steeps into the pluming sea, long after it washed the gaudy town of Brighton into it and although Constant Bay has silted up, few modern buildings disturb the viewing angles, and it is quite possible (and rather scary) to imagine the first schooner risking it's way into this romantic and dodgy little harbour.

Although much of the area between Greymouth and Hokitika has been turned over many times, logged, dredged, re-mined, regrown in scrub, and then planted in pines, all of the crucial areas can be visited, and you do not have to look far at all to see the piles of stone tailings, the preserved sluice gun and the dangerously inexplicable holes that dot the landscape.

Anywhere south of Hokitika, at the Saltwater, Okarito, Three Mile or the legendary Hunts Beach and Bruce Bay, the landscapes still resemble those that the first digger slogged through. Even a thoroughly trashed place like the Ross goldfield is now covered with regenerating bush, and the carefully hand-stacked tailings seem like the remnants of an ancient Aztec town, forgotten in the rainforest.

Lastly, there are the cemeteries, scattered everywhere, overgrown, getting obscured by the gorse and the headstones so green with moss that they are often impossible to decipher. Many other graves lie unmarked and you have to guess the pathos of history underneath these nondescript grass humps. Most of the old cemeteries are well located, but perhaps none better than Ross.

A steep shingled drive leads to the top of a conical hill, with new and old graves spreading down the slopes. Your eye is at first distracted by the views, looking out over the sliver of Totara Lagoon, and the broad band of regenerating forest and shrublands that are reclaiming the original landscape. The distant hills of the Hokitika catchment look sharp against a southerly day, and the same slight breeze brings the mauling sound of a new gold claim being worked at Ross, this time with mechanical dozers and diggers.

In this appropriate reverie you might glance down at a newish gravestone, almost on top of the hill. ‘Philip Ross May’, died in June 1977, aged 47. It’s too young, isn’t it?

Sources for Chapter 1

The Gold Culture

• J. H. M. Salmon *A History of Gold Mining in New Zealand*. His introduction gives a good, precise view of the international movement of gold rushes.

No better visual example of the antipathy felt by the European diggers towards the Chinese can be given than that of the Naseby cemetery, where the Chinese graves (who after all might well have been Christian) are buried on the far side of the cemetery, almost hidden under trees, with the inscriptions facing away from the other headstones.

• Theophilus Cooper *A Diggers Diary at the Thames* pamphlet 32 pages, covering period 1 November to 20 December 1867.

• *West Coast Times* 4 January 1866 (John Stamp).

• Alexander Kerr *Reminiscences of the gold rush days in Australia and New Zealand*, manuscript Alexander Turnbull Library (original and typed).

New Zealand Gold Rushes

• J. H. M. Salmon *A History of Gold Mining in New Zealand*.

• Philip Ross May *The West Coast Gold Rushes* (general information) (wage earnings p253). The expression 'poor men's diggings' was later turned on its head, and came to mean a poorly paying workings.

• The actual conversion of a troy pound to a standard pound is 13.16 ounces, or 0.822857.

The West Coast Landscape

• *Historic Charts and Maps of New Zealand* (1996) Peter Maling. Other maps quoted from can be accessed through the Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington.

'Kai Mataiu' was a peak identified uncertainly by Brunner. A thesis by J. M. Acheson *Behind the Snowy Mountains* (1960) also confirms Kaimatau as Mt Alexander (see chapter one 'Ngai Tahu' p14-38 and Appendix p228-231) and suggests that Tara Tama was also used as a 'marker post' by Maori using the Arahura-Browning Pass route.

It is interesting to note that the famous 'White Spot', Otahu Hill which was marked as early as the 1838 map by the 'Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge', is still there on Wyld's 1853 map. The 'Spot' is marked below Cape Foulwind, and despite it's unlikely name has been persisted with by the map makers for thirty years.

• Barry Brailsford *The Tattooed Land* p203-204.

The Settlers Reaction

• Philip Ross May *The West Coast Gold Rushes*. For an excellent summation of the mixed desires settlers felt about gold, see the pages 64-69.

• *Diary* Frederick Teschemaker p25 & p40, Canterbury Museum Manuscripts Collection.

• *Nelson Examiner* 17 June 1863, from an edition of the Wellington paper *New Zealand Advertiser*.

A Lucky Boy on the Goldfields

J. A. McKenzie spent his boyhood at Slateford, looking down into the river gorge of the Slate River near Collingwood. It was about the late 1850's, when after the first rush to Golden Bay the miners were penetrating into the deep sunless ravines.

'I have seen the ice, inches deep along the banks of the river. Icicles in the thousands, hanging from every rock and tree along the river banks. Diggers with their beards frozen, were a common occurrence, while an iron crowbar would stick to your hands when taken up and you would lose your skin that way if you were not careful'.

The senior McKenzie had already had some success at two claims, 'McKenzies' and 'Richmond Hill' at Collingwood and was known locally as 'Lucky McKenzie'. He must have been a typically restless spirit, for he then took off for the Buller diggings in about 1861, and was later one of the first at Gabriel's Gully 'but I didn't hear of him making much money there'.

Meanwhile the boy was substituting whilst the man was away, and Mrs McKenzie had 12 children to look after in a pit-sawn rimu house with three rooms, and an open fire. The sun never reached the house in winter. Mrs McKenzie died from influenza at only forty 'one of the finest mothers who ever breathed'.

At eight years old J. A. McKenzie was helping his dad on the diggings, at about 12 he was winning more gold than his father and the diggers were now calling him 'Lucky'. He was doing packing runs to Collingwood, and one day returned to find the diggers carrying his father, who had broken his leg. The diggers got together £30 for the family (no social welfare then of course) and the young boy worked almost day and night on a good claim, and there was £50 in the house when his surprised father returned.

'Gold digging in those early days was just a question of a man's courage and strength; nowadays all is done scientifically and in comfort. When sluicing we often had to tunnel under with a hose, never sure we would not bring down a fall of earth that would bury us. In fact many were buried alive or injured by such avalanches. I thought nothing of going into the river up to my neck in snow water and would stop there all day. It was mostly the same, winter and summer, down in the gorge, with generally a keen wind blowing up or down the river'.

But all good things come to an end, and with £60 in his pocket, he left the Slate River behind and set off to walk to Nelson over the Takaka Hill and seek his fortune in the North Island. He had seen nothing of the world beyond Collingwood. He was fifteen.

Chapter 2

Gold Discovered

Between 1857 and 1864 there were various gold discoveries made on the West Coast, some accidental, some deliberate. These discoveries have been arranged in approximately chronological order, but of course, not all of these finds were made public at the time.

Rather like the discoveries themselves, this chapter jumps from personalities to places, indicating something of the frustrated optimism of the editorials, which kept looking forward to a promising summer of gold only, to be chastised by a long, wintry silence.

Chronology of gold noticed

1856

Mackay in Collingwood, made report to Superintendent by letter 7 November 1856, 'report possibility of gold'.

1857

Rush to Collingwood goldfield (February). Mackay saw 'good indications' of gold in Taramakau.

Edward Dobson crossed Harper Pass to headwaters of Taramakau and reported auriferous prospects (September).

Leonard Harper crossed Harper Pass guided by Ihaia Tainui, and claimed to have found gold at Mawhera and Taramakau (November).

1858

Tarapuhi, Tainui, and G. W. H. Lees bring 'scaly gold' from Buller.

1859

Rochfort's survey hands find gold in Buller River (November).

1860

Samuel Butler explored the eastern side, and saw Whitcombe Pass, Arthurs Pass, and reached Harper Pass (February-May).

21 Canterbury diggers arrived at Buller on Fantome, washed fine gold at the Buller mouth, but failed to reach the site of Rochfort's discovery (May).

James Mackay extinguished native title on Westland and bought 7 million acres for £300 (May).

Julius Haast found traces of gold in Buller (May).

1861

Samuel Mackley (2nd journey) travelled overland to Buller, and returned to Nelson with two Maori who had 11 ounces of Buller gold (April).

Otago gold rush, started by Gabriel Read (April).

Buller Maori brought 52 ounces of gold to Nelson (May).

Waimangaroa and the 'Old Diggings' at the Buller attract a small rush (June).

Canterbury Provincial Government offered award of £1000 for a payable gold field, that was 'accessible to Christchurch' (August).

1862

Tainui/Oakes-Dixon find gold at Taramakau, and claim simultaneously for gold bonus (October-December).

Epapara Kahutuanui (and four others find gold at Lyell (December).

1863

Lauper washed traces of gold near Hokitika River (May).

Auriferous or Spurious?

'The royal mineral was lying on the edge of the river, glistening in the sun, and in such quantity as induced rather a mutinous spirit; my hands having a greater preference for the golden prospects before them than the sterner duties of surveying'.

Nelson Examiner 4 January 1860.

It is not precisely clear when the first gold was noticed on the West Coast. Significantly, neither Charles Heaphy or Thomas Brunner commented on seeing any gold, either on Heaphy and Brunner's journey down the West Coast coastline in 1846, or on Brunner's epic journey down the Buller River to the Paringa River in 1847. But of course they were not specifically looking for it either — it was still too early for the possibility of gold to have become generally imprinted on people's imaginations.

In 1857 James Mackay publicly stated that he had not found gold anywhere in the Mawhera district, but later privately admitted that this may have been official discretion. He first wanted to assure the purchase of the West Coast before announcing any gold. In fact a hint did slip out, but no one seemed to take any notice.

By the time of the Collingwood rush in 1857 gold was now firmly on the agenda. Gold was noticed on the West Coast by the Maori at least as early as 1858, and probably a tad earlier than that. There was this curious report from 1 February 1859 from The Colonist.

> 'Gold on the West Coast — we were credibly informed yesterday that gold has been found by a party of natives on the West Coast, about 25 miles south of West Wanganui, and it is said they have made as much as half an ounce per man a day; but this may be an exaggeration'.

With many of the gold finds, a deliberate effort was made to keep them secret, or qualified so severely, so as to reduce the chance of a haphazard gold rush. Partly this was a concern over the Maori land question, partly a genuine desire not to inflame public opinion with a few pennyweights of gold. When Captain Fearon and party walked down the coast from the Buller River to the Grey River in February 1860, they were deliberately circumspect.

> 'Knowing that the land question was not settled, and the maories not wishing us to dig for gold, we abstained from so doing, not desirous of creating any difficulty. The whole country around the River Buller, is, I think, aureiferous, but below, near the valley of the Grey, the country so much alters in its features, that I am strongly of the opinion that no gold will be found to exist there...'

However, the careful manners and qualifications of the European surveyors and explorers were largely ignored by the newspapers, who knew good copy when they saw it. They would give prominence to every genuine or spurious gold discovery, but it was hard going at times, there simply was not that much to go on.

Edward Dobson 1857

> 'It is almost too exciting to be told that the protruding rock in the neighbourhood, described as abounding in quartz, indicates the more than probable presence of gold'.

Thus burbled the *Lyttelton Times* in September 1857, when it received the report of the Christchurch engineer Edward Dobson's account of his exploration of the Harper Pass in 1857. In part, the *Lyttelton Times* enthusiasm was caused by the booming activity on the Collingwood goldfields. Gold was seen everywhere. The newspaper even reported that one gentleman, who had seen the golden geology of Californian goldfields, and had thence compared it most favourably with that of the 'Auckland Isles'.

Edward Dobson's party also included the local runholders G. E. Mason, Taylor and Dampier. There is the suggestion by D. Cresswell that G. E. Mason in the company of John Mallock may have reached the Harper Pass as early as 1855, though he produces no real evidence of this.

> 'He was a great explorer of the back country in the early days and discovered Lake Sumner and several other lakes'.

Tarapuhi te Kaukihi, the leading Maori chief at the Mawhera [Grey River] pa, described the Harper Pass route in detail to James Mackay in March 1857, and Mackay was informed by Tarapuhi that the journey took 'six days' and 'white men at Port Cooper [Lyttelton] have been to the pass on horseback'.

Dobson estimated that the pass was barely a 1000 feet above sea level [actually 3158 feet, 963 metres], and only 30 miles [more like 50 miles, 80 kilometres] from the West Coast. However, despite the newspaper's enthusiasm, Dobson was careful to state only that he only thought the area looked auriferous and 'gold bearing'.

Although Dobson's party pipped Leonard Harper by two months, it's not clear whether they themselves were beaten for the honour by another couple of men, mentioned in Harper's account.

> '[After crossing Harper Pass] Near this spot we were fortunate enough to find a bag of rice and a bottle of curry, left by Messrs. Yonge and Wilson, an agreeable addition to our scanty supply of provisions'.

Who Yonge and Wilson were is something of a mystery, and how far they travelled is also at this stage unclear.

When George Dobson crossed Harper Pass in the company of Richard Sherrin and Charles Todhunter in February 1864 (they were on a search party looking for the missing Charlie Howitt and his two men), he came across an historic tree, somewhere on the Taramakau side, and possibly near the top flats.

> 'At this place is the tree bearing the names or initials of a great number of people, as also dates the oldest of which was '59 written under the name of Howe. The oldest mark on the tree had grown over so as to be illegible but we fancied it resembled the letters L H'.

It's tempting to think that this could be 'Leonard Harper', though who Mr 'Howe' was is not known.

No gold has ever been garnered from the Harper Pass area, but Edward Dobson's report aroused considerable interest, and although this quickly faded, it did at least draw the public's attention to the Harper Pass route, and may indeed have been the catalyst that inspired the twenty-year old Leonard Harper to have a crack at going to the coast. Edward Dobson was the father of Arthur Dobson, and despite his inaccuracies in the Harper Pass report, he was usually a careful engineer. He was subsequently involved in the chase to find a suitable pass to connect up with the new gold field on the Hohonu/Greenstone, and finally decided on Arthur's Pass (his son's pass) as the only feasible route.

There seems to be no definite Maori name for Harper Pass, although on the Arahura map, which delineated what land had been bought on the Westland purchase, the pass is marked 'saddle Taramakau, Te Rau o Tama'.

Leonard Harper 1857

As we have seen, Leonard Harper was not the first European to reach or cross Harper Pass, but he was the first European to successfully travel across to the West Coast in 1857, in the company of Maori guides including Ihaia Tainui, and he furthermore travelled south some '90 miles' from the Grey River to the 'Waitangi'.

According to his son, A. P. Harper, Leonard Harper had some trouble persuading the Kaiapoi Maori to guide him over the pass in the first place, and did so only on the promise that he would not 'make his trip public'. In fact, a full account was printed in the *Lyttelton Times* in January 1858, shortly after Harper's return.

There are three accounts of Harper's journey and unfortunately they differ significantly, for each time the length travelled down the coast has increased. A detailed discussion on this takes place in the sources at the end of the chapter.

What is relevant is that Leonard Harper privately reported gold at the mouth of the Taramakau in 1857, in fact the earliest definite reported sighting of gold anywhere on the West Coast.

> 'I found gold on the beach at the mouth of the Taramakau, and at Mawhera, and brought back some fine specimens'.

A. P. Harper's footnote explains that 'fearing an influx of undesirables, the Provincial Government was against the disclosure of this find'. In an editorial in the *Lyttelton Times* in December 1862 however, this gold sighting was reported slightly differently.

> '...Maoris who accompanied Mr Leonard Harper on his trip to the West Coast three or four years ago brought back specimens of gold with them'.

Leonard Harper

After this youthful burst of energy (he was 20) Leonard Harper went on to play a prominent part in the Canterbury community. He was to become a Member for Parliament for two terms, in 1876-77 for Cheviot, and 1884-87 for Avon. He became a successful solicitor, successful that is until 1893, when the firm of Harper and Company collapsed into bankruptcy, and Harper was arrested in England for larceny (ie theft) in 1894. The collapse caused a provincial scandal.

'One local failure was on a different scale. The bankruptcy in 1893 of Leonard Harper & Company, solicitors, for some £200,000, and the criminal proceedings which had to be removed to Wellington because of the feeling they aroused locally...'

The 'Christchurch Press' ran a scathing editorial on the bankruptcy.

'This unhappy failure affects directly or indirectly the whole district, nay, the whole colony. It is a source of anxiety to a large class of the community and forms the one prevailing topic of talk', 'During the last six or seven years the career of the firm has been a reckless, desperate, series of clutching at the drowning man's straw', 'a series of mismanaged bungles', 'confused, disorderly, erratic', 'culpable weakness and moral cowardice'.

Harper was then living in the Channel Islands in 'poor health' but was brought back in 1895 to answer criminal charges. Despite at least two trials he was found not guilty of any deliberate fraud. The 1903 'Cyclopaedia' of New Zealand reported that Harper was living on Jersey Island.

James Mackay 1859-1860

Because of his exploring experience, his fluent Maori, and his father's influence, James Mackay at the still young age of 28, was given the task of negotiating the 'Arahura Purchase' [Westland or West Coast]. In April 1859 with Alexander Mackay (his cousin) and John Rochfort, Mackay crossed the Harper Pass to the coast, but the negotiations were not successful, and he left via the cutter Supply and returned to Nelson on the 27 September.

A quick trip to Wellington for more instructions, and then Mackay was back in the Buller River in 1860, and arrived half-starved at the Grey in March. Julius von Haast and party were following more slowly in Mackay's footsteps, as the former pioneered a route up over the Inangahua River saddle to the Grey River. This time Mackay clinched the deal, and gave the crucial document a wetting in the Buller River on his return to Nelson.

The question of whether he saw gold is interesting. On his 1857 trip down the coast to the Grey, where incidentally, he first met Tarapuhi who was the only 'friendly' native, he kept his eyes open.

> 'Coming so lately from the Collingwood gold digging, I kept a good look-out for the much coveted metal, but could not discover the smallest indication of gold in my journeying; in fact the country was as destitute of that article as the Nelson Provincial treasury'.

Phillip Ross May added a footnote to this remark.

> 'There is some reason to doubt this pointed reference in Mackay's journal. Late in life James Mackay told James Cowan that he had found indications of gold but had said nothing until the West Coast was purchased from the Maoris'.

Just before James Mackay dashed back to Wellington, after the failure of his 1859 negotiations with Maori, a reporter from The Colonist extracted a hint of gold from the explorer.

> 'In the valley of the Grey, there were no symptoms whatever of gold, but on the west coast side of the Taramakau, the dividing ridge between Canterbury and the Grey, some very good indications were observable'.

It's worth noting also that Mackay later made a claim for leasing 24,000 acres of grazing land at the junction of the Mawheraiti and Grey, so he may not have been keen to see land prices jump in price because of a gold rush. This was in the same area that George and Henry Lees also bagged a grazing lease, though neither Mackay or the Lees actually took up the runs.

James Mackay

One can feel exhausted simply outlining the numerous journeys and explorations that James Mackay pursued throughout his life, both privately and for the government. The man had seemingly inexhaustible energy, and he has been described as 'one of those individuals on whom the expansion of empire depended'.

He was born in Scotland in 1831 and emigrated to New Zealand with his father and two cousins when he was 13, arriving in January 1845. In 1853 he took up the Cape Farewell sheep and cattle run in Golden Bay, which included Farewell Spit. Initially the run was around 1500 acres, and Mackay leased thousands more, including Farewell Spit. He tried alluvial mining in 1857 on the 'Manrope' claim in the Slate River but was not a success.

On his own account with John Clark, he explored the headwaters of the Collingwood in October 1856 and found the Gouland Downs and the 'Whakapoai Gap' leading to the Heaphy River (this was later 'proved' to be a good route by two diggers in 1859 who followed the Heaphy to the sea). Then in February and March 1857, Mackay followed the coastline down to the Grey pa with two Maori guides, fossicked up the Grey River for pasture land, and returned along the coast. In 1858 he was off again, looked up the Takaka River searching for an overland route to the Buller. By now he had been appointed Assistant Native Secretary in 1858, based on the Collingwood goldfields and later in 1859 had accumulated enough other offices to become the virtual Warden.

Between 1859-1860 James Mackay was heavily involved in land purchases in the South Island, notably the Arahura block, but by 1864 he was based in the North Island as a Civil Commissioner, helping in purchasing land from the Maori in the Waikato and Coromandel regions.

Mackay went on to become Warden at the Coromandel goldfield in 1867. 'The Thames Autocrat' was his nickname, and indeed his none too scrupulous methods overcame Maori resistance to the

gold diggers and enabled the area to be opened up. Interestingly, Charles Heaphy had also been appointed a Coromandel goldfield Commissioner, in the extremely short gold rush of the 1850's between November 1852 and June 1853.

Mackay was elected to the Auckland Provincial Council in 1869 and his star seemed certain to continue it's rise until his first bankruptcy in 1870, with personal liabilities of £4,500 and partnership liabilities from the firm 'Mackay, Taipari & Co.' of £9,700. He was forced to resign and declined a memorial dinner proposed by Thames townspeople because of his 'present difficult circumstances'. By 1879 he was back on the West Coast, but his title of Resident Magistrate and Warden for the Greymouth, Hokitika and Nelson southwest goldfields, did not disguise the fact that his career had slipped sideways. Matters got abruptly worse, for in 1880 he went bankrupt again and resigned his posts.

He moved north and settled in Paeroa in the North Island in 1896. He was married with one daughter and apparently had a real estate and stockbroking business with another man, Alexander Hogg, but this however was not enough to halt his drift into poverty. Later we find him partially paralysed, living alone in a small hut on a miserable annuity of £50 a year, which Richard Seddon later increased to £75 in 1903. This remarkable man died on 10 October 1912, aged 81.

For many people of the time James Mackay represented all of the admirable qualities of a pioneer. Energetic, educated, comfortable with the settler classes, yet also popular with the diggers, with whom he could use his fists as good as any of them. His fluent Maori was another string to his bow, and though by modern standards his dealings showed some underhand qualities, he got the results the Europeans wanted. Two titles from two different articles sum up how James Mackay was viewed by his peers: 'Civil Commissioner, James Mackay, a mighty man of valour' and 'James Mackay, a man amongst men'.

There is a Mackay Street in Paeroa, and a nearby Mackaytown. On the West Coast there is a Mackay Street in Greymouth, and Mackay Hut and Mackay Downs on the Heaphy Track.

G. W. H. Lee, 1858

In 1858, the pastoralists G. W. H. Lee and J. S. Caverhill had returned back to Christchurch via the Hurunui Saddle [Harper Pass] guided by Tarapuhi and Tainui. Lee had gone over for the purposes of taking up land, and selected some 140,000 acres at the junction of the Grey and Ahaura Rivers with his travelling partner. Lee and Caverhill must have travelled down the coast from Whanganui Inlet, but both later took on Canterbury runs.

> 'We gain information by degrees as to the value of the West Coast County... They bring specimens of gold in small scales, which they say, is brought down in quantities from a hill called Whakapohai, on the north side of the Buller River, in the Province of Nelson, by the native inhabitants of that place. Our Maori informants add, that the gold is in immense abundance, and that crowds of both white men and natives are now at work at Whakapohai, the gold being found in the soil of the mountain when washed in the stream below. There is of course, a great deal of Maori exaggeration in these statements, but the existence of gold is undoubted, many specimens having reached town'.

This statement is full of puzzles and contradictions. Where was Whakapohai? The Heaphy River and point were called 'Whakapoai', but that hardly seems close to the Buller, and how can there be 'crowds' of white men in the Buller River in April 1858 when the first Europeans are not reported to have been working at Waimangaroa and the Buller till 1861? Notice the reference to 'many specimens'. Presumably Lee was told of the 'immense abundance' by Tarapuhi, and did not get to see for himself. Still for all the hype, it is clear that the Maori were aware of the value of gold, and were prospecting with some success.

life details

G. W. H. Lee & J. S. Caverhill

Both men were larger than life characters and featured prominently in early Canterbury run history. The G. W. H. Lee mentioned in Acland's history of The Early Canterbury Runs is the same man who brought back the gold in 1858. Lee bought the Wharfedale run in 1856, hence 'Lee's Valley', and another Oxford run called 'The Warren' in 1866. According to Acland, Lee 'was known as 'Jockey' Lee, and was a well known owner and amateur rider in the early days of racing in Canterbury'. G. W. H. Lee died in 1883.

Lee's travelling partner, J. S. Caverhill, was a noted pastoralist and explorer in his own right, and may indeed have been the driving force behind the West Coast journey. He was born in the Scottish lowlands and went first to New South Wales where he made money by cattle-droving and exploring, taking up runs which he then sold on. Probably this was the motive for the Lee/Caverhill expedition to the West Coast.

'He was a great hand with all stock. He never forgot a horse or a cattle beast and had such a good eye for them that it was said he could identify particular animals farther off than most other men could tell whether they were horses or cattle'.

One source describes him as 'a great character', a practical joker, 'a red-faced man with tow-like white hair, large prominent tusks of teeth, and abundant evidence of being addicted to the weed for chewing purposes'. Caverhill gets more references in Acland's book than almost anyone else, and had an interest in many different Canterbury runs, and like Lee, he was also a keen horse racer.

'Caverhill had Hawkeswood (where he lived from 1854) and Highfield stations in the Nelson Province and was eventually tempted to the North Island, where, like several Canterbury pioneers, he farmed on a very large scale and lost his money. But he never lost either his spirits or his eye for stock'.

John Rochfort, 1859

The most explicit news of gold came from John Rochfort. It was a justly famous moment, which generated an editorial from the *Nelson Examiner* in January 1860, which enthused about the find, but warned that we must 'not allow the discovery of a few pennyweights of gold to excite our imagination too strongly'. The newspaper generally did not take too much notice of their own advice.

Rochfort had already crossed Harper Pass and surveyed to the coast in his first expedition of February-July 1859. He had met up with James and Alexander Mackay, who were pursuing the purchase of Westland. On that expedition he walked back along the coast to Nelson. On his second survey, he sailed to the Buller river mouth in August, and commenced chaining up the Buller River.

> 'November 8th [1859] Still working through the gorge, the slope of the hills getting more easy. Whilst chaining, I was surprised and no less gratified by one of the hands (F. Millington) announcing the discovery of gold, an event as unexpected as propitious, and one which must have a powerful influence on the future prospects of this long-neglected West land. The royal mineral was lying on the edge of the river, glistening in the sun, and in such quantity as induced rather a mutinous spirit; my hands having a greater preference for the golden prospects before them than the sterner duties of surveying'.

The next day [Nov 9th] he 'Found gold again, and collected about 3 dwts on the north side, lying on the surface'. Rochfort however, rather curiously recommended that men who came to the Buller Gorge should combine agriculture with gold digging, to 'ensure success' ('I should very much regret to see a number of men rush down, with merely digging for their object, as I feel sure they would fail'), though you would think that agriculture in the dark, dense Buller gorge, was rather an unlikely proposition.

The find took place near about where Berlins Hotel is today, approximately 20-25 miles up from the coast, and this place subsequently became known as the 'Old Diggings'. Rochfort finished his work in December and returned to Nelson, where his discovery was written up in the *Nelson Examiner*. It was this account that led to the *Fantome* voyage to the Buller in 1860.

life details

John Rochfort, life details

One writer described John Rochfort as a 'bullock' for work, which aptly sums up the remarkable and successful career of this surveyor and adventurer who was the first to mention 'this west land'.

'Said to be so tough he could work all day without food and still be fresh at night as when he rose in the morning... tactful and fearless'.

Born in London in 1832, and studied civil engineering under the famous Isambard Kingdom Brunel, he and his brother James emigrated to New Zealand in 1852. He worked as a surveyor for a while, then tried his hand at gold-mining in Victoria during 1853, and was back in London by the end of 1853, where he published a short and rare book 'The Adventures of a Surveyor in New Zealand and the Australian Gold Diggings'.

In 1854 the whole Rochfort family emigrated to New Zealand and settled in Riwaka, Nelson, where eventually Rochfort got a job as a surveyor for the Nelson Province.

His most well-known two journeys took place in 1859 where he was surveying the Nelson-Canterbury provincial boundary, and his hands found gold in the Buller River. In 1863-64 he was appointed Chief Surveyor of West Canterbury, and by now speaking fluent Maori he easily accomplished the task of finishing off Bain's incompleted survey down to Haast.

By 1869 he had shifted to Wellington, and surveyed the Rimutaka incline railway line in 1871, then was employed with the Timaru town and port as engineer from 1874-76. He then held numerous positions around the country, including the reconnaissance surveys for the main trunk railway line in the North Island. He died in 1894, at the comparatively young age of 62.

Samuel Butler, 1860

In the early months of 1860 Samuel Butler was explicitly looking for sheep country, but he was a remarkably prescient and active explorer, and covered more useful ground in a few months than most people managed in several years. He spent an intelligent time exploring the headwaters of the Rangitata, Harper (a branch of the Rakaia), Waimakariri, and even up to Harper Pass. He was the first European to see Whitcombe Pass, which he later crossed for 'some distance' into the West Coast with John Holland Baker, until they were turned back by the 'dense timber'. He was also the first European to note Arthur's Pass, and correctly assumed it would lead to the West Coast. Only his unwillingness to leave his horse prevented him from going to the pass itself. There is even an indication that he also found the time to have a look at the newly discovered Haast Pass.

Like any enterprising young man new to the colony, he kept his eyes open.

> 'All the time we kept looking for gold, not in any scientific manner, but we had a kind of idea that if we looked in the shingly beds of the numerous tributaries of the Harper, we should surely find either gold or copper or something good. So at every shingle-bed we came to (and every little tributary had a shingle-bed) we lay down and gazed into the pebbles with all our eyes. We found plenty of stones with yellow specks in them, but none of that rich goodly hue which makes a man certain that what he has found is gold'.

Samuel Meggitt Mackley, 1860-1861

Samuel Mackley arrived in New Zealand in 1857 and was interested in pastoral leases, rather than gold, but he somehow got caught up in the vital events on the West Coast, and had a knack of being on the spot when history was happening. He made two overland journeys down the coastline from Nelson to the Grey River.

> 'Mr Mackley claims to have picked up a few pennyweights of gold on a rock during his wanderings in 1859 [1860], while on his way to Nelson to apply for land, which he subse-

> quently acquired, and he believes he was thus the first discoverer of gold on the West Coast'.

Interestingly, according to the *Cyclopaedia*, Mackley also later claimed to have 'found gold on the beach' at Okarito, the first person to do so.

Samuel Mackley and George Crichton had tramped overland to the Grey in 1860, presumably via the coastline, and met James Mackay, and later Julius von Haast's party as he slowly followed Mackay's trail-blazing. To complete the sudden overcrowding of Europeans at the Mawhera pa, John Rochfort and Captain Fearon of the *Gipsy* arrived after walking down from the Buller River. Captain Fearon needed to inspect the Grey River bar, which finding satisfactory, returned to the Buller and sailed the *Gipsy* into the Grey River bringing the much needed supplies for Mackay and Haast. It was the first vessel to enter the river.

Mackley had had some training as a doctor and fixed up James Mackay's injured knee, then accompanied the signature hunting Mackay down to the Mahitahi and was witness to the Deed of Sale on the 21 May 1860. Whilst John Rochfort continued his survey, James Mackay trudged back up the coast to Nelson. It's not clear whether Mackley or Crichton accompanied him, or if they sailed back with the *Gipsy*.

Around early February 1861, Samuel Mackley made a second trip down to the Grey.

> 'February 22 — Mr Macklay and party started a week ago for the West Coast by way of the Whakapohai pass, adopting Mr Mackay's track cut last year'.

He was obliged to return and start again on March 16 because his mate was 'not quite up to roughing it'. On April 30 there was an excited report from Collingwood.

> 'April 18th — I write to you in haste, to tell you there are some Maoris arrived from the Buller River, West Coast, with a quantity of gold obtained, according to the Maori account, in a very crude way, principally with a sheath-knife. Dr Mackley has returned, and has brought some of the gold with him; another Maori is expected daily with upwards of a pound weight'.

The 'quantity of gold' was almost certainly the 11 ounces reported at the same time in the *Nelson Examiner*, but the

pound weight did not seem to eventuate.

The Maori had gathered this gold from the Buller River using the discarded knives and tin dishes of the Fantome party. This started a rush of Maori down south, who returned with further parcels of 27 ounces and 52 ounces within three weeks. This in turn excited the storekeeper Reuben Waite, who, undaunted by the scepticism of Nelson folk, hired the *Jane* and landed in the Buller in June 1861.

Lauper and Whitcombe, 1863

By early 1863 the Canterbury Provincial Government had a short burst of optimism and activity concerning it's neglected region of West Canterbury. The double claim for the gold bonus by Oakes and Tainui in late 1862 may have caused some of this interest, even though the claim was disallowed. The administration decided to set up a depot on the Grey River, and sent Charles Townsend to erect the pre-fabricated store. They also instructed Henry Whitcombe to find a 'practicable gap into the West Coast country', and investigate the possible pass that Samuel Butler had noticed nearly three years earlier. No one could have anticipated the tragic outcome of both these well-intended projects.

Neither Whitcombe or Lauper may have been ideal choices. Whitcombe had only recently come from India, where he was more used to having a plentiful supply of labour for his surveying, and Lauper had only just completed a series of rather exhausting travels over Harper Pass, nearly starving to death on one trip. Whitcombe was also under some pressure from Thomas Cass, the chief surveyor, who had complained that Whitcombe had overdrawn on stores 'You will be held responsible for any missing stores', and had also denied an increase in wages. It seems that Whitcombe was running out of his financial allocation, and this may help to explain why only the two of them attempted the crossing, and perhaps why Whitcombe was scrimping on food.

The story of their gruesome journey has been told several times, and there is no need to repeat it in any detail here. In April 1863 they left Christchurch, and crossed the un-named pass at the head of the Rakaia, which later gained Whitcombe's name. The Maori may have called this pass

life details

Samuel Meggit Mackley

He was born in Leeds in 1829, and started to train as a doctor, but gave it up because of 'poor health'. He arrived in New Zealand in 1857, and after his first and second expeditions down the coast to investigate pastoral opportunities, he took up a lease at the junction of the Grey and Mawheraiti Rivers, which he called Waipuna.

Mackley returned in the schooner Jane to the Grey in March 1862 with his wife Mary and baby daughter, and hired Captain Jacobsen to help move his goods to Waipuna.

'It took nearly a month to take the six trips backwards and forwards, before Mr Mackley was settled. Mr Mackley's house, which measured 40 feet by 30 feet, was made out of manuka poles and bark, and took eight days to build'.

In February 1863, Mackley drove 100 ewes and two heifers over Amuri Pass to Waipuna, over a track that had been previously cut by John Rochfort. At about the same time, or perhaps jointly, Isaac Freeth, with four hired hands drove 560 merinos over the pass, and took up the lease of G. W. H. Lee's old run, which Lee had forfeited because he had failed to stock it. This run was at the Grey-Ahaura junction. A third Grey River run was stocked by 'Major Newcombe' in September 1864, and the rather unlikely pastoralist Captain Jacobsen, took charge of the station for nine months.

It must have been initially extraordinarily hard for the Mackley family in the first few years, and matters were not helped by the gold rush. In 1865 hungry gold miners were trekking south from Nelson via the Grey River to the Blackball diggings, and Mackley complained from his Waipuna run that 'men are hourly arriving here in a state of starvation, having to throw away tools, clothing, tents and blankets, on the road'. Apparently the 'famished overlanders had killed his pigs, fowls and sheep'.

However, the gold diggers also provided the Mackleys with a much needed income, and they gradually settled into Waipuna, content on their '2200 acre domain', and the couple raised eleven children, five sons, and six daughters. Samuel Mackley was listed in Crear's Almanac as 'hotelkeeper, brewer, butcher and storekeeper' and was for a while the Grey Valley representative on the Nelson Provincial Government. He died in November 1911, and his descendants still own the property at Waipuna.

'Mackley Plain' up the Grey River still commemorates this athletic gentleman, and the name of his run 'Waipuna' is marked on a road, a river and a locality.

‘Rurumataikau’, but there is no evidence that they used it for access to the greenstone country. After a grim struggle down the gorge, Whitcombe later drowned trying to cross the Taramakau River, but before that tragedy Lauper spotted something interesting in the lower Hokitika valley, possibly on the banks of the Kokatahi River.

> ‘Next morning I made some tea, while Mr. Whitcombe examined the road we had to go; by chance, looking towards the bank of the stream I observed some splendid looking washing stuff — fine gravel, mixed with quartz and ironstone. I took the lid of the billy and washed about two handfuls, and found some fine specks of gold — what diggers call ‘the colour’. I washed some more, and laid the result on a green leaf. When Mr. Whitcombe returned he asked me what I was doing; I showed him the gold; we no longer thought about our breakfast — he knocked down the stuff with the iron point of his compass-stick, and I went on washing as fast as I could; I think I got somewhere about two grains of fine gold; then Mr. Whitcombe cried out, ‘That is enough, Jacob, we shall claim the reward, we cannot spend any more time here’. He then asked me if it would pay to work; I answered perhaps it would, with a ground sluice, not in any other way, but we had not found the bottom, which is always best. He scraped up the gold carefully on a bit of paper, which he tied up in a corner of his handkerchief. He spoke of it the whole day, and had great hopes concerning it’.

After the disaster at the Taramakau, Lauper walked upriver some ‘three miles’, where he met a Maori family who gave him some potatoes and fish. He walked a further ‘three miles’ and met five Maori in canoes going downriver from the diggings. They took him across, and he reached the diggings that evening, where two Maori families gave him some more food. Presumably these diggings were close to the junction with the Hohonu River.

Lauper clearly states that he is going to ‘leave the Taramakau’ from the diggings, and follow up the ‘Ohaoi creek’, which is probably the Hohonu River. This would be the direction of the Maori track to Lake Brunner, and after camping a night on the ‘range’ (what range? perhaps he means the low saddle between the Hohonu and Lake Brunner), he reaches the lake. Howitt records in his diary on 11 May 1863: ‘saw a man walking in the water around the lake. When he came near it turned out to be ‘old Jakob who was out with Drake’.

Lauper puts it simply ‘I was saved’.

life details

Jakob Lauper

Jakob Lauper was born in 1815 in Switzerland and entered the famous Swiss Guard at the Vatican in 1835, and possibly joined the French Foreign Legion. In 1843 he married his cousin Elisabeth Lauper and had two sons, but still had an itch to roam. He travelled to Australia in 1858 and reached New Zealand in 1861.

We next hear of Jakob Lauper when he nearly starved with Samuel Johnson on an early crossing of Harper Pass in 1862 and he and his mate had to be helped back over to the east coast by Rowland Davies and Charles Money. Lauper did not lack for determination however, for although still recovering at Taylor's Station in the Hurunui, in January 1863 he was hired by Drake on his surveying and prospecting party, which accomplished a fast eight weeks survey to the Grey pa and back to Christchurch by March. In April Lauper was hired by Henry Whitcombe.

Interestingly Lauper made a claim for the £1000 award offered by the Canterbury Provincial Government for the first finder of a payable West Coast goldfield, the gold in fact noticed by Lauper and Whitcombe near Kaniere on their exploration. His first claim was in May 1865, and he reiterated it in November. Though this claim was dismissed, he had received £100 from the Canterbury Provincial Government in 'recognition of his fidelity' to Whitcombe, and kept on as a 'chainman for the present'. Whitcombe's widow and children received £1000.

By all accounts Lauper fell on hard times. Christchurch Press 14 September 1864: '...Jacob Lauper, better known as Swiss Jacob, who has been an explorer in Canterbury and has done no small amount of benefit to the province, is allowed to walk about the streets, old, maimed and almost starving in search of employment'.

Possibly this blunt hint in the newspaper made the Provincial Government feel obliged to do something, for by July 1866 Lauper is mentioned as being the messenger and storekeeper of the Engineer's Department in Hokitika, and he had bought a section of land in Hokitika in April 1866. Lauper went back to Switzerland in 1868 and stayed (it seems unhappily married) tilll 1880 when he returned to New Zealand. He worked in Napier in various jobs, including a lighthouse keeper, and died in 1891 aged 76.

Robert Bain, 1863 & 1864

Robert Bain could count himself painfully unlucky. When the Canterbury Provincial Government decided to organise a survey of the West Coast, Arthur Dobson tendered for the northern section from the Buller to Abut Head, whilst Bain received the southern section from the Awarua River in Big Bay up to Abut Head. In fact Canterbury had snitched an extra piece of Otago, because there was a confusion over the name 'Awarua' which properly belonged to the Haast River, but had got accidentally transposed to a muddy tidal creek, filtering into Big Bay.

Dobson not only had the advantages of a government stores depot, already established, to draw on, but when his white men deserted him, could employ the skilled and friendly Maori to plug the gap. Canoes, whattas, potato gardens were all readily available for Dobson, whilst Bain had to struggle on in a virtually uninhabited country.

Two men died on Bain's survey, the boat he had hired was wrecked, it rained interminably, and one day, after putting on his waterproofs to divert flood water from the tent:

> 'Having done so I took off the coat and found myself covered from head to foot with live maggots. The flies had blown the inside of the sleeves, without my being aware of it and it took me two days to get entirely free of the vermin'.

In his lucid and calm writing style, Robert Bain makes several references to gold and gold prospectors. On 13 November 1863 they arrived at Jackson Bay and found a note written by a group of prospectors from the cutter *Nugget*, they had sailed back to Invercargill only ten days before, having found no 'gold in payable quantities'. Shortly afterwards, six men in a whaleboat from the Cowrie arrived, and told Bain they had been prospecting for six months in Milford and Bligh's Sound 'without finding the least trace of gold'.

Bain employed them, and engaged the boat for his survey, but one man drowned, and eventually the whaleboat was smashed on the rocks. In January 1864 at Big Bay, Bain requisitioned a schooner *Pride of the Huron* which had just sailed in from Dunedin, but that too was wrecked at Martins Bay. Before starting the long trudge back along the Hollyford to Lake Wakatipu (another man died on the way), Bain noted the only place he had seen the colour: 'A few specks of gold were obtained in the river running into Barn Bay', this was probably the Hope River.

Francis Morris, 1864

In mid 1864 John Rochfort was employed to finish off Bain's survey, mainly from Jackson Bay to Abut Head. In a trip of eighty-eight days Rochfort enjoyed pleasant winter weather, enduring only twenty-two 'wet, showery or misty' days, and some of those were only broken by a squall or two.

The chain-man was Francis Morris, who noting that Rochfort had left no public account of this survey, 'jotted down day by day my impressions of what I noticed' and supplied an account to the *Lyttelton Times*. It's an excellent journal, and as a 'miner', Morris kept a sharp eye open for any gold. His main complaint was that Rochfort drove them along at too hard a pace to enable anything more than casual panning.

After sailing to Jackson Bay and establishing a stores depot there, Morris returned to the Grey and on May 2 they left the pa and reached the 'Waita' [Waitaha] 'where, by the way, on my return, I got three specks of gold (colour) in my pannikin'. He thought 'Okarita' looked 'auriferous', found 'colour' in a small side-creek of the 'Waiau' [Waiho now, though in fact Waiau is correct], considered that the Waikukupa was 'a likely-looking gold creek', and noted that at the Hauraki Creek 'gold was found by the Maoris two years ago'. The Hauraki is a small side-stream about twelve kilometres north of Gillespies Beach. Morris had also commented that the Maoris told him they had found gold near the Paringa 'but I saw none in their possession, but picked up a speck myself in a small water-course near the Paringa'.

It must have been frustrating for the prospector — all these colours, and still Rochfort drove them heedlessly on, chaining as they went.

They arrived at Jackson Bay on the 18 June, 'recruiting our strength', then left on the 28 June and arrived back at the Grey on the 29 July 1864 to find that the Hohonu/Greenstone River was occupied by a flurry of diggers from Nelson. Morris joined them.

Francis Morris evidently knew what he was about, for nearly all the places he spotted engaged the attentions of miners later in the rush, and he was the first man to point out that gold possibilities existed along the whole length of the West Coast shoreline. His report on what the Maori said is interesting, but perhaps unreliable. Morris thought that Mackay and Mackley has been at the Mahitahi 'only 18 months previously', in fact nearly four years before. Still, if we accept his comment at face value, it is not implausible that the Maori had found gold at the Hauraki in 1861 or 1862, but they could have been just teasing an ardent prospector.

Francis Morris & Robert Bain

After the survey with Rochfort, Morris was hired by the Provincial Government for a position in Hokitika, and it was to fulfil this position that he boarded the ill-fated 'City of Dunedin' in May 1865. After leaving Wellington the steamer disappeared and bits and pieces of wreckage gradually appeared along the Wellington coastline. All 14 passengers and 25 crew were drowned. Subsequently his brother Dr Morris, instigated a claim for a reward on Morris' behalf for discovering the West Canterbury goldfields.

Robert Bain was reimbursed £500 by the Provincial Government for his losses whilst doing the West Coast survey, and recommended by Thomas Cass, the chief surveyor, for Whitcombe's old job. In his letter of application Bain stated he had 20 years' experience as a civil engineer and surveyor 'laying out railways in England and Scotland, and Roads in the Colonies', and also worked as a municipal engineer in Victoria.

However it's not clear whether he got the job, because by 1867 he was employed in the somewhat lowly position of Deputy Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages in Greymouth. He obviously resumed his surveying work in Canterbury for there are occasional mentions of him surveying in Cheviot and Charteris Bay.

He got into a spot of bother when he filed for libel and £5000 damages (a large sum) against a certain W. C. Walker, who had alleged that Bain had altered a surveyed road to his own advantage. According to one version 'he [Bain] failed to get a verdict'. In 1879 he was in joint bankruptcy with J. Godfrey over the failure of the Sun newspaper they had launched.

Sources for Chapter 2

Auriferous or Spurious?

• *Colonist* 1 February 1859.

• *Nelson Examiner* 21 March 1860 (Captain Fearon's account).

Edward Dobson

• *Lyttelton Times* 26 September 1857.

• *Lyttelton Times* 20 January 1858 (for 'Yonge and Wilson'). Harper does not mention them in his third account.

• D. Cresswell *Squatters and Settlers in the Waipara County*. Charles Torlesse mentions the return of G. E. Mason, J. S. Caverhill and Thomas Hanmer who had explored up the Hurunui River in April 1851, again with no details given. See *The Torlesse Papers* p209. For more of G. E. Mason see Acland *The Early Canterbury Runs* p280 and others.

• George Dobson's *Diary* 3 February 1864-21 in Arthur Dudley Dobson papers 1859-1922, Canterbury Museum Manuscripts Collection. Dobson's writing is hard to read, the 'H' could be a 'N', but the librarian also thought an 'H' was possible. Unfortunately no typescript is yet available.

Leonard Harper

• *Lyttelton Times* 20 January 1858 (first version).

• New Zealand Alpine Club volume III p75-81 (second version).

• Three versions of Leonard Harpers journey.

The first version stated 'ninety miles', the second version said to 'Jackson Bay' (about 160 miles), and the third version to Big Bay (about 210 miles).

The third version seems unlikely, as the distance is too great. A. P. Harper identifies 'Waitangi' as the Haast, presumably because of Leonard Harper's description (the first account in the Lyttelton Times 1858) of 'up this river, according to their account [the Maori], there is a road to the East Coast, through open country', presumably the Haast Pass. The fact that the Haast River was known by the Maori as the 'Awarua' might have led to the third account later being mistakenly lengthened down to the Awarua River in Big Bay. Though you would think A. P. Harper, knowing South Westland so well, would have been well aware of the possible confusion of names.

Edward Shortland's map of 1838 might have caused some of the muddle because it clearly shows the 'Awarua' leading 'two days' to a Lake marked 'Oanaka' [Wanaka], but places this 'Awarua' at Big Bay, when in fact of course it was a reference to the Haast River, and should have been placed much further north.

Phillip Ross May favours Leonard Harper's first version, and thinks that the 'Waitangi' is the Waitangitaona River, just south of the Whataroa River. But there are difficulties: this is certainly not a large river and there's no easy pass inland. The Waitangitaona is also only sixty miles south of the Grey, ninety miles south would bring the traveller to the

Karangarua River, which doesn't make things any clearer. Henry Harper (Leonard's brother) mentions a 'hundred miles', but this only reaches Bruce Bay, still thirty miles short of the Haast. The early travellers were notoriously 'out' in their estimates of distances, and sixty miles could feel like 'ninety miles'.

Another aspect of the confusion may have lain in Maori minds. On the map with the Arahura purchase, a peak called 'Tiori Patea' is clearly shown marginally south of Mount Cook, virtually opposite a river called 'Waitangi'. Tiori Patea was the traditional name for Haast Pass, so when the Maori indicated to Harper that an easy pass lay up the Waitangitaona, they may have been muddled as to the where the Haast Pass was. Perhaps none of Harper's guides had actually been over the Haast Pass, and were reliant on traditional information.

So the thing is something of a puzzle. Getting to the Waitangitaona River would be a good journey, to Big Bay would be astonishing. Initially this writer preferred the second version, where Leonard Harper got to the Awarua or Haast River. Harper mentions that the beach was 'impassable' after Jackson Bay, and this would certainly be true of Cascade Point. The low pass, the 'large' river, seem more plausible in regard to Haast River than either the Waitangitaona River or Big Bay.

However, when you examine the time periods that Leonard Harper himself suggests, then the whole journey starts to unravel. He was away 'about three months', and left Christchurch on the '30th October' and reached the coast on the '26th November'. They rested a few days then Harper travelled south with Tarapuhi. Remembering that Harper took only two weeks to return from the Taramakau back to Christchurch this barely leaves him 6 weeks to travel down the coast and return. The distance to Haast from the Taramakau is about 180 km one way, an average journey time of about 8-9 km every day. And the party had to catch their food, wait for low tides, were 'delayed by the rivers' (there are about 16 major rivers, as well as lagoons and numerous minor streams), construct mokihi (it could easily take up to a day to build a raft), negotiate bluffs, and finally Harper complained of the 'Maories habit of loafing at any place where eels and birds were plentiful'. If they had even one rest day then on the next day they would have to walk 16 km, and so on. The journey quickly becomes a mathematical impossibility.

Francis Morris was a chain-man for John Rochfort on the 1864 survey from the Grey to Jackson Bay and back, and recorded a travelling time of eighty-eight days, surveying on the way down as they went. But their return time from Jackson Bay to the Grey was exactly one month, from June 28 to July 29, and they were not hanging about, had good winter weather, and did not have to stop to gather food on the way. Studying Morris's account it's not possible to believe that any other party could have gone much faster, and it seems clear that Harper would have had to have maintained that sort of speed even to reach the Haast. There simply would be no time to be 'delayed by rivers'.

There's a final point worth adding, that whereas Leonard Harper's description of the crossing of the divide is detailed, his coastal description is brief and vague, and on examination the more doubtful his coastal mileage seems to become. On balance, the Waitangitaona River may well have been his southernmost point.

• A . P. Harper *Memories of Mountains* and Men p201-208 (third version). It has to be said that the son may have felt the financial

failure of his father rather deeply ('early in 1893 I had some very hard and troublesome business to do') and attempted to rescue something of his father's reputation by exaggerating the length of the coastal exploration. It's interesting that Harper's work with Charles Douglas took place from 1893-95, precisely the period of his father's bankruptcy.

• Henry Harper *Letters from New Zealand* p57.

• Philip Ross May *The West Coast Gold Rushes* p47.

• Edward Shortland *The Southern Districts of New Zealand.*

• Ngai Tahu Maori Trust Board Claim before the Waitangi Tribunal , Crown Evidence.

• Francis Morris *Lyttelton Times* 20 April 1865.

• *Lyttelton Times* 24 December 1862 (editorial).

Leonard Harper, life details

• *A History of Canterbury* volume III 1876-1950 p68.

• *Christchurch Press* 18 April 1893.

• *G. R. Macdonald Dictionary of Canterbury Biographies* Canterbury Museum Library H194. It is a moot point whether it is better to be damned as a cunning swindler, or an incompetent manager.

James Mackay

• Phillip Ross May *The West Coast Gold Rushes* p44-59.

• *Lyttelton Times* 3 & 7 October 1857.

• *The Colonist* 23 September 1859.

• *Nelson Examiner* 24 September 1859. It's a good indication of the ups and downs of coastal sailing when you realise that the cutter Supply took John Rochfort down to the Buller in 14 days, but only needed four days to return the two Mackay's to Nelson.

• *Courage and Camp Ovens* Enga Washbourn p51. The Manrope claim was so called 'because the claim was in a gorge and could be reached only by climbing down a rope'.

James Mackay, life details

• Dictionary of New Zealand Biography volume 1, p252-253. Two short biographies are N. Watson *Civil Commissioner James Mackay, a mighty man of valour* 17 September, Journal of the Auckland/Waikato Historical Society No 19, and *A Man Among Men the story of James Mackay Junior* A. M. Spence Clark, Nelson Provincial Museum MS Mackay J A1319.

• *Nelson Examiner* 1 November 1862. W. G. Gordon enjoyed James Mackay's hospitality (and some of his clothes) in October at the Farewell Spit run.

• *Thames Advertiser* 30 September 1870 (first bankruptcy) also 3 August, 17 August & 1 September 1870. I could not find any editorial comment on this bankruptcy of 'James Mackay Junior', which seems odd considering he was on the Auckland Provincial Council at the time. His assets were listed as freehold land at Tararu, wharf, house, land at Shortland, and 1090 acres at Collingwood. A 'Mr Hogg' had also been with the firm in 1870, and the name W. H. Taipari crops up quite frequently in the *Thames Advertiser*.

• W. F. Heinz, *Scrapbooks* West Coast Historical Museum p65 volume 1, or article Christchurch Press 23 June 1977.

• *Farewell Spit: a changing landscape* Chris Petyt p31-35. There is a lot of interesting detail on Mackay's life at Golden Bay. Mackay's farm at Cape Farewell was put up for sale in 1864, but did not sell until 1870, when it was bought by his brother-in-law Edmund Davidson. Mackay married Eliza Sophia Braithwaite in Nelson in June 1862.

G. W. H. Lee (and J. S. Caverhill)

• Philip Ross May *The West Coast Gold Rushes* p48. Lee did not take up the run which was subsequently bought by Isaac Freeth.

• *Lyttelton Times* 3 April 1858.

Lee & Caverhill, life details

• L. G. D. Acland *The Early Canterbury Run*s (1946) p60-62, p67, p255-256, p268.

• *The Torlesse Papers* p109.

John Rochfort

• *Nelson Examiner* 24 December 1859 'A Brief Account of an Expedition to the West Coast' (see also The Journal of the Royal Geographical Society volume 32 1862 p294).

• *Nelson Examiner* 4 January 1860.

• *New Zealand Geographic* July/Sept 1996 p71-73.

John Rochfort, life details

• W. F. Heinz *Scrapbook* p73-74 volume 1 West Coast Historical Museum, or Christchurch Press 23 & 29 September 1973.

• G. R. Macdonald *Dictionary of Canterbury Biographies* Canterbury Museum Library R309.

Samuel Butler

• Samuel Butler *A Year in Canterbury Settlement* p53.

Samuel Meggitt Mackley

• Philip Ross May *The West Coast Gold Rushes* p57-58, p71, p78, p164.

• *The Colonist* 22 February 1861, 5 April 1861 (Mackley leaves for West Coast) 30 April 1861 (Mackley returns with Maori).

Samuel Mackley, life details

• *The Diggers Story* p50.

• W. F. Heinz *Christchurch Press* 25 October 1975. There is a photo of Mackley's homestead in this article and Heinz states the Mackleys had four sons and six daughters.

• *Cyclopedia* volume 5 p265-266 (also photo). Crichton is spelt 'Creighton' in the Cyclopedia version.

Whitcombe and Lauper

• Jakob Lauper *Over the Whitcombe Pass* (edited John Pascoe). An alternative translation is provided in *Pushing His Luck* by Hilary Low.

Pascoe (via Holdsworth) identifies the 'Ohaoi creek' with the 'Orangipuku River', which is surely incorrect. The distance up the Taramakau to the Orangipuku River is 18 miles, and Lauper is making painfully slow progress, at barely three miles a day, and beside, the usual Maori trail was via Lake Brunner, and the Maori at the diggings would surely have directed Lauper in that direction.

The place where Lauper found the gold is not easy to identify. Pascoe, who edited Lauper's

account, pointed out that Lauper may have got some of the features muddled. However, because Lauper mentions hearing the sea the day after they left the gold site, it is possible that they were in the region of the Kokatahi River. Also, before reaching the gold site, Lauper talks of following up one river 'which was impossible to cross, also coming in from the north side; we followed it up for some miles to where it divides; we were able to cross the first, but not the second branch, this we ascended still higher to where it again divides, and here we crossed over'. The 'second branch' could refer to the Toaroha River, and certainly the ease of travel implied by Lauper suggests that these two rivers are the most plausible location..

• Herries Beattie *Maori Lore of Lake, Alp and Fiord* p62. The sheer number of Maori place names suggested for the Southern Alps indicates the Maori had a considerable familiarity with the mountain regions. One early recorded Maori name for Whitcombe Pass is 'Kaniere'. Beattie also gives the name 'Noti-Raureka' for Browning Pass. In Song of the Waitaha Browning Pass is identified as 'Pariwhakaoho' and the Arahura River as 'Nga Wai O Mamari' 'the waters of the fish with green bones' p59.

• Charlie Howitt's C. H. Howitt's *Journal* manuscript Alexander Turnbull Library.

• Thomas Cass, Chief Surveyor. Cass's letter of 27 March 1863 *Inwards Correspondence to the Canterbury Provincial Government* National Archives, Christchurch Office, CH287, CP 36, ICPs 636 31/3/1863, to the Government is interesting if confusing.

'I have instructed Mr Whitcombe to proceed without delay and examine the country very carefully about the western sources of the rivers Ashley and Waimakariri for a practicable gap into the West Coast country. He will be able during the next 5 or 6 weeks fine weather to determine that point almost definitely in that particular locality. I have personally very little doubt on the subject, as I have frequently questioned Maories on the subject, and they have invariably agreed [?] there was no pass in that direction. Had such been known to their ancestors when this country was more thickly populated, the fact would have been handed down to the present generation amongst their other traditions, such being an invariable custom amongst these people. However Mr Whitcomb's exploration may serve to set the matter at rest one way or the other. There is clearly no practicable gap between the Rakaia and Rangitata. Messrs Haast's and Park's surveys clearly show there is none — the Maoris told me the only passes in this part of the country were one by the Waiho, and one by the Taramakau, both could be used in the winter — Mr Haast on his return will be able to throw some light on the subject as far as the southern part of the Province is concerned'.

It is a puzzling letter. It has to be presumed that from Cass's point of view Whitcombe's task was mostly a negative one, and the Maori had obviously not hinted at the possible existence of either Arthur's Pass or Whitcombe Pass. However, in between this letter and news of Whitcombe's death, Cass must have received some new information (perhaps an old report of Samuel Butler's?) because his instructions were changed.

'In the early part of April last, I instructed Mr Whitcombe to examine the headwaters of the Rakaia and the Waimakariri for a pass said to exist on the West Coast...'

According to Cass, Whitcombe had no authority to explore beyond the pass, 'this was certainly not in accordance with my instructions...' so there might have been some sort

of communication lapse. Or, Whitcombe thought the pass was too good an opportunity to miss and never realised the difficulties before him. See National Archives, Christchurch Office, CH287, CP38, ICPS 1014 25/5/1863.

It is not clear where the 'Waiho' pass is as no such river exists on the east coast. It is faintly possible that this is a reference to the 'Ohau' River, and to Brodrick Pass. The Maori confirmed to Richard Sherrin that the best passes were Harper Pass and Haast Pass but 'The Natives profess some knowledge of a pass on the south of Mount Cook, but state that it is very difficult'. There is some evidence to suggest the Maori may have been referring to Brodrick Pass, at the head of the north Huxley River. Since this pass leads into the Landsborough River it would indeed be an indirect and 'difficult' route.

Note: Unfortunately, both Lauper's two letters claiming the gold bonus were unable to be found in the Inwards Correspondence to the Canterbury Provincial Government, and are now deemed 'missing' from the National Archives Christchurch Office, a fate that has also occurred to both of William Smart's gold bonus letters, John Peter Oakes two letters, and Albert Hunt's famous letter, all from 1865. P. R. May mentions that some early goldfields material was transferred to the Mines Department, but a search of the National Archives in 1997 drew a blank. See P. R. May p544.

Jacob Lauper, life details

• Charles Money *Knocking About in New Zealand* p34-40.

• Jakob Lauper *Pushing His Luck* a revised version of Lauper's text by Hilary Low. Her research has provided a much fuller picture of lauper's life.

• *Christchurch Press* 18 August 1973, article by W. F. Heinz.

• *Greymouth: The First 100 Years* p18.

Robert Bain

• Robert Preston Bain *Journal of an expedition to the West Coast for the purpose of Surveying 1863-1864* Canterbury Museum Manuscripts Collection (34 pages).

• Letter 1863 *Inwards Correspondence to the Canterbury Provincial Government*, National Archives, Christchurch Office, CH287 CP54 ICPS1243/1864.

Because of his cost overruns Bain had exhausted his funds and was unable to pay his survey hands their due wages. They petitioned the Government for the £500 owing them, plus another £150 of 'costs' for staying at Watson's 'Royal Hotel' Dunedin, whilst they 'waited' for their wages. The *Nugget* was subsequently used by Barrington on his failed gold prospecting trip to Jackson's Bay in late 1864 and later sunk off the Grey River in February 1865, the master drowning.

• National Archives, Christchurch Office, CH287 CP54 ICPS1244/1864 (work application). Cass recommended Bain 18 April 1864.

Francis Morris

• Francis Morris *Lyttelton Times* 20 April 1865.

Francis Morris & Robert Bain, life details

• G. R. Macdonald *Dictionary of Canterbury Biographies Canterbury* Museum Library Collection M621 & B39.

Bankruptcy

At least three of the men mentioned in this chapter were declared bankrupt, James Mackay (twice), Robert Bain and Leonard Harper. When you consider that they would all have been considered important men in their community, the rate of bankruptcy seems surprising, but it seems to be a reflection on the times.

Robert Pinney in *Early South Canterbury Runs* lists a whole series of booms and busts that affected Canterbury pastoral runs, and New Zealand in general. Times 'were fairly prosperous' from 1855 to 1866, then the London crash of May 1866 depressed the economy till about 1871. There was a period of prosperity in New Zealand from 1871 to 1878, fueled by Government borrowing, that enabled the economy to weather the European crash of 1873 and a brief slump in England in 1876. However, in 1878 the City of Glasgow Bank crash had a dire effect, and depressed the New Zealand economy well into 1895.

This rapid cyclic movement of boom-busts must have caught out many people, Mackay's bankruptcies were in 1870 and 1880, Bain in 1879, Harper in 1893. One gets the impression that individual bankruptcy proceedings did not necessarily destroy a man's career, although Harper's did, partly because his financial collapse ruined many other people in the process. Perhaps people had to take work where they could, hence the often diverse employments. This may have lead to business ventures that were poorly conceived, and bankruptcy proceedings may have been a way for gentlemen to extricate themselves from a failed business venture.

Gold Reward

Provincial Secretary's Office, Nelson, September 3rd 1863.

The Superintendent directs it to be notified that a bonus of Two Thousand Pounds (£2000), or such other lesser amount as herein specified, will be given to the discoverer of a payable goldfield within the Province of Nelson, upon the conditions and with the exceptions following:-

Every application for a bonus must be made in writing to this office, and accompanied by a sketch plan of the ground to which it refers.

No application shall refer to more than twenty-five (25) square miles.

Where two or more applicants conflict wholly or in part, the earliest will have precedence, unless it shall be made to appear that a later applicant was, and the earliest was not, the bona fide discoverer.

No application shall include private property, or land under lease from the Crown.

No application will be received after the 1st day of February 1864.

The bonus will be payable to the first applicant in respect of any block of land (he being the bona fide discoverer), when it shall have been proved to the Superintendent, that duty has been paid on gold raised from the land in such block, to the amounts, and in time stated in the following scale:

For 16,000 ozs raised in 6 months £2,000

For 8,000 ozs raised in 4 months £1,000

For 4,000 ozs raised in 3 months £500

Every application shall be published immediately on receipt, in the Government Gazette, and in the Provincial newspapers, and no objection to any application will be entertained, unless made within two months after the date of such publication.

The following places are excepted from the above offer:

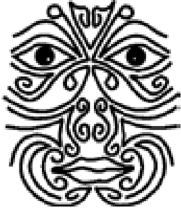
The river Lyell, for three miles above its junction with the Buller.

The river Mangles, for five miles above its junction with the Buller.

J. C. Richmond, Provincial Secretary

(Published in the *Nelson Examiner*, September 5th 1863).

Chapter 3



Te Koura

The role of the Maori in gold prospecting and discovery on the West Coast has been rather overshadowed by the European discoveries. It was an obvious, and at times disagreeable fact to the first European gold-diggers, that the Maori were extremely quick to take up the pursuit of gold-getting.

On the Collingwood, Buller and Greenstone gold-fields the Maori were generally in the front rank for both prospecting and digging and they proved to be just as adept at making a 'quick buck' as the pakeha.

This chapter looks in detail at the Maori involvement on the early goldfields on the West Coast, and particularly at some of their successful prospectors.

Chronology of Maori prospectors and Gold Prospecting

1857

Leonard Harper crossed Harper Pass guided by Ihaia Tainui, then guided by Tarapuhi down coast and back over Harper Pass (November-February).

1858

Tarapuhi, Tainui and G. W. H. Lees bring 'scaly gold' from Buller.

1860

Mackay clinched sale of Westland, £300 for seven million acres. Wereta Tainui (Ihaia's father) and Tarapuhi were signatories.

1861

Samuel Mackley travelled overland to Buller, and returned to Nelson with two Maori who had 11 ounces of Buller gold.

Otago gold rush (March-April).

Buller Maori brought 27 and then 52 ounces of gold to Nelson, started rush to Waimangaroa and the 'Old Diggings' at the Buller (May-June).

Canterbury Provincial Government offered award of £1000 for a payable gold field that was 'accessible to Christchurch' (August).

1862

Ihaia Tainui made claim simultaneously with Oakes for gold bonus (December).

Epapara Kahutuanui and four others found gold at Lyell (December).

1863

Tainui and Tuakau sporadically working their claim at Hohonu/Greenstone, and build a whare each.

1864

Haimona 'Simon' Tuakau and 'Samuel' Iwikau te Aika find a boulder of greenstone, and gold underneath it, in upper Hohonu/Greenstone River (January).

Tarapuhi dies (8 April).

Hunt guided by Tuakau to Greenstone boulder site (May).

Steamer *Nelson* arrived with Reuben Waite and 85 men, who race for diggings (22 July).

Maori try to conceal diggings and have collected 50 ounces of gold (August).

Maori and Gold

The speed with which the Maori learnt the trade of goldminer was as disconcerting to the older settlers as was the spirit of Maori independence to the new immigrant. The pakeha grew to respect Maori prospectors, who were to be prominent in the discoveries on the Buller and the Taramakau'

J. H. M. Salmon A History of Gold Mining in New Zealand p37.

It is worth asking at what point the Maori realised that gold was important to the white man. As early as the 1840's Europeans were seriously looking for auriferous signs, and would have questioned the local inhabitants, so that by the 1850's, both in the North and South Island, the local Maori tribes would have been aware of the pakeha interest in gold. Salmon believes that the Maori saw gold long before the European arrived, but had no use for it. Vincent Pyke confirms this view.

> 'That the Maoris were aware of the occurrence of gold, before the arrival of European colonists, is a tolerably well established fact. When making inquiries on this subject in 1862, I was informed by Mr Palmer, an old whaler, then resident at East Taieri, that, many years previous to the settlement of Otago, he was told by a native chief, whose name he gave as 'Tuawaiki', but which I suspect was really Tewaewae, that 'plenty ferro', or yellow stone, such as that of which the watch-seals of the white men were made, and which had attracted the old chief's attention, was to be found on the river beaches inland, and that the Matau or Molyneux River [Clutha] was the place it principally occurred'.

Pyke further reports an 1852 gold exploration by a Thomas Archibald and others in Otago, initiated from Maori information.

> 'The man, Raki Raki (sic), had resided on the Wakatipu Lake, but had left many years ago. He left a brother, who had two wives, behind; and who, he said, were the only Maoris in the interior. He told me he once picked up a piece of 'simon' (gold) about the size of a small potato on the banks of the Molyneaux, but did not know it's value, and he threw it into the river. They told us they had seen the small simon on the sides of the river, where their canoes had been lying. On seeing a small sample of gold... the natives were the more convinced we should find it in the sands of the Molyneaux'.

Salmon also mentions the curious episode of the schooner *Amazon*, which if true, suggests that traffic in gold-diggers was not just one way across the Pacific.

> 'The *Amazon* was owned and sailed by the Southland runholder, whaler and trader, Captain John Howell, of Riverton. In 1849 he engaged a Maori crew and contracted to take a party of French settlers at Akaroa to Tahiti, but at their destination the Maoris learnt of the California gold rush and persuaded their captain to sail on to San Francisco. No sooner had the Maoris experienced the conditions of the Californian diggings then they reported in disgust that the whiteman's gold occurred in similar fashion in their homeland. However, there was no sequel to this story when the Amazon returned to Otago although from time to time Europeans reported Maori knowledge of gold in the basin of the Molyneux'.

The Maori subsequently called gold 'koura', gold mines were 'maina koura' or 'rua koura', and the prospector as 'kaihaurapa'; haurapa can be interpreted as to 'search diligently for'. The 1993 *English-Maori Dictionary* by H. Ngata identifies all these words as coming via the English.

One of the earliest references to Maori gold-digging comes from a surprising quarter — Australia.

> 'One of Rewi's lieutenants, his cousin Te Winitana Tupotahi, was a man of enterprise and some adventures. He was one of several Maoris who had voyaged to Australia, attracted by the gold rush of the 'fifties' in Victoria. Tupotahi worked on the diggings at Ballarat and returned with a hoard of gold, although he had suffered losses by a robbery on the goldfields. At the gold diggings he learned a good deal about shaft-sinking, tunnelling and boarding-up, and this knowledge he turned to account in military engineering when the Waikato Wars began'.

The hostility of Coromandel Maori to having a goldfield established on their patch in the 1850's, may not simply have been a land issue, but one of 'environmentalism' (for want of a better word). They already knew, or guessed, what the result would be of having an Australian-type goldfield in their back-yard, and that the flood of gold-hungry Europeans might largely alienate their customary land tenure and threaten their way of life.

Another extraordinary story is that of 'Rangi', or William Wallace, as he was dubbed by the captain of a whaling vessel based at Otaki. Rangi was from Wanganui and became involved in whaling at both Waitemata and Poneke (Wellington) harbours.

> 'After a few years the discovery of gold in Victoria in the early 1850's took Rangi and some other Maoris away from their seafaring life, never to return. Once again Rangi was lucky and made quite a small fortune. He took a ship to England and enjoyed life as young men generally do, as long as his money lasted and when that was done, he returned to his old haunts again, where he was more or less successful, until the discovery of gold in New Zealand took Rangi back to his native land, never to leave it again'.

According to his obituary, Rangi was a miner at 'Maori Point' at the Shotover River where he was involved in the famous fracas between Maori and pakeha diggers, and later moved to the West Coast.

> 'Rangi made his way over to the Coast and resided in the Red Jacks district more or less for 30 years and was at first very lucky in his finds, for in Rangi Creek situated in the first gorge between No Town and Red Jacks he unearthed the largest nugget on this side of the Grey, over 57 ounces in weight and worth about £220, a nice little haul for a hatter. For all this Rangi died poor, but thanks to the old age pension he was placed above want in his declining years. He was buried in the Grey cemetery' [in 1901].

Undoubtedly, the knowledge of the 'several Maoris' like Tupotahi who travelled to Australia, could have been widely disseminated and this may help to explain the rapidity with which South Island Maori became prospectors and diggers. It is not inconceivable that some South Island Maori had already gone to the Victorian goldfields, though there is no direct evidence of this as yet.

Maori were by now regularly travelling around New Zealand in pursuit of gold. A Collingwood Maori, Nepia te Ngara, discovered gold at Ohinemuri on the Waihou or Thames River, some 20 kilometres south of Thames. Two other Collingwood men were Te Paratene Whakautu and Hamiora te Nana, both experienced prospectors who fos-

sicked for two months near Thames, and to whom Mackay attributed the discovery of gold at the Coromandel in July 1867. All three prospectors were known to James Mackay from his time at the Collingwood fields.

Maori were attracted to the Collingwood goldfields from north and south. The *Lyttelton Times* noted in August 1857 that were '60 Maoris from Porirua digging at the Slate River, and it was supposed they were doing exceedingly well' for they were sending specimens back to their 'friends and relatives in Porirua'.

Parties from the Buller and Grey came up to the goldfields, and by 1863 the techniques of sluicing and panning were disseminated all down the West Coast. For example, a gold prospector called 'Mason the Maori' [Henare Meihana] was mentioned on the Collingwood fields, and later at the Taramakau. The *Nelson Examiner* of August 1861, had this comment on the Waimangaroa diggings, just north of the Buller.

> 'Gold is now principally got by the Maoris, there being but few white men in the district, and, to show the anxiety of the natives for prosecuting a further search for gold, a small band of them, from the Grey district, had visited the Waimangaroa for the purpose of gaining some instruction in the mode of digging for and washing gold when obtained, they would then return to the Grey and search for it in that district'.

There were believed to be forty Maori working gold in the Buller district in August 1861 and by November that figure had risen to eighty. And they were apparently doing well. It was reported in January 1863 that 'there is one or two Maori claims working with nothing but tin dishes and making ten or twelve ounces per day' and that a 30 ounce nugget was bought by two Maori diggers at £4 an ounce. *The Colonist* reported that some Taranaki Maori were working at the Lyell in April 1863, ostensibly to escape the civil warfare up in their tribal lands.

By April 1863 Charlton Howitt noted that the Maori on the Hohonu/Greenstone diggings were:

> 'sawing and making a sluice, which is the only thing that will pay here. The diggings are situated at the junction of the Hohone Creek and the Teremakau, about six miles from the beach. The Maoris come up and down by canoe'.

This knowledge and energy produced a group of outstanding West Coast Maori gold prospectors, who were to consistently beat the pakeha at their own game.

Look at the results. Rochfort had noticed gold in the Buller River in 1859, yet in 1858 Tarapuhi and Tainui had given Buller gold to Lee, who brought it back to Christchurch. In 1860, it was a Maori party that extracted 11 ounces of gold from the Buller, rather cheekily utilising the equipment discarded by the disgruntled diggers of the *Fantome* prospecting party, who had failed to get hardly anything. Several weeks later they brought 27 ounces and 52 ounces to Collingwood, which excited Reuben Waite's interest and started the first rush to the Buller in 1861.

At the Lyell, Epapara Kahutuanui with four others, found payable gold in December 1862, despite the fact that there had been European prospectors present at the Buller for over a year. So dominant were the Maori at the Waimangaroa and Lyell, that because of the goldfields isolation and difficulty of access they were described for a while as a 'Maori diggings'.

At the Taramakau, Captain Dixon employed Ihaia Tainui to take a slim parcel of 30-40 grains of fine gold to John Peter Oakes in Christchurch. When he got there Tainui trumped the astonished Oakes by producing a 'shotty' gold sample of his own. Both Tainui and 'Simon' Tuakau were sporadically working the diggings at the Hohonu/Greenstone for some years, they had whares there, and persevered whilst several European prospecting parties struggled past, and condemned the place as a 'duffer'. It was Tuakau who made the crucial discovery of gold under a greenstone boulder, and showed it to the so-called discoverer of the goldfield, Albert Hunt. Indeed they may have worked as partners for a short time. When Reuben Waite landed at the Grey River in July 1864 he was secretly shown a parcel of gold by the Maori, 'fifty ounces of the finest gold I ever saw' which they had obtained from the Hohonu/Greenstone, meanwhile the European prospectors were milling around and threatening to lynch him because they had seen no gold. Waite remarked later:

> 'The next diggings [the Totara] were again
> found by the Maoris, ever restless, they seemed
> to be proud of being the first to find the gold'.

It was not just as prospectors that the Maori showed acumen. They adapted to gold digging with alacrity, and they quickly rivalled the European in the early days on

the goldfields of Collingwood, Lyell and Taramakau.

Mackay reported that by 1857 on the Collingwood fields there were 1300 Europeans and 600 Maori, and the Nelson Examiner 'Own Correspondent' commented frequently on Maori diggers on the Collingwood goldfields. Some examples:

> 'Natives report having found heavy gold', 'Maori diggers were making wages', 'considerable number of diggers (primarily natives) at the Para Para', 'the quality and style of work performed by Maories is fully equal to that of their white brethren', 'Some of the Ngatiraukawa natives left the Aorere River the other day with large quantities of gold in their possession, worth altogether £600, one individual had £140 to his own share. Other parties of natives are at work in the Aorere, up to their middle in water, fishing out gold with shovels, and get a pennyweight to the shovel of stuff; one dived the other day, and brought up an ounce in a bucket'.

In June 1857 W. Lightband noted that the Maori had asked for a copy of the Gold Digging Regulations 'in their own language, in a printed form'.

The Maori success can be attributed for several reasons. They already knew the country well and were more familiar with the difficult landscape and rugged conditions. They could wholly or partially live off the land, which gave them freedom of movement and enabled them to be more frugal and work gold prospects that would not be payable for Europeans. They also worked in effective family teams.

> 'The Maoris seldom worked their claims in small groups on the European method [Collingwood 1857 onwards], but the whole community, including, indeed depending upon, women and children, lent their labour. This enabled them to undertake larger projects that were usual among Europeans, and in some cases they engaged in attempts to direct the course of streams by primitive earth dams.'

Until the European diggers began to combine in companies to build water races and import heavier machinery to extract the more difficult gold, the Maori prospector could compete one on one with the pakeha digger. Needless to say, such efficiency caused friction.

> 'The most serious trouble between the races occurred on the Anatoki River in October 1857. Large numbers of Maori prospectors had been among the first on the field. Lack of food, incessant rain, and the hostility of the Maoris drove the majority of European miners across the spur to the mining camp on the Takaka. When the rain stopped, those in the Takaka camp attempted to return to the Anatoki field, but all the claims had been taken up by the Maoris and violence was met with violence. George Taylor, the only constable in the area, reported that a state of near war existed between the two factions. The Maoris continued to occupy pakeha claims which they had worked during the rains, and when Taylor inquired as to their rights to apparently vacant claims he was informed that they belonged to 'brothers in Manawatu'.'

Because it was the first goldfield in New Zealand, Collingwood was initially the least regulated, but matters settled down after a while. On other goldfields, regulations were usually adopted quickly, and wardens appointed, and there were relatively few direct clashes between European and Maori diggers again on the West Coast.

Because European prospectors were eager to claim the gold bonus for finding a payable field, they were not slow to put their names forward to the governing authorities and publicise their cause, but it is not so easy to identify individual Maori prospectors. Language was a barrier to any claim, as was the problem of authenticity, and status.

From a pakeha digger's point of view, no Maori established sufficient mana as a prospector in their own right, so when an occasional claim was made, it received little attention. No one had heard of 'Isaiah Tainui'.

But it should no longer seem surprising, that out of the conglomerate group vaguely labelled 'Maoris', there should emerge some individuals who deserve closer attention, for they played a significant prospecting role on the West Coast. Ihaia Tainui, Haimona 'Simon' Tuakau and Epapara Kahutuanui were three such individuals.

Ihaia Tainui

The figure of Ihaia Tainui is important in the gold prospecting history of the West Coast. He was the son of Wereta Tainui, and the nephew of Tarapuhi te Kaukihi. In 1857 it was Ihaia Tainui who guided the twenty year old Leonard Harper and a man called Locke across the then 'Hurunui Saddle', but later named in honour of Harper, to the West Coast.

> 'As a matter of fact the Maoris were very much against anything that might interfere with their greenstone country. But after much persuasion, and on condition that my father should not make his trip public, he [Wereta Tainui] agreed to let three Maoris, including his son Ihaia Tainui, accompany him on the adventure. Eventually with a good deal of hesitation he also agreed to a Mr Locke joining the party'.

Old Tainui's reluctance may have had something to do with the forthcoming land settlement, and there was a widespread fear that European pastoralists would simply take over the land without any reparations if access were too readily granted.

Once at the Grey pa, Tarapuhi took over as guide for Harper, and they went down the West Coast for 'ninety miles'. Tainui's name is next mentioned in connection with the pastoralist G. H. W. Lee, who had selected some 140,000 acres of land at the junction of the Grey and Ahaura River, and was guided over Harper Pass by Tarapuhi and Tainui. Significantly, Lee had a small parcel of Buller gold, given to him by the Maori.

Tainui visited the Golden Bay diggings, and worked as a digger before returning to Taramakau in mid 1862. This experience must have been vital to him, because he started to fossick about in the Kapitea Creek, which is a small side-stream that flows into the sea a few miles south of the Taramakau River, and in the Hohonu/Greenstone River. About this time Captain Thomas Dixon on the *Emerald Isle*, had sailed by mistake into the Taramakau River. Dixon had been on the California goldfields and his party quickly found traces of gold everywhere. Working a small side-creek Dixon prospected some 30-40 grains of gold, and since the schooner was bar bound, Dixon engaged Ihaia Tainui to take the sample across to Christchurch by the overland route to his financial partner John Peter Oakes.

Taramakau, West Coast, 7 December 1862.

> Captain Oakes, Dear Sir, I send you a sample of gold that I dug yesterday, this is the second place in which I found gold. The sample I send you now I got out of two buckets of earth, so I will leave you to judge what it is like. I think it will be the richest diggings in New Zealand. There is about 18 feet of washstuff. There is a gully close to this spot which is very rich. In one creek the water was moving very rapid, I put the shovel down and took up very little stuff on account of the water running so strong. I washed it out, and got four specks of gold out of it. You may therefore guess the rest. There is not the slightest trouble in turning the course in any part of it. It must be very rich at the bottom. It puts me in mind of California diggings. There is a good fall for the water. I think this sample you will find to be fine and pure gold. I wish you to exhibit it to all who may wish to see it. I can give to the Superintendent every satisfaction concerning the gold in this locality, as to being good and in payable quantities. If you can make up a good party, I will take them to the spot on my return. You may publish in the papers this news if you wish to do so. The 'Emerald Isle' is the first vessel that ever entered this river: we are also the first white men that have been here; so the natives inform us. Hoping these few lines will find you all well, in haste, yours respectfully. Thomas Dixon, Master schooner 'Emerald Isle''.
>
> Printed in the *Lyttelton Times*, 20 December 1862.

Tainui reached Christchurch on the 17th December and delivered the letter to Oakes, who next day made a visit to the Provincial Government to claim his reward. However Tainui trumped him, for he had brought gold of his own, and claimed the £1000 bonus for himself and his mates 'Neri and Whitau', for a discovery made in the Hohonu/ Greenstone River on 17 October.

> 'Kaiapoi, December 19, 1862, Sir, I wish to inform the public that I was the discoverer of the gold lately brought over from the West Coast. Immediately on finding it I started for Christchurch to inform the Superintendent, and arrived here a few days ago, I am, Sir, &c,

> Ihaia Tainui' (letter drafted by Mr Stack at Kaiapoi).

By all accounts it was an interesting scene. Tainui had beaten Oakes by a few minutes and Oakes was disconcerted to find that Tainui had gold of his own. William Martin has an account from Oakes point of view, and it starts from when Tainui arrived with Dixon's gold.

> 'The three pounds was as promptly paid, and he was entertained that night at the 'Golden Fleece' [the pub owned by Oakes] right royally by Captain John Peter Oakes who was in a state of excitement at the find and future prospects. Next morning at ten minutes past ten Captain Oakes, dressed in his best, entered the Provincial buildings with his letter and gold — the contents of the parcel — and asked to see the Provincial Secretary on important business, and when told he was engaged asked for Mr Moorhouse, the Superintendent, he was told that the Superintendent was engaged too. "The fact is" said the official "gold has at last been found and the officials are closeted with the lucky discoverer". "That be damned!" roared Oakes "I am the discoverer of the gold, or at least my brother-in-law Captain Dixon is, and here is his gold and here is his written claim. There is some fraud here and I will see what it is!". With that he pushed past the man and entered the Superintendent's office. There he found the Chief Provincial Officers in a state of excitement looking at some splendid samples of shotty gold and extracting information from the finder who had verbally claimed the two thousand pounds reward.

Oakes was not a little taken aback when he found Dixon's messenger 'Tainui' had forestalled him by ten minutes and was also a claimant for what he deemed to be without doubt his and Dixon's. He declared Tainui had stolen the gold from Dixon's parcel but on comparing the two samples it was found that while Dixon's sample was fine — some of it as fine as flour — and mixed with black sand, the Maoris was coarse gold, from a quarter to one pennyweight pieces and no black sand with it, and that the parcel Oakes got from his friend was sealed and quite up to the weight mentioned by him. Captain Oakes raved and stamped about declaring the Maori a fraud, and that no one but Dixon was entitled to the money'.

Tainui was also apparently 'astonished' that the parcel he was carrying for Dixon contained gold, and the Lyttelton Times interviewed Tainui and published some extra details.

> 'The gold brought by Ihaia is somewhat coarser than that sent by Captain Dixon, and the former insinuates that it had not been washed out by Captain Dixon at all, but obtained from some native who had been at the Grey'.

Tainui offered to 'make a bullock track to the diggings in three weeks', and informed the newspaper that there was a 'large quantity of gold in the district'. He had taken 'four days' to go from the Grey to Kaiapoi, but with a good track it could be done in 'two days'. Tainui had spent some time at the Collingwood diggings 'and learned something of prospecting'.

Neither claim was accepted. They had not demonstrated a payable field, and the Taramakau and Hohonu/Greenstone were not, in the judgement of the Provincial Government, particularly accessible from Christchurch (another of the careful Canterbury conditions), and because in any case, the bonus had been withdrawn some time earlier. In hindsight, Dixon perhaps should have been less naive, as a remark he made to William Martin suggests.

> 'I noticed that the Maoris seemed very much interested in what I was doing; I thought they knew nothing of gold washing and that it was only their idle curiosity'.

So whilst Captain Oakes went away fuming, and planning the second voyage of the Emerald Isle, Tainui continued with his prospecting, despite the setback. Smart records 'Jack' Tainui on 12 January 1863 with a party of three other Maori 'Patterson, Peter and Harry', at the Taipo, coming over from Kaiapoi. Tainui got colour from here and moved onto his old ground at the Hohonu/Greenstone with the Europeans. Charlton Howitt recorded on 17 June 1863.

> 'Stopped at the Taramakau mouth. Went over with Jack Tainui to see poor Whitcombe's grave. He has buried him again deeper than before and made a very decent place of it. Two paddles being stuck up at the head of it'.

By late 1863 both 'Simon' Tuakau and Ihaia Tainui, had built whares at the Greenstone, and were still fossicking, but with what results is unknown, though in a letter Tainui was optimistic indeed.

> 'Listen, there is plenty of gold here, only the water at present prevents prospecting. In the summer [there] will be more food and less water. Then I propose prospecting all over the country. This place is not fit for Europeans, there is too much water'.

In late September 1863 'Jack' Tainui was working with Arthur Dobson, on his initial survey up the Taramakau River, and in December, with a large party of Maori, Tainui, 'a very strong man, carried a heavy swag' down to the Taramakau River from the Grey River as Dobson started his survey to Abut Head. Dobson mentions that several Maori went up the Taramakau to 'dig for gold in the Ohono', and it is likely that Tainui was among them.

Then came the crucial find of the greenstone boulder in January 1864, and Tainui, with many other Maori, worked at the Hohonu/Greenstone River till at least late 1864. W. H. Revell commented in August that:

> 'The Maoris are also doing very well. Ihaia Tainui and his party consisting of thirteen are washing out from 1.5 lbs to 2 lbs weight per week'.

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The dramatic Oakes/Tainui clash in the Government Provincial buildings on the 18 December resulted in this enterprising advertisement being placed two days later.

Ihaia Tainui

It is believed he was born about the early 1830's, the son of Wereta Tainui. Tainui had travelled to Collingwood and had learned gold prospecting there, and, as we have seen, was very closely involved in much of the early Maori mining. He was also involved in further land claims, although with little success. By 1868 we know that Tainui was a lay-reader in the Arahura Church, and was also acting as a Trustee for the money that was derived from the rental from Maori reserve land.

Coincidentally, both Ihaia Tainui and Leonard Harper, were both later elected Members for Parliament, Harper for Cheviot 1876-1877 and Avon 1884-1887, and Tainui for the electorate of Southern Maori in 1879-1880. A. P. Harper recalls:

'There was a 'young' Tainui in the House at the same time as my father in the middle 'seventies'. I remember, as a small boy, having to rub noses with him when we were in Wellington one session'.

H. K. Taiaroa was appointed to the Legislative Council, but was subsequently disallowed under the Disqualification Act from continuing to sit in the Council. This meant that Taiaroa was in effect being removed from Parliament. According to Harry Evison, Taiaroa had 'often been a thorn' in the Government's side, and they employed this somewhat dubious method to get rid of him.

'Ihaia Tainui, in a gesture of Ngai Tahu solidarity, resigned his seat in the Lower House to enable Taiaroa to be re-elected as Member for Southern Maori'.

1879 was a busy year for Tainui, for in January in Greymouth he was involved in the detailed Maori land allocations that were supervised by the Young Commission. This was an attempt to sort out what people were entitled to of the West Coast Maori reserve land that had been set aside by James Mackay in 1860. Later, in August 1879, he was involved with the retreat of the Te Maiharoa heke that was evicted from Omarama, and was retiring slowly down the Waitaki River. His role was as temporary peacekeeper between the European landowners and the aggrieved Maori.

Ihaia Tainui was married to Amiria Waikura and had one son, Hoani and one daughter Metapere. Wereta Tainui died in December 1880 aged about 80 years. His son Ihaia Tainui died in October 1885. The official record records that 'Deceased hung himself being at the time of unusual mind'.

Epapara Kahutuanui

In November 1862 a Maori referred to as ‘Epapara’ and four other Maoris, found gold in a creek subsequently known as the Lyell. A 30 ounce nugget ‘among other large nuggets of gold’ were reported in the Nelson Examiner. Maori parties were already heavily involved in the Waimangaroa and ‘Old Diggings’ in the Buller, and in a population of less than 150 people, about half of those were Maori.

However, there had been a hint of riches considerably earlier than that, for in September 1861, the Maori were suggesting that the upper Buller gorge, beyond the Old Diggings, had ‘plenty of gold’ and that ‘three canoes of Maoris’ were investigating.

It seems possible that ‘Epapara’ is Epapara Kahutuanui, a man who owned 20 acres of land at the Arahura, and whose name appears several times in the Young Commission land allocations. By 1879 he was listed as living at Rapaki, and died on 28 'Aperiea' 1884, aged 56, and is buried in Rapaki cemetery. In Rapaki Remembered (1987) by Arthur (Hiwi) Couch, an 1886 list of Maori who were entitled to a share of Rapaki and Port Levy reserves included 'Petera Kahutuanui'.

One newspaper report on the Lyell was unusual because it mentioned the names of three other successful Maori prospectors.

> ‘Buller River 29 December 1862 — Two Maoris have come down the river with £350 worth of gold, another called Perie [sic] got 8 ounces 5 dwts in half an hour. This I am certain is correct. Their names are Waihe and Hone Pirika [or Piriki] who got the nugget; one wahine with a tin dish got a pound weight in one day. Waimangaroa is deserted for the present’.

It’s not certain who ‘Waihe’ or ‘Hone Pirika’ are (possibly they were Nelson Maori) but a man called ‘Paraire’ shared 25 acres of land on the Buller with Epapara Kautuanui and Aterea Potini, and this might possibly be ‘Perie’.

Haimona Tuakau

On the Taramakau River and at the Hohonu/Greenstone River gold diggings there was a Maori prospector known sometimes as 'Simon the Maori', but was given the full name of 'Simon Tuangu' by Phillip Ross May, and 'Simon Tuangau' in the court notes printed by the West Coast Times. It is suggested that his actual name was Haimona Tuakau. Arthur Dobson called him 'Simeon' but both William Sherrin and William Martin both used 'Simon' in their accounts, and it is certain that it is the same person. Sherrin described 'Simon' as 'the handiest man on the coast'.

Fortunately, unlike the other 'Simon the Maori' at the Lyell, we know a good deal more about the history of Haimona 'Simon' Tuakau, as both Arthur Dobson and William Martin knew him well.

Dobson's account is written against the background of the drowning of Townsend, Mitchelmore and 'Solomon' Tuapaki on the Grey River bar on 8 October 1863. 'Simon' (or 'Simeon') was also on the boat, as was William Sherrin, and they both survived.

> 'Simeon had once been on a whaler, and was a very good man in a boat, besides being a very expert swimmer. As far as I know he was the only one of the party who understood anything about boating in a sea-way... I was very much surprised at Simeon going with Townsend, and I am sure he must have been offered a pretty good sum, as Townsend was most anxious to have the boat at Greymouth'.

Dobson paints a picture of a fairly cool customer. After the boat capsized, Simon swims to shore, where his wife reminds him he has left his swag behind, so he swims back out to the boat to recover it.

> '...canoeing and boating work he liked better than any other kind. In fact he would not undertake swagging or ordinary bush-cutting. He was a North Island Maori, and had been a great deal about Porirua in the whaling days as a young man, where a good many Maoris were employed in the whale-boats, especially at the shore stations'.

William Sherrin confirms that 'Simon' was the only man who 'kept his head' but in his version of the accident

Tuakau's wife Patahi was not present, and that both the surviving men, 'Simon' and Sherrin, were exhausted when they reached land. William Martin's background of Tuakau does agree in part with Dobson's, but paints rather a different picture.

> 'He had been kidnapped when a boy by the Captain of a whaler at the Bay of Islands, who after compromised the matter with the Maori chief there by giving him a keg of tobacco. So poor Simon was for many years practically a slave on board a whaler. Finally he affected his escape at Akaroa and was sheltered by the natives there'.

Here, Tuakau met 'Elizabeth' Patahi (see Patahi's Story) and they shifted to the Grey pa, possibly to avoid meeting the whalers again.

Tuakau and Patahi based themselves at the Grey (Mawhera) pa, and apart from working casually for European surveyors like Dobson and Rochfort, Tuakau built a whare at the Hohonu/Greenstone diggings and began prospecting in a steady if sporadic way. Ihaia Tainui also had a hut there. In January of 1864, Tuakau and 'Samuel' Iwikau fossicked up the Hohonu Creek and found a large greenstone boulder.

It is suggested that Haimona 'Simon' Tuakau was born about 1840, and died on the 28 June 1890, aged about 50. Tuakau's first wife was Meretini Wahine and they had several children. He and Patahi had one son that did not survive.

Patahi's Story

In his manuscript *A Pioneer Reminiscences,* William Martin spent some time with Haimona 'Simon' Tuakau and his wife Patahi on the Hohonu/Greenstone diggings. In fact for a while there are only the three of them at the Hohonu, as the other members of Martin's party have gone back to get stores. They go canoeing and fishing together, and they seem to establish a rapport. He is struck by the fact that Patahi speaks much better English than her husband, and when he asks her why, she replies by telling her life story.

‘Long time ago when I was young girl big ship come to Otakau, it have a lot of men to catch the whale, they stay at Otakau. They go away, catch more whale, sometimes the whale come near Otakau. Then the men and boats go make a catch the whale and bring it to the Kaik, then cut him up and boil in big coppers to get the oil.

By and by they get wood and water, give the Maori beef and biscuits, Maori give pork and potatoes, then they go and catch more whale; one white man I like him very much. He very kind to me and by and by he say you be my wife. I say by and by when I get big and older. Next time you come. The ship she go away and I very sorry, the Maori chief at Otakau [Otago], he big strong man he make a big fight with Te Rauparaha, the big chief came with a lot of canoes and men from what you call South Island and kill lot of Maoris. The Maori of Otakau kill a lot too, and then they come the chief, Bloody Jack, after the ship gone, Bloody Jack he say I want you for my wife. I say no. I like the pakeha Palmer and when the ship come back I going to be his wife. The chief he very angry, and many times he get very angry, all the other Maoris say I must marry Bloody Jack, so one night I left Otakau and go to Moeraki, stay four moons, then I go to Waikouaiti and every day I make a look out for the ship, by and by it come.

Then I go to Otakau and I be Mr Palmer’s wife, I stay on the ship, men build a whare and live there and a Maori pa [sic?] instead of Mr Palmers. I very happy then. For long time we live at Otakau and I have one little girl, then another, by and by the ship go to Sydney.

Mr Palmer he say to me “I go away with the ship, by and by I came back”. Then I very sorry and many days I make a cry. I say “No you go, you stay”. I afraid if he go he no come back. Then I say “If you go, I go too”. So Mr Palmer take me and we leave the little girls at Otakau, he say we no take them. We soon be back.

By and by, after many days at sea we came near land and one night it get very dark thunder cloud. Then the ship is on the rock, big waves

wash over us, one boat get away, all the others washed away, we stay till daylight. Then some men say the ship soon break, and they say they make a swim to the land. Mr Palmer say "Patahi I make a swim too", I say "Alright, I go too". Mr Palmer take off his clothes, I do so too. We leave the ship and swim, the water was lots cold, and I make a swim alongside my husband, we swim a long time, the land get nearer, Mr Palmer say "Oh, I am tired" I say "Swim, we soon on the land", we turn over and make a rest on the water, then we swim again, then he say "Oh I die" I say "No, you put your one hand on my shoulders, and make a swim with the other". I strong then, my husband he take hold of me, I say "Hold on to me, not my arms" and I swim with my husband, seem long time and I very tired, I near the land, then big wave came and sweep both on the rocks, I very much cut and sick, and when the waters take Mr Palmer back I catch him by his hand and hold on to rocks with my other hand then a man came and pull us out. I was very bad, lay long time on the ground, by and by, next day, some people came and take us, give us plenty to eat, plenty of clothes, Mr Palmer many weeks ill, then we go to Sydney.

Lots of people there but I not like it, by and by we come back to my little children to Otakau. Mr Palmer say he never go to sea again, we live long time at Otakau, I have another little baby girl, make three.

By and by, two, three ships come. Bring lots of white people, they go up the river and make a lot of houses, by and by Mr Palmer go away in boat to see them. Lot of other ships come. then Mr Palmer go to Taieri, build house, take lot of cattle with him. I want to go to but he say no. Sometimes he no come for a long time and when he come he very cross, by and by he say he no married to me like white people. Then he say he married to white woman and he come for the children. He take them away from me. I very angry and make a long cry. The Maori say he no good, better you had married Bloody Jack.

About a year after Toby a Maori he take me for his wife, but many times I cry. Toby say

"What you cry for?" "Mr Palmer" I say. I cry to see my little girls and many times I say "I want to go to Taieri to see my little girls". Toby say when the days get long we go to Taieri ferry. When the warm weather comes we leave Otakau, make a walk. Catch the weka and the eels. Make little whare every night of flax, and three days we come to Taieri's ferry. We stop in bush all night, next morning I go near the grass field and see Mr Palmer's house, but the bush hide me.

By and by I see my little girl. She come near for cows, I make a call as I see her come, she no see me, then I come nearer and called her. She came and we both make a cry, then she go and tell other little girls and they all come, by and by the white woman see us and tell Mr Palmer, then he come down and say "What you do here?" I say "I come to see my little girls". He look very angry and say "You no stop here". I say "No". He say "Well, you come and get some breakfast then you go away". I went to the house. I no hungry. I look all the time at my little girls. Toby he like plenty of breakfast, by and by Mr Palmer say "You go eat, you take tucker with you, you eat it by and by". He gave me lot of food and some tobacco then he took us to the road and say "Goodbye, no you come again". That is the last time I see my little girls.

After a long pause she said "They not little now, they all women now. I am long way from them. I am getting old. I think I never see them again. Mr Palmer he old man too, he got plenty land and sheep and white woman. He no want me, by and by, I die".

Seated on the floor of the whare with her hands clasped around her knees, she gazed in silence into the decaying light of the whare fire for a short time, then her face covered to her knees, and I felt that her recollections and silent grief were too sacred to be disturbed and sought my side of the whare and left her alone with her past.

As I lay awake that night I felt for the poor blighted soul and tried to picture what sort of man her betrayer could be. Who had so basely

> deserted a whole-hearted devoted woman and flung away the purest, richest gift to man — a woman's pure love. What if the skin be black or white?
>
> I afterwards learned from Patai that Toby and herself left Otakau, settled down in Akaroa, where Toby died there. She fell in with Simon, another victim to the white man's power, he had been kidnapped when a boy by the captain of a whaler at the Bay of Islands who afterwards compromised the matter with the Maori chief there by giving him a keg of tobacco. So poor Simon was many years practically a slave on board a whaler, finally effecting his escape at Akaroa and sheltered by the natives there. So after a time these two poor creatures joined a small party of Maoris going to the Grey and finally settled down on the banks of the Taramakau'.

The Greenstone Boulder

At the heart of the discovery of the goldfield on the Hohonu/Greenstone River, was the discovery of the greenstone boulder at a place later called 'Maori Point', some fifteen kilometres upriver from the Taramakau. The river subsequently took on the name 'Greenstone' in the light of the significance of this find.

In general, the discovery is attributed to two Maori, 'Simon Tuangau' and 'Samuel Iwipau', in January 1864 — Haimona Tuakau and Iwikau te Aika. William Martin gives a very full account of the usually accepted version of events in *The Diggers Story.* Martin had become acquainted with Tuakau on the Hohonu/Greenstone diggings in the middle of 1863 and had previously offered £50 if the Maori could locate any payable gold.

> 'January 1864, his mate, Samuel (a Maori) [Iwikau] and himself [Tuakau] went up the Hohuna River, and on its main branch (the Greenstone Creek) they found an embedded boulder of pure greenstone, which, with the aid of levers cut in the bush, they eventually rolled out of it's deep bed in the stream, and by rolling with the fall of the creek, placed the boulder in the bush out of sight and floods. An hour or two afterwards they went to the spot

> where the boulder had lain, with the discoloured water away, and on the side and bottom, embedded in the debris, they clearly saw shining in the clear water lumps of gold from one pennyweight to four or five, and, to use Simon's own words, he said: 'We take out our sheath knives and we take all we see, and I say to Samuel we want big hammer to break up the greenstone, and I say we no tell we find gold, but we go make a walk to Christchurch. We find Martina, get £50, buy big spawl hammer, bring Martina back with us, when we then tell all the Maoris, and all the Maoris go with us, get plenty of gold, we go to Christchurch and speak to many mans, but no one knows you. We make a walk about all day and see many men making the house, but we no see you working. We get very tired, buy a hammer, and go back to Kaiapoi, then we come home'.

Interestingly, George Dobson confirmed in his diary that they had met 'Simon' and 'Samuel' in the Taramakau River in February, heading for Christchurch.

William Martin knew Haimona 'Simon' Tuakau from his prospecting efforts on the Hohonu/Greenstone in 1863, and later 'stayed with Simon and Patai, his wife, at the Taremakau' in 1865. This is where he heard 'Simon's' explanation of events. According to Martin, the Maori took pity on Albert Hunt, after the latter had 'idled several weeks' at the Grey pa in May 1864.

> 'The Maoris understood the position, and out of good nature Simon and his mate disclosed their find to him, and directed him where to go, giving him a lift in their canoe to the Hohuna, where Tainui and Simon each had a whare'.

Smart and Day struck gold on their own account at the Hohonu/Greenstone, and Smart's letter to the *Nelson Examiner*, and Hunt's letter to the *Christchurch Press*, simultaneously started the rush. But we have not heard the last of the greenstone boulder, for it became the centrepiece of a celebrated court case in 1866 — 'James Reynolds versus Simon Tuangau'.

In general terms this is what appeared to happen. Under Maori custom, the finder of a greenstone boulder becomes it's owner, until such time as he or she passes on the ownership rights. It does not matter if the boulder is being worked or not, the right of ownership is permanent. European

mining law is quite different, if a claim is not regularly worked, then it is regarded as being 'abandoned', and anyone else can stake a new claim. In about December 1865 a European digger named James Reynolds walked up the Greenstone River and found the boulder, and immediately pegged out a claim around it. Another European, 'Bill' Chappell arrived and said that he was 'looking after the boulder for the Maoris' and Reynolds should not touch it. This view was subsequently confirmed by the Warden at Greymouth, Mr Revell, who told Reynolds that the boulder had been discovered before the Goldfields Act was in place, and therefore it was a matter of property, not a mining claim:

> 'The stone you have taken possession of belongs to Simon Tuangau and I think you had better not touch it'.

Reynolds tried to do a deal with Tuakau, who declined, and Reynolds subsequently brought up blasting equipment and a hired hand, and proceeded to break up the greenstone boulder. The total quantity derived was about 1885 lbs, considered to be of 'high quality', and was estimated at that time to be worth 30 shillings per pound, about £2800. At this point Tuakau slapped a writ on Reynolds and the case went before the Supreme Court in Hokitika.

The case was covered in extensive detail in the *West Coast Times*. There were in fact two trials, and in both cases the jury was unable to reach a verdict. The *West Coast Times* wrote a rather sly editorial in favour of Reynolds and the European Mining Law, and Justice Gresson reprimanded the paper on the matter, which resulted in another indignant editorial protesting the paper's purest innocence.

All the participants were interviewed in detail, including both 'Simon' Tuakau and 'Samuel' te Aika. In general, the accounts confirm how the boulder was found according to Martin, but they add a number of interesting details. Simon's wife Patahi was also present at the discovery, and helped them move the boulder by the use of skids and levers onto the side of the creek. The boulder weighed about two tons and it took three days to shift. They disguised the boulder with brush, and Tuakau and Iwikau occasionally worked at it.

On the second visit to the boulder there were a number of people present. A Maori named 'Isaiah Tainui' gave an interesting account. The original was spoken in Maori, and this was interpreted for the court.

> ‘He went up to the Greenstone Creek sometime in June 1864. He saw some greenstone there belonging to Simon and Samuel. He saw where they left it. He also saw Waita do something with the stone. The Maoris who were at the rush at the Greenstone were there. He, Billy, Werita, Arabetta, M’Lean, some women, and a European named Hunter were there, and that was all. We moved the stone a second time to get at the gold under the stone. The other Maoris and I were working the claim for gold. We left the claim in November 1864’.

Now surely ‘Isaiah Tainui’ was Ihaia Tainui, as ‘Ihaia’ was the recognised Maori translation of ‘Isaiah’. ‘Werita’ may well have been Ihaia’s father, Wereta Tainui. ‘Arabetta’ was possibly Arapata Horau (‘Albert Horan’) ‘some women’ probably refers both to Patahi, ‘Simon’ Tuakau’s wife, and the wife of ‘Samuel’ Te Aika. The actual name of the Maori ‘M’Lean is not known. ‘Hunter’ might well be Albert Hunt.

Because of the significance of the case and the two hung juries, Justice Gresson decided to send the case onto the Court of Appeal. William Smart asserts that the Maori eventually ‘gained the case and got the stone back’, but so far this has not been confirmed.

The natural skills that Maori had over the European prospector — crossing rivers, ability to live off the land, canoe building — had stood them in good stead for the last five years of prospecting, but these advantages were soon to be swamped by the arrival of the European diggers. You get the impression that the Maori in the first six months of 1864 worked the various claims on the Hohonu/Greenstone goldfield quite vigorously, and at times secretly, perhaps guessing that a human flood was on the way.

But that still leaves a puzzle. Why did they show Albert Hunt the source of gold under the boulder? Generosity? Pity? Comradeship? And they were generous with many other European explorers and prospectors as well, for if the West Coast Maori had a mind to it, they could have delayed the discovery of the West Coast goldfields by a considerable margin.

Sources for Chapter 2 — Te Koura

Maori and Gold

• Vincent Pyke *History of Early Gold Discoveries in Otago* p10-11. The Maori word 'ferro' is probably 'whero' meaning 'red, reddish-brown, orange'. Pyke suggests that anything brightly coloured was called 'whero'. 'Simon' is an odd derivation, Pyke suggests 'timata' to mean 'heavy' or 'heavy stones', though this may be a corruption of 'taimaha'.

'Tuawaiki' is the Ngai Tahu chief 'Tuhawaiki', and note that Pyke's informant, a Mr Palmer, could possibly be the same 'Palmer' who was Elizabeth Patahi's lover, see 'Patahi's Story'.

• J. H. M. Salmon *A History of Gold Mining in New Zealand* p45-46.

• H. Ngata *English-Maori Dictionary* 1993.

• James Cowan *The New Zealand Wars* volume 1 p374.

• W. A. Taylor *Lore and History of the South Island Maori* p190 has this comment. 'In the gold prospecting days, Maoris are reported by the Gold Fields Wardens in official reports, as working at the various headwaters of the Whataroa right up to the snowline'.

• Rangi's obituary *Grey River Argus* 18 September 1901. I'm grateful to Anne Hutcheson of Hokitika for drawing my attention to this story. There does not now seem to be any mention of a 'Rangi Creek' in the Notown and Red Jacks area on the S71 topographical map (4th edition 1971, inch-mile).

Several Maori played a significant part in gold prospecting in Otago. The Maori Point gold claim at the Shotover River was named after it's two finders 'Dan' Erihana and Hakaria Haeroa, who, the story goes, were rescuing their dog when they came across rich crevices full of gold. Before nightfall they had collected 25 lb, see Salmon. The discovery of gold at 'Foxes' or Arrow River is attributed to 'Maori Jack' 'a Thames native Hatini Whiti, otherwise Antony White', see Pyke p84-85. It is interesting to note the widespread activity of some Coromandel Maori in gold-digging throughout the South Island.

It is perhaps scarcely relevant, but of the first 6200 names recorded as applying for miners licences at Tuapeka, at least 16 are obviously Maori, see Tuapeka Mining Licences Register 19 Aug to 1 Nov 1861 (manuscript, Turnbull Library).

• *Lyttelton Times* 4 July 1857 & 29 August 1857.

• *Nelson Examiner* 6 March 1858, 24 August 1861.

• *Otago Daily Times* 16 February 1863 (30 ounce nugget).

• *The Colonist* 3 April 1863 (Taranaki Maori).

• C. H. Howitt's *Journal* manuscript Alexander Turnbull Library.

• Reuben Waite *A Narrative of the Discovery of the West Coast Goldfields* p13 & p17.

• J. H. M. Salmon *A History of Gold Mining in New Zealand* p36-37.

Ihaia Tainui

• A. P. Harper *Memories of Mountains and Men* p201-208.

• *Lyttelton Times* 20 December 1862.

• William Martin's *A Pioneers Reminiscences by William Martin*, Papatowai, 1863 manuscript MS-0205 Hocken Library.

• Philip Ross May *The West Coast Gold Rushes* p88-89. May states that Tainui's gold on his claim for the gold bonus came from Hohonu Creek, but William Martin suggests it was Kapitea Creek.

• William Smart's *Journal* p98.

• Charlton Howitt's *Diary* p28.

• *Inwards Correspondence to the Canterbury Provincial Government*, letter 15 September 1863, National Archives, Christchurch Office, CH287, CP44, ICPS 570A 6/10/1863. There is another interesting letter drafted by Ihaia Tainui to the Government forbidding Arthur Dobson to survey the Arahura River.

'Taramakau 12 January 1864. Do not go up the Arahura, because Arahura all to belong to Maoris, from it's source to it's mouth, this river belong to the Maoris. Mr Mackay agreed to this, and noted it on our map. For this reason we forbid you to go surveying up the Arahura. This is all we have to say to you Arthur Dudley, from our council'. Signed: 'Wereta Tainui, Tarapuhi, Hakiaha, Makarini, Arapata, Purua, Papara, Inia, Ihaia Tainui'.

National Archives, Christchurch Office, CH287 CP51 ICPS536/1864. James Mackay Jnr had to reassure the Maori that it was in their interests to get the river surveyed (see W. A. Taylor p191 *Lore and History of the South Island Maori*).

• Arthur Dobson *Reminiscences* p59 & p67-68.

• W. H. Revell, letter and report 13 August 1864 *Inwards Correspondence to the Canterbury Provincial Government*, National Archives, Christchurch Office, CH287 CP57 ICPS2241/1864. The 'per week' is not easily deciphered, but it seems a plausible time period.

Ihaia Tainui, life details

• *Native Affairs South Island* p42 1867 it mentions that 'Four natives — Ihaia Tainui, Arapata Horau, Wi Makariri, Moroati' went to Wellington to make a further claim.

• Archdeacon Harper *Letters From New Zealand* p140. In 1857 Harper also meets an 'Ihaia' who was 'one of their important men' at Kaituna pa (p32).

• Buddy Mikaere *Te Maiharoa* p148, footnote 6.

• Harry Evison *Te Wai Pounamu: the Greenstone Island* p455-456.

• *Young Commission report* Appendices to the House of Representatives 1879 G-3b p4-22. This Commission was chaired by Thomas E. Young who was charged with allocating the Maori reserve land on the West Coast to the rightful owners. There had been some confusion over James Mackay's original allocations in 1860.

'Neri' might possibly be Neri Meihaua, mentioned in the 1879 Young Commission, and 'Whitau' could be Whitau Kahaki who claimed some land at the Grey River and was given 10 acres at the Arahura, but was then currently living in Kaiapoi.

• Ngai Tahu Maori Trust Board Claim before the Waitangi Tribunal volume 8, p424.

• Coroner's report West Coast Historical Museum, Hokitika.

Epapara Kahutuanui

• Nelson Examiner 10 December 1862 (30 ounces).

• Philip Ross May *The West Coast Gold Rushes* p73. May has given no explicit footnote reference to his note on 'Epapara' and so far I have been unable to locate the original source. Eparara was also known as 'Simon the Maori', but he should not be confused with Haimona Tuakau. Note also that one of the signatures on the letter to Arthur Dobson is 'Papara'.

• *Young Commission report* Appendices to the House of Representatives 1879 G-3b p4-22.

Haimona Tuakau

• Arthur Dobson *Reminiscences* p61-64.

• William Martin *A Pioneers Reminiscences by William Martin*, Papatowai, 1863 manuscript MS-0205 manuscript Hocken Library.

• William Sherrin *Christchurch Press* throughout December 1863.

As the Canterbury and West Coast Maori adopted Christianity, Christian forenames became much more common. Sometimes these biblical names were the original first name, or adopted because they had some similarity to their Maori name. The Bible had been translated into Maori and this was a source of many new names. For example 'Ihaia' and 'Isaiah', 'Piripi' and 'Philip', 'Horomona' and 'Solomon', 'Etara' and 'Ezra', 'Pita' and 'Peter', etc. With any number of 'Simons', 'Samuels' and 'Peters' on the West Coast at this time, I confess to having trouble sorting out who was who. In the southern Maori dialect 'ng' is usually translated as 'k'.

Patahi's Story

• William Martin *A Pioneers Reminiscences by William Martin*, Papatowai, 1863 manuscript MS-0205 manuscript Hocken Library.

I have altered some of Martin's punctuation and spelling where it seems unclear. William Martin gives her name as 'Patai' in his manuscript and 'Pahati' in The Diggers Story, and in the court record of the West Coast Times her name is given as 'Pahati'. Whakapapa records from the Ngai Tahu seem to indicate her name was Patahi. 'Toby' might be an anglicisation of 'Topi'. A 'Erihupeti Patahi' was one of several adult Maori baptisms recorded in Canterbury November 1851 (see The Summer Ships) Colin Amodeo. Another name in the list was Hamioa Rewiti Te Iwipau.

'Mr Palmer' is Edwin Palmer, a whaler, who with his brother William Palmer, worked along the Southland and Fiordland coast during the 1830's and 1840's. We know that William Palmer was only seventeen when he arrived at Preservation Inlet in 1832, see The History of Otago A. H. McLintock (p71 & p81). In *The South Explored* by John Hall-Jones there are pictures of Edwin (p39) and William (p53). Both brothers took Maori wives. A quote extracted from F. Tuckett's journal states that at Tautuku Bay were 'erected some good houses', and William Palmer had a Maori wife of 'very prepropessing appearance and manner, the mother of two or three fine children' (p65). William Palmer may have taken more than one Maori wife.

Edwin Palmer was described as 'a tall dark man of rather distinguished appearance'. According to H. Beattie in his book *The First White Boy Born in Otago*, Edwin Palmer had 'two half-caste daughters, Betsy and Jeannie', 'In course of time Betsy became Mrs Sizemore

and Jeannie [Tini] became Mrs Bob Brown' (p34-35).

- *Patahi and the Whaler* Ross Wilson (June 1992). An unpublished 10 page manuscript with a family tree and biographical details of the Palmers. Ross Wilson is a descendant of Betsy and Richard Sizemore. Peti (Elizabeth or Betsy) Palmer was born in 1829 and died in 1858, and was buried in Waikouaiti cemetery. The Sizemores had three children, Mary, John and Charity, and the Palmers are an extensive Ngai Tahu family.

The Greenstone Boulder

- Carl Pfaff *The Diggers Story* p94-97.
- *West Coast Times* 8, 9, 10, 11, 13, 14 August 1866.
- George Dobson's *Diary* 20 February 1864 in Arthur Dudley Dobson papers 1859-1922, Canterbury Museum Manuscript Collection. Dobson, Charles Todhunter and William Sherrin were searching for Howitt's missing party, unsuccessfully. There was also a boy called 'Frazer' with 'Simon' and 'Samuel'.
- William Smart's *Journal* p100 & 149.

The discovery of the greenstone boulder is usually attributed to Haimona Tuakau and Iwikau Te Aika, but there is at least one different version of the story. In January of 1863 William Smart and party, were unsuccessfully working the area at the confluence of the Hohonu/Greenstone and Taramakau Rivers. Charles Money and Rowland Davies were also present. Smart's journal records the following:

[January 26 1863] 'Patterson and Peter started early this morning and went a long distance up the Ohonu, and up the right-hand branch. It was dark when they returned. They say they have found a large Greenstone Boulder. The place it was found was the celebrated Maori Point'.

Only later of course was Maori Point 'celebrated'. Smart confirms his opinion later, adding some extra details.

'One of these Maoris — George Peters — is the Maori parson at Kaiapoi — his father Peters and Patterson were the finders of the Greenstone at Maori Point — when they were with me in January'.

If it is possible that 'Patterson' and 'Peter' found the boulder, they by Maori rights should be the owners, but nowhere in the court testimonies is it stated that anyone but 'Simon' and 'Samuel' own the boulder. The second possibility, that 'Patterson' and 'Peter' are in fact the same as 'Simon' and Samuel', can be discounted. Smart was correct in asserting that John 'Patterson' Paratene became the first Member for Parliament for Southern Maori in 1867. 'John Patterson' had also made an application for the Mail Run between Christchurch and the Grey pa in 1865, and signed himself as 'Tamanuiarangi'. Smart also recorded that 'Peter' Mutu was the father of the present Maori clergyman, the Reverend Peter Mutu 1893'.

In the court records, several Maori clearly state that the initial find took place in January 1864, a year later than Smart indicates. If Smart's claim is true why did the Maori wait almost a year before setting off to get implements to break the boulder? 'Simon' and 'Samuel' had no such hesitation when they found it, and headed to Christchurch, and Tarapuhi also set off with a similar aim to the Buller.

It is a puzzle. Smart repeats his assertion that 'Patterson' and 'Peter' found the gold at least four times in his journal, though no gold was recovered, because the boulder was not

moved. Perhaps the most likely explanation is that 'Patterson' and 'Peter' had discovered a different greenstone boulder from the one subsequently found by 'Simon' and 'Samuel', and Smart got the two boulders muddled.

• William Smart's *Journal* p100, p104 & p149.

• for 'Patterson'

• *Inwards Correspondence to the Canterbury Provincial Government* 1 September 1865, National Archives, Christchurch Office.

• *Te Wai Pounamu: the Greenstone Island* Harry Evison p417.

• Ngai Tahu Maori Trust Board Claim before the Waitangi Tribunal.

• *Dictionary of New Zealand Biography* volume 2, mentions that Paratene 'Patterson' also stood for Parliament in 1879, being defeated by Ihaia Tainui.

Chapter 4

Gold Prospected

Buller River 1860-1861

The tenuous development of the Buller goldfields from 1860 to 1861, was triggered by a closely related succession of events.

From Rochfort's find of gold in the Buller River, which summoned the Fantome prospecting party, who left behind equipment that the Maori used, to fossick out the gold that impressed Reuben Waite, who lead his romantic gold rush.

It was a development repeatedly crippled by poor access, shocking weather, and surprise, surprise, not a great deal of gold.

Chronology of gold found in the Buller region

1857

James Mackay may have seen gold in Buller, but did not report it officially (February).

1858

Tarapuhi, Tainui, and G. W. H. Lees bring 'scaly gold' from Buller.

1859

John Rochfort reports on gold in Buller near present day Berlins (November).

1860

Fantome party landed at the Buller rivermouth. Discarded tools (May).

1861

Two Maori returned with Samuel Mackley to Nelson with 11 ounces of Buller gold (April).

Otago gold rush, started by Gabriel Read (April). Buller Maori brought 52 ounces of gold to Nelson (May).

Waimangaroa and the 'Old Diggings' at the Buller attract a small rush led by storekeepers Waite and Rogers (June).

Canterbury Provincial Government offered award of £1000 for goldfield (August).

1862

Survey by Haast (with Dobson as an assistant) found no gold-bearing rocks on eastern side of province (January).

Brunner, Burnett, Rochfort, Robinson (Superintendent) at Buller. Robinson, Burnett, Rochfort went up Buller, Inangahua to Grey River. Brunner, Robinson, Burnett sailed for Nelson, Rochfort started track to Amuri Saddle (March).

Epapara Kahutuanui and four Maori find payable gold at Lyell (November).

1863

Small gold strikes at Owen, Mangles, Maruia and Matakitaki (August-October).

1864

Wakamarina rush (April).

Sea Voyages, Schooners and River Bars

'To Gold Diggers — Gold Scales, American Long-handled Shovels, American picks, shovels and Axes, Cradle Plates, Tom Plates, Sluicing Forks, Puddling Spades, Camp Ovens and Go-Ashores —

I. M. Hill, Ironmonger, Waimea Street, Nelson'.

Advertisement The Colonist 20 September 1861.

It must have seemed by April 1864 that the Wakamarina rush had killed once and for all the hope that the Buller River might produce a genuine payable goldfield, but it had not always looked that way. Flurries of gold discoveries at Waimangaroa, the Buller River and later Lyell, kept excitement high for Nelson prospectors throughout the early 1860's. It was clear that there was obviously gold up the Buller River, the question was, how to get to it?

It is hard for modern day New Zealanders to realise the difficulties faced by a prospective visitor to the West Coast in 1860. Did you walk from Nelson? Brunner's and Heaphy's accounts were widely known and the coastline seemed a painfully slow way to starve yourself. The alternative overland bash down the Buller River looked suicidal.

So it had to be a sea voyage, and there are probably several books waiting to be written on the considerable hazards of coastal voyages in early New Zealand. The risks were high, the boats small and vulnerable, often ill-fitted with inexperienced captains and a raw crew. Accuracy of navigation was not a noted feature, and so like the Greeks and the early Portuguese sailors centuries before them, they were obliged to hug the coast, which inevitably increased the dangers of shipwreck and loss of life.

The West Coast compounded all these risks and added a few more. There were the prevailing westerly onshore winds with a heavy beach surf, so that even a simple landing meant an uncomfortable anchorage and a splash and dash through drenching surf. If the weather was bad, you headed out to gain searoom and if the winds died, you prayed the currents would not drift you onto the numerous and leering rocky headlands.

There were no really secure harbours on the entire West Coast, except at Jackson's Bay, where ironically there was no gold. However, by now it was known through Heaphy's, Brunner's and Mackay's observations, that both the Grey and Buller rivers might provide an anchorage, but they involved negotiating the notorious river bars found at the entrance. The bars changed location and height regularly, requiring a cautious approach. A boat would try to time their entrance into the river on an ingoing tide to mitigate the effects of the river current. This is an account by Captain Fearon on the schooner *Gipsy* in February 1860.

> '...we then steered for the mouth of the Buller River, but the weather thickened, and conceiving that we were close in shore, we kept the lead going. In the first cast we found eighteen fathoms, so still kept towards the shore until we reached seven fathoms, and could then distinctly hear the surf breaking, but the weather being too thick for us to see the land, we tacked, stood off and on. In less than half-an-hour the weather cleared up, and before us we saw the mouth of the Buller, distant between half-a-mile and a mile, but, perceiving that a heavy surf was breaking over the bar, we deemed it prudent to wait until morning before entering the river, and so came to an anchor at about two miles and a-half off shore, under the black reef. Early the next morning we ran into the Buller with a light breeze; not much surf on the bar; we sounded continually as we passed over it, and found nothing less than ten feet; this at about half-tide.'

This was a relatively easy trip across the bar, and Captain McCann on the *Gipsy* was considered a 'smart seaman', but getting attached to pieces of land was almost an everyday occurrence for these jaunty little vessels. On the first day of this same voyage (9 February) this had already happened.

> 'We proceeded cheerily along, and at nine, p.m., the wind being off the land, we stood to the west side of the bay, and ran down, but at eleven p.m. the vessel having been incautiously steered too near to the land, she struck a reef off Tonga Point. Our kedge was immediately got out, and we soon hauled her off again, and ran for Fisherman's Bay, which we reached about eight o'clock the next morning. On examining the Gipsy, after she had been put on the beach, we found that her false keel was shattered. At eleven o'clock we again got under sail, and made for Riwaka, which we reached in that morning, and there we remained until the 16th February, as we were only able to work at the repairs of our little vessel when the tide was out'.

The same sort of thing happened to Reuben Waite on his 1861 exploratory voyage to the Buller on the schooner Jane, which got stuck near Farewell Spit. One man was incautious enough to suggest they throw some food over-

board to lighten the load (they were tempted to throw him overboard for the suggestion!) but eventually they ran from side to side and dislodged the vessel.

The boats used on the early days of the West Coast were tiny, usually two masted schooners of anywhere between 15-60 tons each or the even smaller one-masted cutters.

One boat that was a regular visitor was the *Emerald Isle* built by William Oakes at Mercury Bay in 1854 and was typical of the type. She was a schooner, 55 feet long, 15 feet across (beam) with a depth of 6 feet (20 m x 5 m x 2 m) and registered weight of 28 tons. A few cramped cabins for the well-paying passengers, the rest slept where they could. The *Crest of the Wave* was a schooner of 58 tons register, length 67 feet, beam 20 feet, depth 8 feet, built in 1862, the schooner *Fantome* length 51 feet, beam 14 feet, depth 6 feet, 26 tons register built in 1859. All three were constructed in Auckland.

We know the *Gipsy* was a 17 ton schooner, length 45 feet, beam 13 feet, depth 5 foot, with a crew of three or four, plus the captain. The *Gipsy* was built in Nelson in 1856. There was one small four bunk cabin and the rest of the passengers slept on mattresses in the hold.

Terms such as 'schooner' and 'cutter' seem rather arbitrary and somewhat dependent on the captain's advertising abilities. One suspects that tonnage was frequently increased to make the boat seem bigger and therefore more seaworthy than it really was. The 28 ton *Emerald Isle* was described as '40 tons', and the 58 ton *Crest of the Wave* became '80 tons'.

The cargo of these small coastal vessels would normally be characterised as 'mixed', or in a translated form, anything that paid. The *Crest of the Wave* advertised this cargo in December 1863.

> '200 boxes of candles, 90 boxes tea, 10 half-chests ditto, 2 cases cigars 1 box glass, 4 portmanteaus, 7 cases port wine, 1 case 20 boxes raisins, Dranfield; 100 cases of geneva [gin], 12 hhds [hogsheads] beer, 22 cases champagne, 35,000 feet Aikman & Co.; 4 hhds beer'.

Although the small size of the vessels usually meant an uncomfortable voyage, they had the advantage in being able to seek shelter in restricted anchorages that the bigger barques and brigs would not dare attempt. The manoeuvrability and shallow draft of the schooners enabled them to get across the river bars, and if did beach themselves, they could frequently be refloated.

The *Gipsy* under Captain McCann was 'wrecked' in February 1863, just close to the Steeples at Cape Foulwind south of the Buller River and the crew and passengers struggled to the Buller food-stores. So anxious were the shipwrecked men to get across the Buller that the canoe sent across to rescue them was overloaded and capsized on the return journey, with three people drowning, including the surveyor Charles Skeet. Both Charles Money and William Smart comment on this disaster, but it seems the *Gipsy* was refloated, for the boat was wrecked again on 13 September 1863, this time with Arthur Dobson on board, on the north beach of the Grey River. Dobson managed to secure most of his stores but this was the final end of the gallant little *Gipsy*, for it was too damaged to salvage and the remains were subsequently burnt some years later. Captain John McCann and his four crew were obliged to trudge up the coast for a second time to the Buller rivermouth.

Even allowing for the risks of shipwreck, sea-sickness, and poor navigation (Dixon sailed into the Taramakau River mistaking it for the Grey), the passengers had to be doggedly patient. Dobson's voyage on the Gipsy took a frustrating six weeks from Nelson, vainly waiting for the right weather conditions to run across the Grey River bar, they even drifted down as far as the glaciers. In the end, they chanced their arm and piled up on the beach.

William Martin's account of his voyage of the *Emerald Isle* demonstrates just how convoluted such voyages could be, yet it must have been somewhat typical for the times.

The start was delayed, partly because of the need to get enough fare-paying passengers and cargo, and Oates complained that because of the bad publicity resulting around the first Dixon/Oakes claim for the gold bonus, they could only get six passengers 'and they eat more provisions than their passage money would pay for'.

The boat left Christchurch in March 1863 with 80 sacks of oats bound for Oamaru, got blown beyond there, and arrived at Dunedin. Originally it had been intended to go to the West Coast via Foveaux Straits, but at Dunedin they altered their plans, and they picked up passengers bound for Picton and Nelson. So, back up the coast again, this time successfully dropping off the oats at Oamaru, and unloaded three passengers at Picton, and two passengers at Nelson.

Here they were detained for some further three weeks, presumably because Captain Dixon was trying to drum up more paying passengers. Martin got involved in a drunken brawl

on board, they picked up Mr and Mrs Freeth and children, and eventually beat out of Nelson. After being forced back twice around Farewell Spit, they reached the Grey River in June 1863. A voyage of some four months, or to make it sound dreadfully tedious, sixteen weeks.

The attrition rate on boats is staggering. We have already seen the *Gipsy* sunk in 1863, and two other regular visitors to the West Coast, the cutter *Supply* went down in December 1870 and the schooner *Rapid* in May 1870. Both boats were deliberately run ashore to save life. Reuben Waite's transport, the 20 ton ketch *Jane*, was totally wrecked in April 1871 near Cape Jackson, Cook Strait.

It gets worse. The *Emerald Isle* was 'wrecked' once in September 1865 at Port Underwood, made sea-worthy again and finally sunk off Constant Bay, Charleston in August 1867. All hands were drowned. The *Crest of the Wave* was similarly lost with all hands in Foveaux Straight in April 1894 when on a voyage from Lyttelton to Bluff. She carried a crew of four. The schooner *Fantome* disappeared on January 1861 sailing from Lyttelton to Wellington, Captain Toohig, crew and three or four passengers all presumed drowned.

The introduction of steamers sped up the travel times drastically, to days rather than weeks. The *Nelson* at 123 tons, was the first paddle-steamer to enter the Grey and Hokitika Rivers, carrying it's first excited load of gold-diggers in July 1864. These iron made paddle-driven vessels were around 30-35m long (90-120 feet) with a hull depth of around 2 m (7 feet), shallow enough to cross most of the major river bars most of the time. But their arrival did not automatically number the days of the sailing vessels, for the steamers needed a larger complement of passengers to make them pay and were later usually Government subsidised, in order to maintain a fragile link with the isolated communities on the West Coast throughout the later nineteenth century.

The 'Old Diggings' and Waimangaroa

The *Nelson Examiner* reported the famous parcel of West Coast gold '11 ounces' on the 27 April 1861, then followed this up with a report of '27 ounces' in early May, and '52 ounces' in late May, all from Maori prospectors.

This rash of sudden gold should be treated cautiously. For instance, it's not entirely clear whether the newspaper

meant that the 52 ounces of gold took three weeks to gather, or refers to the gap of three weeks between announcements. One should also be careful with the amounts of gold bandied about, for the '52 ounces' might also have included the '27 ounces'. All diggers, Maori and pakeha, were highly prone to 'improve' their figures, as indeed were provincially patriotic newspapers.

The gold had all been found from either the 'Old Diggings', at present day Berlins, some 25 miles up the Buller River, or from the Waimangaroa River mouth. The latter in particular showed promise, and developed into a small, if a rather intransigent, gold diggings.

> 'A splendid sample of gold from the Buller district, on the West Coast, consisting of about 100 ounces of very heavy gold, obtained from the... Waimangaroa or Starved Creek. This spot being on the coastline some few miles north of the Buller, the parties who have gone up the river are in ignorance of the richness of this locality. The gold mentioned above has been principally panned by the Maoris, who have obtained it in pounds weight'.

The Waimangaroa diggings were about three miles upstream from the coast, the gold bearing gravels littered with large granite boulders from 5-20 tonnes.

> 'The Maoris have got some very good claims there, one party of four sunk a hole on one of the bars, and got out with a tin dish 24 ounces; that is one of the best claims; some of them are doing very little, the parties of whites have scarcely got fixed, they are principally running about fossicking'.

Charles Money worked sporadically at the Waimangaroa from December 1862, which had already been partially deserted by the rush to the Lyell, but did 'nothing brilliant in the ground we had set into'. He went prospecting for a while during the winter, returned and commenced blasting with a mate when he was offered...

> '...a piece of ground by a man up the creek who had got good gold out of it himself, and was only leaving to go to some better ground up the Buller River... the work was both difficult and dangerous, being a drive or tunnel made into the side of the hill, or rather cliff, blasting the rocks that were too big to get out otherwise, and going in underneath the hill without using any props'.

A mate on a rival claim was blinded by an ill-informed blasting operation.

> 'I was one day washing a dish of stuff in the creek below the claim, when I heard a shout above, and. looking up, saw the man with whom he was working running down the track with a face like a ghost, calling for help. I immediately ran up and passed him — for he was too flabbergasted to speak a word beyond 'blast', 'blown up', 'dead man' — and so on reaching the drive found poor Ned crawling out from beneath it on all fours, and with a face like a plum pudding. He seemed to know at once the full extent of the mischief, for his first words were 'I wish to God it had killed me; I shall be blind for life!'

Money gave up this dodgy work after a month, and tried some more prospecting on his own, but arrived back at the Buller...

> '...in a tattered old flannel shirt not bigger than a waistcoat, and a flour-bag with a couple of holes in it in place of my trousers, which had been burned while left to dry over the fire after a soaking day in the bush... this last disappointment gave me rather a disgust to the place, and I determined to go back to civilisation for a time, and become once more a victim of tailors' bills'.

Population numbers on these two early diggings were generally low, and fickle. In September 1861 there were estimated to be about 140 people on the entire Buller diggings, including three parties of white men and two Maori parties at the Old Diggings. In October it was claimed that most Europeans had 'left the Buller', though in November there's another report of 30 Maori and 20 Europeans at Waimangaroa and the Buller mouth, plus four stores.

> 'Down at the Buller mouth Westport struggled into existence as a provisioning centre for the forgotten men digging gold in the interior. The commercial establishment doubled when Waite and Rogers were joined by two others, John Martin and Waite's brother-in-law Isaac Blake. Martin's wife Elizabeth, with her two sons, and Waite's wife Marion, both made Westport their home early in 1862. The storekeepers

> imported a few dairy cows, some goats, pigs and poultry, and in 1863 Waite leased an area of the pakihi on the west bank of the Buller for a cattle run'.

Still, in general, the Europeans found it hard going. Poor provisioning, erratic ship communications and scurvy were a constant problem, as was the scarcity of gold, and for most of 1861 and 1862 the Buller goldfields were dominated by Maori diggers. Indeed one correspondent thought that the skills needed in canoeing and bushcraft were such as to always make the Buller a 'Maori diggings'.

Lyell, 1862 & 1863

The Lyell goldfield got off to a bang of a start in November 1862, as the *Nelson Examiner* excitedly noted.

> 'West Coast Gold Fields — the schooner Gipsy, which left the Buller on Monday last, arrived here after a short run of thirty hours. She brings news that the Maoris had, among other large nuggets of gold, found one weighing 30 ounces and of remarkable purity. All the diggers had left the Waimangaroa diggings in order to work higher up in the neighbourhood where this very valuable nugget was found. We believe all are doing well'.

However, there had been a hint of riches considerably earlier than that, for in September 1861, the Maori were suggesting that the upper Buller gorge, beyond the Old Diggings, had 'plenty of gold' and that 'three canoes of Maoris' were investigating.

The new find quickly cleared the Waimangaroa diggings, despite the difficulties of getting to this new and unnamed field. There was also a flurry of canoe building, and the Buller River mouth was likened to a ship-builders yard. The storekeepers Waite and Martin donated £5 each to the Maori for the discovery of the new field.

> 'I think the merchants and storekeepers of Nelson should give their mite to these Maoris, for they have found all the goldfields that have been discovered here; they have gone where the Europeans would not go prospecting, and have persevered under great difficulties'.

The Maori had also cornered the transportation market.

> 'Rain had fallen in quantity and had flooded the river, but sixteen [sic] canoes were waiting near the Buller pa, so as to start up the river with men and stores. The Maoris charge £2 each to the diggers and £3 per hundredweight for conveyance up the Buller River'.

Another 30 ounce nugget found at Lyell by a Maori in January seduced even *The Colonist's* correspondent, who got together with a team of three others and discovered 46 ounces in three days. Although *The Colonist* remained cool on the prospects of the new Lyell field (the paper tended to encourage farming and shopkeeping than wild gold enterprises), the *Nelson Examiner* got increasingly worked up.

Having noted that a 19 ounce and a 13 ounce nugget, were included in the 400 ounces that the steamer *Lyttelton* brought back to Nelson on January 3, the paper lambasted the Nelson Provincial Government in two editorials, which compared the 'neglect of our own goldfields' to that of the booming Otago diggings, and to the prosperous land sales in Canterbury. The paper kept up the pressure with headlines such as 'Important News from the Buller' and 'Important Gold Intelligence'. 'We hear that the diggings on that river have turned out richer than any hitherto in Nelson, if not in New Zealand'. Stirring words, everywhere was going ahead it seemed, except dull old Nelson.

The truth was even duller. The Lyell was forty miles up a deep gorge, and the only access was by canoe and in good weather took three days. Then there were '40 or 50' crossings to get up the two miles up the 'Lisle Creek' as reported by one correspondent. Stores were expensive, and frequently damaged, and although some diggers were finding their way overland to the Lyell, it was no picnic. There were other distractions as well, for in that same month of January there were reports of gold finds at Collingwood, the Baton/Wangapeka area, Taitapu (at West Wanganui), and the Dixon/Oakes/Tainui claim at the Grey River. By the winter of 1863, gold was being extracted in the Upper Buller, Matakitaki, and Mangles area, which all rather reduced the need to plunge into a chilly, forbidding, Buller gorge.

In January 1863 there were only a hundred men at the Lyell, and a year later, in April 1864, there were forty Europeans and thirty Maori, and the Hohonu/Greenstone rush was just about to diminish that number.

The *Examiner* had cause to regret it's earlier enthusiasm with a sour comment on 'the deceitful gleams of the Buller', but perhaps the newspaper wrote off Lyell too quickly, for it remained an enduring goldfield for much longer than anyone could have predicted. By 1882 it was a sizeable town, with a recorded population of 1070, and the quartz gold-mining remained productive up unto 1912. Perched by the moody Buller River, cloaked in fine mist, and surrounded by barely explored mountains, Lyell maintained a well deserved reputation as the most romantic goldfield on the Coast.

Storekeepers and 'Cold Tea'

Because of the short autobiography that Reuben Waite wrote later in life, written partly to support his claim for the gold bonus, we know a good deal about this man and his motivations. Perhaps we know too much, for he was a good publicist, and several writers (notably Halket Millar) have virtually given Waite the credit for the West Coast rush.

That's certainly not the case, but he was the first storekeeper on the Buller in 1861 and on the Grey in 1864 (with the exception of the government store), and can claim to have had the leading hand in starting both the towns of Westport and Greymouth. Without Waite's undoubted enterprise in making expeditions to these isolated rivers, the diggings might have taken longer to eventuate, but Waite was considerate in his risk-taking, and only waited till gold was found in sufficient quantities before chartering a boat.

Storekeepers were the most essential and most disliked personages on the goldfields. Essential, because without a storekeeper a goldfield was not payable, for where else would the miner get food and equipment? Disliked, because of their perceived high mark-up on goods that the digger had little choice but to buy. So it should not be seen as surprising that storekeepers were not only in the forefront of rushes, but actually advertised them, and lead them.

Storekeepers charged steep prices of course, for shipping stores to the West Coast was expensive, and the risk from spoilage, shipwreck and simply plundering were high. Needless to say, these prices were a ready target for a dig-

gers disgruntlement, who needed few excuses to blame ill matters on this disagreeable symbiotic relationship.

From the storekeeper's point of view the digger was no saint either. Credit was frequently demanded, and with the notorious restlessness of the digger, the storekeeper would often find it impossible to get his money back from a digger who has done a moonlight flit. There are accounts of indebted miners on board departing boats, jeering at the storekeeper on shore who can only watch helplessly as their creditor slips away on the full tide.

Reuben Waite was not slow to complain about these habits in a barrage to the *Nelson Examiner*, but there are always two sides and Waite’s grumbles about digger impermanence got a reply by ‘A Lyell Creek Digger’ in the newspaper.

> ‘Now for Mr Reuben Waite. Mr Reuben Waite is the oldest storekeeper on the Buller, and at one time had the whole command of the West Coast trade. That command enabled him to sell inferior goods at the highest possible prices. If any Lyell Creek man in Nelson happens to read this, I am sure he will shudder at the recollection of the black mouldy flour we were compelled to swallow in mid-winter’.

Waite had leased some 3000 acres at the Buller river mouth on the south bank ‘Waite’s Pakihi’s’, but by early 1864 he was beginning to get fretful in the Buller, and was thinking of the Grey River. The £50 fine imposed by James Mackay on all the storekeepers at the Buller for selling alcohol without a license, was the final straw. ‘Cold tea’ was always a profitable side-line, and if you couldn’t make a little money out of beer or whisky on the sly, perhaps Reuben Waite judged it time to move on.

By now rumours had started to filter through about the prospect on the Hohonu/Greenstone River.

> ‘We expect a great many men will go south, below the Grey; at least Mr Waite takes a craft down there with provisions’.

However, matters were not that quick, as two minor rushes interfered in Waite’s plans; the Matakitaki rush in March, and the bigger and brassier Wakamarina rush in April. The letter of William Smart’s that Isaac Blake gave to Waite in July 1864 in Nelson generated the old fire. He spruced up the letter, published it, advertised for diggers and filled up the steamer *Nelson* in a great grand gesture.

For the second time Reuben Waite had made a sure place for himself in the history books and became the first private storekeeper on the Grey River in 1864.

life details

Reuben Waite

Waite was born in England, a stonemason by trade, and came to New Zealand via the California and Victoria gold fields. In 1860 Waite was classified as a 'miner' for jury service, and had a team under him that was helping to cut a tunnel through Rocky Point on the Slate River in March 1860. Later on that year he was engaged in larger mine works with another partner 'Mackenzie and Waite... have put in a water-wheel and seem to have every prospect of success'. In a major flood Mrs Waite had to be rescued by a digger 'swimming out and bringing her back to shore'.

After his entrepreneurial charter trips to the Buller River in 1861, and the Grey River in 1864, Reuben Waite slips gradually from prominence. We find he still had a store on the banks of the Grey River on Christmas day 1864, because George Cundy sold him a 22 ounce nugget gleaned from the Blackball Creek. Waite sought an appointment as Warden on the West Coast goldfield, and also wrote letters complaining of 'blacklegs and thieves' after the Blackball rush in January 1865. Miners he fumed, could steal on one side of the river, which was in Canterbury Province, and escape to the other side with impunity, because this was still in the Nelson Province.

This rather plaintive advert appeared regularly in the West Coast Times throughout 1865: 'Grey River, the Post Office Store. Reuben Waite, the Original Pioneer of the West Coast goldfields, continues in the old spot, and all goods suitable for the diggers can be obtained at his store at Hokitika prices'.

By the 1870's Reuben and Marion Waite were operating the Richmond Hotel in Greymouth, and then shifted to run a store and accommodation house at Inangahua Junction from 1873 till his death in 1885. Because of his straightened circumstances, Waite several times unsuccessfully petitioned the Provincial Government for a reward of the gold bonus.

He died in Nelson on 18 August 1885, and was buried in the Whakapuaka Cemetery. Marion Waite died in 17 October 1894 in Westport. 'Waite Street' and 'Marion Street' in Greymouth recall this long pioneering partnership.

Sources for Chapter 4 — Gold Gathered, Buller River

Sea Voyages, Schooners and River Bars

• *Nelson Examiner* 21 March 1860 (Captain Fearon's account).

• Clifford Hawkins *Out of Auckland*, see Appendix II for ships built in Auckland.

• Harry Morton *The Wind Commands* p230-231. This book has excellent diagrams giving the various rigging styles for the diverse types of sailing vessels, including cutters, schooners, brigs, ketches and barquentines.

• *Christchurch Press* 20 December 1863. The '35,000 feet' presumably refers to timber, and on this particular cargo at least, Mr Dixon was carrying the good life.

• Charles Money *Knocking About New Zealand* p70-72 (first Gipsy shipwreck).

• *The Diggers Story* p44 (first *Gipsy* wreck). A crew member states 'Later on the schooner [*Gipsy*] was wrecked between the Buller and the Steeples, but after a considerable time was refloated and returned to Nelson...' It is not recorded how they managed to refloat the vessel.

• Arthur Dobson *Reminiscences* p42-52 and James Cowan *Hero Stories of New Zealand* p258-269 (second *Gipsy* shipwreck). According to Dobson 'The skipper was not a navigator. I was the only one on board who could take sights and ascertain the position'.

• William Martin *A Pioneer Reminiscences*, unpublished manuscript, Hocken Library.

• J. D. Wilkinson *Early New Zealand Steamers*.

• *New Zealand Shipwrecks* 1795-1970 (revised 1972). These shipwrecks make a doleful litany, but it should be said that most of the ships that visited the West Coast were small and worked very hard. Twenty years was probably a reasonable life expectancy.

Fantome Party

• *Lyttelton Times* 21 July 1860.

• Philip Ross May *The West Coast Gold Rushes* p59 & p71.

• *Nelson Examiner* (11 ounces) 27 April 1861, (27 ounces) 1 May 1861, (52 ounces) 25 May 1861. J. Halkett Millar in his book *Westland's Golden Sixties* gives a rather fanciful version of what happened, where he draws a picture of three Buller Maori watching the gold diggers at work on the Collingwood, and learning the techniques:

'They had seen it [gold] countless times, winking at them from the stones of the numerous creeks, but what good had it been? None at all — till they saw how the pakehas prized it'. They visited the storekeeper Reuben Waite, who demonstrated ventriloquist tricks to them like an 'old time tohunga', and they decided that would be the man they would take their gold to, and returned to the Buller (p10).

• *The Colonist* 30 April 1861 (first mention of Dr Mackley).

'Old Diggings' and Waimangaroa

• *The Colonist* 23 August 1861 (100 ounces), 17 September 1861 (Maori 'good claims', 24 ounces), 11 October 1861, 29 November 1861.

• Charles Money *Knocking About in New Zealand* p69-82.

• *Nelson Examiner* 11 June 1864.

• Philip Ross May *The West Coast Gold Rushes* p70.

Lyell

• *Nelson Examiner* 10 December 1862 (30 ounces, first mention of Lyell), 3 January 1863 (13 and 19 ounce nuggets), 10 January 1863 (editorial), 31 January 1863 (another 30 ounce nugget), 11 February 1863. The Examiner also noted on the 20 December 1862 that the first steamer, the Lyttelton, travelled to the Buller.

• *The Colonist* 17 September 1861 ('plenty of gold' 'upper gorge'), 7 November 1862 ('Upper Buller' ground), 12 December 1862 (first definite mention), 2 January 1863 (19 ounce nugget), 6 January 1863 (detailed account, '£350'), 3 February 1863 (30 ounce nugget).

• Margaret C. Brown *Lyell, the Golden Past*.

Reuben Waite

• Reuben Waite *A Narrative of the Discovery of the West Coast Goldfields* (30 pages).

• Philip Ross May *The West Coast Gold Rushes* p157.

• *Nelson Examiner* 17 March 1860, 10 December 1860, 28 January 1864, 9 February 1864.

Reuben Waite, life details

• *Nelson Examiner*, as above.

• G. H. Hassing *Notes from a Memory Log* p35. G. H. Hassing claims that a Mr 'Waite' leased a Waipara run in North Canterbury, 'who subsequently settled on the Pakehe or open country south of the Buller River, near Addison Flat'. However Hassing has confused Reuben Waite with Robert Waitt of the Teviotdale station beside the Waipara River.

• W. F. Heinz *Christchurch Press* 1 June 1974.

• *The Colonist* 22 April 1861 (Marion Waite rescued). It would be interesting to know whether the 'Mackenzie' Waite teamed up with at Slate River was the same 'Lucky' Mackenzie whose story was briefly mentioned in the opening chapter (see page 33).

• Warden application 'many years experience in Australia and California', National Archives, Christchurch Office, CH287 CP50 ICPS466/1864.

'Orowaiti'

• *Lyttelton Times* 3 October 1857.

• G. G. M. Mitchell *Maori Place names in the Buller County* p42-44.

Chapter 5

Gold Prospecting

Taramakau River 1862-1863

A track, a government store, a survey and a gold claim, were all factors that helped to lure a number of prospecting parties over the Harper Pass to the Hohonu/Greenstone diggings. But lack of stores, poor weather and digger inexperience, all contributed to the general failure of these parties to find a payable goldfield in 1863.

The inexperience of these digging parties is ironic when it is remembered that the black beach sands they were trudging over were richer than beyond their imaginings.

Chronology of gold discoveries in the Taramakau region

1862

October

Captain Dixon entered Taramakau and gathered 30-40 grains.

December

Captain Dixon engaged Ihaia Tainui to carry a package for Oakes overland. Tainui made his own claim before Oakes made his claim for £1000 bonus, but both claims were declined.

1863

January

Smart's party and Money's party meet up at Hohonu/Greenstone diggings, one man finds a large nugget, but both parties run out of stores and head up to Buller (January-March).

Drakes survey-cutting down Taramakau includes Jakob Lauper and Richard Sherrin, who advises the government privately that the Taramakau is 'auriferous' (January-March).

March

Canterbury Provincial Government withdrew £1000 bonus offer of gold reward, and promised instead to treat any successful claimant 'liberally'.

May

Lauper washes gold traces near Hokitika River, Whitcombe drowned in Taramakau.

June

Charles Townsend establishes the government depot at the Grey.

Captain Dixon's *Emerald Isle* arrived at Grey with prospecting parties Sherrin and Martin, and Freeth and family at Grey. Dixon's second appearance, Sherrin's second appearance (June 3).

Sherrin's party explore Hokitika, find 'traces of gold', then return to Christchurch (June-December).

Martin's party find colours and return via Harper Pass (June-October).

July

Hammet arrives with news of Howitt's death at Taramakau. Sherrin sends him to Townsend at Grey River, where he is sent onto Buller.

September

Gipsy wrecked on bar with Dobson's surveying party, crew walked to Buller (September 13).

Comings and Goings

'There is no doubt payable gold somewhere, but the prospectors and those who open up the country will have to undergo a great deal of slavery, hardship and danger'.

Arthur Dobson, letter Lyttelton Times 17 November 1863.

Whilst the Buller competed vainly against the temptations of the Wakamarina and Otago goldfields, attention on the West Coast now began to shift further south, to the Grey River, and particularly the Taramakau River.

A number of events triggered this interest. The Provincial Government commissioned a survey of the West Coast in early 1863, the south section to be led by Bain, and the north by Arthur Dobson. Also in January 1863 Charlton Howitt was appointed to cut a track over the Harper Pass, down past Lake Brunner, through into the Hohonu/Greenstone River, and out to the Taramakau river mouth. Consequently, it was felt necessary to establish a government store at the Grey, for the purposes of supplying the surveyors and track cutters. This store arrived with Charles Townsend (the first government agent) on the Crest of the Wave in the mid-winter of June 1863.

Then there had been the double claim by the Dixon-Oakes expedition and Ihaia Tainui in December 1862, both getting some gold from the Taramakau-Greenstone region. The claim was disallowed, but the more adventurous prospectors looked more discerningly at the Taramakau. There was a track (of sorts) a store (of sorts), and gold (of sorts).

With this doubtful promise several prospecting parties tackled the Harper Pass, and scratched at the Hohonu/Greenstone — with little success.

Arthur Dobson's letter to the *Lyttelton Times* in November 1863 seemed to sum up the frustration:

> 'My survey party have got the colour almost everywhere they tried, but nothing more... I have prospected in the Grey and Taramakau; the Arahura and the Hokitika have been prospected by the Maoris with about the same success; the colour (very fine) everywhere... There is no doubt payable gold somewhere, but the prospectors and those who open up the country will have to undergo a great deal of slavery, hardship and danger'.

The difficulties were compounded by a succession of drownings in mid 1863. Whitcombe in May, Howitt and two others in July, Townsend (the government agent at the store), Peter Mitchelmore, and Solomon Tuapaki in October. The Taramakau seemed to have a curse on it,

and by late 1863 there were very few Europeans left in the area. Most diggers had either left for Christchurch, or headed up to the Buller workings.

At times it is difficult to be quite sure how many men and prospecting parties were heading over Harper Pass. Richard Sherrin estimated that '40 people' (Europeans) had passed down the Taramakau River in 1863, and the Maori were worried about providing for them all. It seemed to get rather busy if one accepts Howitt's notes. '11 men going to diggings' on January 10, 'party of men camped near us going to the diggings' January 31, '30 Maoris at Loch Katrine' March 1, 'three white men and two Maoris going to the diggings' April 2, someone called 'Traths' on April 2, 'W. Hutchen and Ned...stayed all night' April 18, 'W. Shand and Ned' going to diggings on May 3.

These terse entries have no further descriptions unfortunately, though one can make imaginative guesses. For example, the '11 men' might be a combination of Charles Money's seven members, and the Arthur party of four.

What does seem clear is that there were more prospectors present than any of the diary notes can account for, and that the pattern of progress seemed to be mostly one way, over the Harper Pass, down to the Grey, and then a long hungry trudge up to the Buller stores. Reuben Waite mentions having to rescue and revive several nearly dead Europeans.

By the end of 1863 the West Coast seemed a damp, discouraging place.

First Voyage of the 'Emerald Isle', 1862

As we have seen, Thomas Dixon and John Peter Oakes fitted out their schooner the *Emerald Isle* and Dixon sailed to the Grey River, but in September 1862 Dixon crossed the Taramakau River bar by mistake, and they quickly found traces of gold everywhere. Dixon hired Tainui to carry gold over to his partner, and this led to the famous contretemps in the Provincial Government building.

In any case the publicity from the joint Dixon/Tainui claim led to a number of enterprising prospectors tackling Harper Pass, including the likes of Charles Money and William Smart.

Also on board the *Emerald Isle* on it's first visit to the Taramakau were two prospective settlers, W. M. McFarlane and A. MacKillop, who were supposedly looking for grazing land, but one gets the distinct impression that both men had other agendas. MacKillop managed to hire Solomon Tuapaki to take a letter across to Christchurch.

> '18 December 1862, to the Superintendent
>
> 'Sir, I take a chance everytime I fall in with any of the Maoris to address a few lines to you such as they are. I travelled up the bed of an Ironstone Creek yesterday for some distance and came across pieces of flat land very rich covered in rotten timber. I met specks of gold everywhere, indeed after my boots had dried on board I found a speck on one of them. I could make no mistake on the subject for I always look at them though a powerful magnifying glass. There is an immense quantity of mica and blacksand here. I believe gold is to be found in all directions hereabouts especially above the blue pipe clay running through or over them. Great quantities of granite, quartz and ironstone. The fine blue soapy clay runs from 12-14 feet in perpendicular height from the beach.
>
> The bearer, Solomon, will show you a little gold found by a friend of his a few miles from the river approximately at the foot of a hill. The Captain of our vessel sends a specimen of what we got, to his brother in law, Captain Oakes of the Golden Fleece which you shall see, and another gentleman of our party sends some to a friend.
>
> The worst of this locality is the infamous bar and it's entrance. I hope we shall soon be enabled to get over it and proceed on our trip of discovery. There is some good land near this, but more towards Jackson Bay. I keep a journal which on our return I will hand to you. A. MacKillop'.

There are several curious aspects to MacKillop's letter to the Superintendent. There is some suggestion here that he had been instructed to keep his eyes open, and to send regular, and private reports back to the Provincial Government. The gold found by Solomon's 'friend' is probably Tainui's gold again, or it could be 'Simon's'?

Who the other 'gentleman of our party' who was sending gold as well, is not clear, perhaps McFarlane, but by all accounts at least three parcels of gold found their way over to Christchurch in December: 1) Dixon's 2) Tainui's (or 'Simon's') and 3) 'another gentleman'.

The comings and goings of William Malcolm McFarlane are rather hard to fathom, but he was a busy man.

He arrived with Dixon in December 1862 'to look for country' and seems to have forsaken his pastoralism, and his partner MacKillop, for he has teamed up with the Walker brothers in February 1863 and travelled down with them to the Wanganui River. In June he joined Richard Sherrin's party in exploring the Hokitika River and

life details

Thomas Dixon

Thomas Dixon was the brother-in-law of John Peter Oakes, who was the licensee of the Golden Fleece hotel.

'In 1864 John Peter Oakes and Thomas Dixon dissolved their partnership. Dixon became master of the cutter 'Elfin Queen'. In October 1865 the Elfin Queen was wrecked outside Manukau Heads. All hands were drowned, including Dixon, and Joseph Oakes, who was travelling with him. John Peter Oakes sold the Golden Fleece hotel in 1864 and returned to seafaring.'

'Various portions of the cutter were found scattered on the beach, on one of which the name 'Elfin Queen' was distinctly seen. The vessel eventually drifted ashore on 15 October, almost abreast of the flagstaff. Almost immediately a corpse rose to the surface of the water. The body was secured and on being measured was found to be 6 ft 2 in. in height, leaving little doubt that the corpse was that of Captain Dixon, master of the cutter.'

The Oakes family were early Auckland pioneers, and one source suggests that John Peter Oakes had trouble renewing his licence for the Golden Fleece because it was 'the resort of prostitutes'. In any case he returned to Auckland and maintained his interests in shipping. He was born in 1833 and died in 1893.

by August he was part of a party of four men (William Sherrin, Arthur Nicholetts and Isaac Sargeant) who were employed by Richard Sherrin to finish cutting Howitt's track from Lake Brunner to the beach.

Since it is not clear what McFarlane was doing during the latter months of 1863, or in between other expeditions, he might well have been the European prospector Richard Sherrin was encouraging.

> 'When, however, I left the Hohonu Creek for Christchurch, a man that I had been supplying with rations for some time had succeeded in obtaining at the native diggings payable gold. By going further into the bank he found the prospect better. He has a native for a mate and in a small paddock, about 10 x 14, he washed out three ounces of gold, washing by himself one afternoon as much as 16 dwts... The gold is coarse, and unlike that obtained at Gaffney's Creek, while the wash dirt is thin and the stripping heavy... I believe this is the first piece of payable ground that has been found in the province, and therefore deserves a little attention'.

Sherrin's journal was published in December 1863. Sherrin comments that Dobson also helped this unnamed digger and his Maori mate with provisions.

In February 1864 the 'prospector' McFarlane travelled back with Arthur Dobson to Christchurch (this is confirmed by George Dobson's Diary), yet W. H. Revell's journal mentions a 'Mr Malcolm W. McFarlane and party' working for Freeth in March-April 1864. This implies that this active man had promptly returned to the coast, but in any case, the 'McFarlane party' was heading for Christchurch on 18 April 1864, and that's the last we hear of him.

Over the Harper Pass

Charlton Howitt was employed by the Canterbury Provincial Government in September 1862 to explore and prospect the northern boundaries of the province, whilst at the same time Julius von Haast was appointed to do a similar search of the southern boundary. It was on this exploration, that Haast in January and February of 1863, crossed over the pass that bears his name.

The first European prospectors over the 'Hurunui' pass, as it was then called, were Charles Money and Rowland Davies in 1862, a peripatetic duo who decided to try their luck first in the South Hurunui. Charlie Howitt was also vainly prospecting here and his diary for the 8 October 1862 mentions he met 'two other prospectors'. Howitt told Money:

> '...that in a very few weeks, the time that Government allowed him would have expired, and that then another party would be raised and placed at his disposal for the purpose of making a good track up the east side of the dividing range, in order to see what sort of country there was to the westward'.

By 30 October 1862, Howitt and his men had reached Harper Pass and were cutting a track down on the other side. The weather was terrible, a month of rain in only a two and a half month period, and Howitt was having trouble retaining his men. That is, until they reached the 'more promising country' of the mid-Taramakau, and saw gold prospects which changed their minds. However it was still not enough, and on 30 November 1862 the men told their boss that they 'intended to return' and the diary stops. However by January 1863, Howitt was back in business again, having been hired by the Canterbury Provincial Government to cut a track over the Harper Pass. Howitt reports several parties of men going to the diggings.

Meanwhile, Money and Davies had continued up the South Hurunui and 'pitched their tent in the snow'. They prospected for a fortnight, then followed Howitt's track over Harper Pass, staying a night with Howitt on the way.

> 'He [Howitt] gave me my first lessons in bushcraft, such as a knowledge of edible herbs and roots, modes of crossing rivers, snaring birds, and many other invaluable 'bush wrinkles''.

Money and Davies pushed on down the Taramakau.

> 'I do not think I am mistaken in believing that, with the exception of Mr. Leonard Harper, a son of the Right Rev. Bishop of Christchurch, who went over with a party of Maories some years before, Rowley and I were the first white men who reached Lake Brunner from the east side'.

The eternal problem for the young explorers were stores. Davies headed back over the pass to get some more provisions whilst Money busied himself for a fortnight building a small hut, snaring birds and getting hungry. He too, was driven back over the pass, and reached an old slab 'wharry' that Howitt had built, and surprised two men staying there. He tried vainly to discourage them from risking the Taramakau River, and then continued onto the station and met up with Davies who had been nursing an injured foot. They returned with heavy swags to the small hut in the Taramakau which they had called 'Red Flag Camp', and found the two men that Money had seen earlier, practically starved and almost unable to walk. This must have been around late November.

The two hungry men were Jakob Lauper and Samuel Johnson, who had reached Lake Brunner, and even followed the Arnold and Grey Rivers, before being forced back by lack of food. According to Lauper they had had only 24 hours of fine weather in six weeks. Anyway, Money and Davies helped the two men back over Harper Pass again, and moved further downriver to establish a camp near 'a wide opening in the hills' which Davies investigated and found led to Lake Brunner.

Once again supplies ran out, and once again Davies went back over Harper Pass. It was at least three weeks before Davies returned, in the company of Howitt and two hands. Howitt and his men thrashed their way to Lake Brunner, whilst Money and Davies headed down the Taramakau River and established a lower camp. For the last time they went back over Harper Pass (they must have been getting thoroughly sick of the place by now), re-provisioned, and started on the return. Money gives the date as 2 January 1863.

In the Hurunui they met up with another prospecting party, whom they guided to the pass. Money later mentions the names of 'Smart and Day' and Phillip Ross May adds the name 'Frazer' to the list, and implies they were a party of three, though Money does not explicitly say so. Money and Davies had forgotten some items at Lake Sumner, and met up with five other prospectors, and again offered to guide them over the pass, and guided them to a camp close to the Taipo River. With difficulty, they crossed the Taipo and made progress down the Taramakau till their progress was blocked by a gorge. After a 'council of war' they decided to raft. Money mentions that one of this

party was a man called Johnson, who had nearly starved in the Taramakau valley, with Lauper, only a few months before. His mate this time was a 'German'.

They baulked at the raft, and attempted to travel overland, but soon gave up and returned in time to join the boating party.

life details

Charlton Howitt

Charlton Howitt was born in 1838 in Esher in Surrey, England. His father William Howitt was a poet and his brother became a well-known Australian explorer. In his early twenties he went to Australia and worked for two years on a 'bush selection' with his father and brother, then arrived in New Zealand on the Minerva on the 27 February 1861. He quickly gained employment with the Provincial Government and turned out to be just the sort of back-country and adaptable man they needed.

He was initially hired to look for gold in the Hurunui region then when that contract lapsed, was subsequently re-hired to cut a track over the Harper Pass to Lake Brunner and the Hohonu/Greenstone goldfield. Howitt must have liked the country, for a man named Montgomery made a land application on behalf of Howitt for '2000 acres of grassland surrounded with bush between the Taramakau and Lake Brunner'.

Howitt made a home-made dugout canoe and disappeared with two other track men on the Lake in 1863, presumably drowned, aged only 25.

Money mentions Howitt a good deal, and favourably, learning many 'bush wrinkles' including Howitt's practical habit (unusual for that time) of going about in shorts. Howitt's photograph is held at the Canterbury Museum, as well as a picture of 'Mrs Howitt nee Bates'. Since nowhere in his two diaries does Howitt mention a wife this seems rather odd.

> 'Johnson's mate was a German, with a perfectly natural horror of cold water, and as soon as we started he laid himself flat on his stomach and clasped the side of the moguey [mohiki or raft] with both hands'.

They shot down the river and reached the confluence of the Hohonu (Greenstone) River. The German did not enjoy the ride.

> '...I caught sight of the fat German, his square face rigid with horror, and nothing of his person visible (so closely was he embracing the moguey) but his hands, which were convulsively clutching its side as he came on top what he must have conceived his doom'.

In this entertaining manner they reach the Hohonu/Greenstone River, on 19 January, where they found Smart's party and a number of Maori, who were vigorously working the diggings.

Smart's party had made reasonable progress from the pass, and had reached Money's 'Red Flag Camp' on 3 January. On January 5 another prospecting party of four turned up (including the 'darkie' Arthur). Despite Smart's warnings of the difficulties ahead the men carried on undeterred. Four Maori arrived:

> 'Jack Tainui, Patterson, Peter and Harry from Kaiapoi'. The Maori got 'some colour' from the Taipo and Day picked up a piece of gold as large as a shilling', 'This was the first piece of gold got in this part of the country'.

Smart nipped down to the Grey for stores in the company of 'Jack' Tainui, and returned in time to meet the arrival of Money and party on 19 January.

The gold-digging was, as always, unsuccessful, and after ten days Money records that four Europeans went down, 'in the company of two Maories, one of whom was called Peter', and Tarapuhi te Kaukihi fed them up with honey, potatoes, kaka, and eels. Smart, Day and Frazer lingered for a short while, and met Drake's surveying party (Drake, Lauper, Sherrin and Tuapaki) on 1 February 1863. Drake's and Smart's party go down to the Grey River to see about stores.

Now the parties start to separate. Money and Davies decide to walk to the Buller River mouth to get stores, a journey that took them seventeen agonising days, with two mates 'Jem' and 'Charlie'.

> 'All the next day we plodded drearily on, and the evening saw the last of our flour made into cakes and eaten. Our tea and sugar had long since been expended. Darker than ever seemed the prospect; neither fern nor 'tucker' had met our eyes for some time, and the sands were unbroken by a single crag that could shelter a periwinkle, but not until the afternoon of the sixteenth day after leaving the 'Grey' did we begin to straggle. Rowley [Rowland Davies] went on ahead, I came next, and the other two followed at intervals, both of them suffering much from the state of their feet, one of them being entirely without boots, and the other quite unable to bear the pressure of them. That night we curled up dismally enough in our blankets, supperless and nearly hopeless, and slept deep and long till the glare of the sun and the furious bites of the sand-flies woke us'.

Isaac Blake rowed across the Buller and picked them up, and Reuben Waite fed them 'twice over'. They worked briefly for Blake then went up to the Waimangaroa diggings, about February 1863. Davies was lured up to the new rush at the Lyell, whilst Money worked and prospected at Waimangaroa, then went by steamer to *Nelson* and eventually walked to Christchurch.

By mid February Smart's party were back at the Hohonu/Greenstone River, getting colours, but not much more. Smart showed Tarapuhi 'how to work gold with a dish'. Frustrated with their lack of success, Smart's party first tried to go up the Grey and over the saddle to the Inangahua. They found a coal seam in this 'outlandish country', but were obliged to return, and go up the beach route on 21 February to the Buller. Here, Smart and Day tried the diggings at Waimangaroa, did odd jobs, and finally went to the Lyell on 31 March. They established a store and remained ensconced until Tarapuhi informed them about the gold discovered under the greenstone boulder in February 1864.

The Dark Prospectors

Chronolgy of 'Arthur' and 'Johnson'

— 'Arthur' and 'John Alfred Arthur' were probably the same man.

Darkie Arthur at Taramakau n 1863, reported by William Smart (January).

Arthur at Lyell, 1864, reported by Smart (April).

John Alfred Arthur at Lyell, 1864, letter to Christchurch Press (May)

John Alfred Arthur at Wakamarina, 1872

— 'Johnson'

with Lauper over Harper Pass, rescued by Money and Davies, taken back over Harper Pass (December 1862)

'Negro who had been cooking at Lances' reported by Howitt (January)

'Johnson' and German rafting, reported by Money (January)

'Negro' at Taramakau river mouth, reported by Sherrin (February)

'Blackfellow' at Lake Brunner, reported by Howitt (May)

'Coloured man Johnson' at Buller river mouth (August)

'Another coloured man named Johnson' at Lyell (September)

One would have hardly thought it likely that there were two black men, both ex-cooks, at the Hohonu/Greenstone diggings in the summer of 1862-1863 — but such was the case. Out of a European population of scarcely 30 people on the diggings, two negros seems long odds, but it does serve to show how diverse were the types of men that could turn up in pursuit of gold. Their history (or what is known of it) reveals both the luck and the folly of gold-getting.

We first hear of a 'darkey' on the West Coast via William Smart's *Journal* on the 5 January 1863, at the Taramakau River near Charles Money's 'red flag camp'. Another prospecting party turned up.

> 'Four men came down, one of them a Darkey, Arthur — had been a cook at one of the Hotels in Christchurch. They had come over prospecting, but brought very little food with them, and seemed to have no idea they were going to a place where there was no food to be got what they could catch or shoot'.

These men carried on undeterred, and whilst Smart and party rafted down to the Hohonu/Greenstone River where they commenced to dig, the four men (including Arthur) arrived at the Hohonu/Greenstone on 14 January. Smart advised them to go up the 'beach line' to the Buller stores, and on the 15 January he recorded that the prospecting party did indeed carry onto the Grey River.

Richard Sherrin distinctly recalls meeting a 'Negro and a half-caste' at the mouth of the Taramakau on the 4 February.

> '..a half-caste and an African black were prospecting three miles from the Taramakau. After the reported discovery of gold, the half-caste and darkie were the first travellers to reach the land of promise in the west. Master darkie, as black as your hat, being rather elated with the fact of being the first on the ground, claps his half-caste mate on the shoulder and exclaims 'There, my boy, we are the first white men yet who have reached the coast by following the Taramakau'.

Sherrin mentions the half-caste again, for he travelled with their party in February 1863 to the Arnold River, and was engaged by four more prospectors whom they met there, to guide them down to the diggings.

Smart and his mate Day met 'Arthur' again after they had shifted to the Lyell Creek, some twenty miles up the Buller River, where they were operating a store.

> [Lyell, April 1863] 'Arthur — the coloured man who was with us in the Taramakau, came up here and as he was very hard up, I gave him leave to stop with me in the store and go out prospecting occasionally. After many weeks without getting anything he came home one evening and brought in a nugget which weighed nearly 53 ozs, with which he went to Nelson. There he bought, and returned with, tools and everything necessary to work again in the same ground, but he got nothing to speak of afterwards near where he got this nugget, this was up in the hills towards the big manuka flat'.

In a pencilled footnote, Smart adds some further details.

> 'When Arthur came in one evening he said 'Well boss, I got the first good colour today. Let's have a drink! You see Boss I haf traced the fornication [underlined by Smart, presumably formation] of the gold right up to de big Hill'. He then pulled out of his pocket a big nugget wrapped in calico. I lent him enough money to take him down the Buller and onto Nelson, where he sold his nugget and returned some weeks later after bringing some tools, earrings in his ears, and rings on his fingers, and paid me all he owed'.

In the *Christchurch Press* of 30 May, 1864, in amongst a general report on the Lyell field by the *Press* correspondent was inserted a short letter:

> 'Lyell Creek, May 6. 'Sir, I beg to send you a small prospect of gold, obtained twenty yards from the Manuka Flat. Being short of water in my claim, I went up to the flat just for one day's prospect. By what I see of the place, I feel assured that there is payable gold to be found there. I calculate the sinking will be about 100 feet on the flat' (signed) John Alfred Arthur'.

Was this 'John Alfred Arthur' of the Lyell the same as the 'Arthur' that William Smart befriended? My suspicion is that they were and that someone else, possibly Smart, wrote J. A. Arthur's letter for him. Mike Johnson in his massive study of the Wakamarina rush *Gold in a Tin Dish*,

notes that a 'Darkie' John Alfred Arthur was active in the Wakamarina in 1872, with a prospectors claim there on called ‘Darkies Terrace’.

It was Howitt who first mentions the second black man on the Greenstone/Hohonu. Howitt and his gang of men were cutting a track around Lake Brunner as part of a government contract. On 13 May 1863, his diary records this encounter.

> ‘Returning along the track to the lake [I] found footsteps going in the same direction, [and was] very much puzzled to know who it could be. On crossing at the lake [I] found it was a Negro who had been cooking at Lances’. He had had nothing to eat except a crow which he killed. He intends going to the diggings. People seem to travel about in this West Coast as though there were a store every few miles. He was looking for us to get some flour. Told him we had very little for ourselves and that the best thing he could do was to return as quickly as possible, as he could not get to the diggings, and supposing he should reach them, there was nothing to eat. Brought him over with the canoe’.
>
> ['Lances’ was a pastoral lease sheep station run by the Lance brothers near Hawarden and later called Horsley Downs].

On the next day, May 14, Howitt continues the story.

> ‘Sold the blackfellow 10 lbs [5 kg] of flour and advised him strongly to return before the snow set in. He said yes, but did not seem inclined to do so. If we have many more men here we shall not have sufficient for ourselves. One cannot, however, send them away without anything. I felt glad to give Old Jacob [Jacob Lauper] enough to go back, but this fellow, wandering about without any object, and who would not take any advice, I grudged all he eat, as we are obliged to eke out all our supplies with what we can catch. He ended by going up the creek to the diggings’.

However, Charlie Howitt had not seen the last of the ‘blackfellow’. On 9 June there was another, and more disagreeable meeting, where they found the man at their food whatta, having stolen and eaten almost 40 lbs [20

kg] of flour. From then on they had to watch the man like a hawk, and escorted him to the diggings.

> 'He stole a lot of sugar before we had been there ten minutes. We were very glad to see him off in the canoe'.

That's the last of him in Howitt's diary, and no mention of him is made by William Martin's party, who arrived on the 3 June 1863 at the Grey River on the *Emerald Isle* or Sherrin's party, on the same boat. However, in September 1863 the *Nelson Examiner* published this account.

> 'Buller River, August 22 — We have had two more unfortunate men here overland from Canterbury via the Grey. One was a coloured man, named Johnson, who arrived by himself, and stated that he had, for a long time, been living on raw woodhens, as he had no means of making a fire. He has been here about three weeks, and is still in a very weak state. The second man is named James Belgrave Hammett...'

The *Examiner* went on to publish Hammett's grim tale, but this man Johnson rather sounds like Howitt's blackfellow.

The timing is just about right, from mid-June to late July is probably about how long it would have taken Johnson to drag himself along the coast. William Smart clinches the matter when he refers to 'another coloured man named Johnson, who had been a cook at the Royal Hotel in Christchurch' who was at the Lyell in mid 1863. Smart adds:

> 'He was with Howitt's party cutting the track and from him I learnt about Howitt being drowned in Lake Brunner'.

It now seems to me that the 'Johnson' that Charles Money refers to in his book is the same Johnson that annoyed Howitt. Money also seems to indicate that it was Johnson who was with Lauper on their first hungry trek across Harper Pass. As Lauper recuperated and joined Drake's survey party in early January, Johnson was working as a cook at 'Lances' or Horsley Downs. Presumably Sherrins 'negro and half-caste' were Arthur and Johnson.

Walker Brothers, 1863

There were other prospecting parties on the coast at this time, usually mixing some zest for adventure, a search for pasture, and a dash of gold panning — such were the Walker brothers.

They had already done one investigation of the West Coast in 1859, where they had fortuitously met a rather bedraggled James and Alexander Mackay at the Buller River in September, and carried them back to Nelson in their cutter *Supply*. They seemed to make a business of servicing the coast, for there are several occasional references to the cutter's activities throughout the early sixties. There is a mention of a 'George Walker, (brother of the captain of the *Supply*)', who caught a kakapo at Lyell in March 1863.

The 'Journal of Three Gentlemen' was published in the *Christchurch Press* in April 1863. The Walker brothers left Taylor Station on the 3 February 1863, and crossed Harper Pass finding 'a Maori at work making a sluice-box for gold-making in a small stream which runs into the Taramakau'. An article published in the *Illustrated London News* in 1865 shows four detailed sketches, including a crossing of the Taramakau River with a Maori guide. The Maori has an obvious moko, and the picture of their Taramakau camp shows a Taranaki-type mountain in the distance, which may be a reference to Mount Alexander. All four of these sketches are included in this book, and judging from their quality, Albert Walker was a talented artist.

The Press chose only to publish the details of their February 1863 trip down the coastline from Taramakau to the Wanganui River. We know that W. M. McFarlane was the other member, we also know he could not swim. From all accounts the trip was memorable for being rather wet, no decent pasture land was noticed, and neither was any gold found.

Drake's First Survey, 1863

This surveying party led by J. C. Drake, also included Richard Sherrin (who wrote up the account for the Press), two Europeans W. B. Osborne and 'Riehard', and the Maori guide 'Solomon' Tuapaki, who was to subsequently drown at the Taramakau River mouth. At Taylors Station 'Mr Drake hired another man, named Jakob Lauper, a Swiss, just returned from a six weeks peregrination in the Taramakau and Grey Rivers'. Drake had previously arranged to hire 'Tinui the younger' [Ihaia Tainui] but there had been a disagreement over pay, so only 'Solomon' was taken.

> From Thomas Cass, Survey Office Christchurch,
> 30 December 1862
>
> 'Mr Drake, I am directed by the Provincial Government to employ you to proceed to the West Coast by the Hurunui and the Taramakau. You will on leaving Lake Sumner make a careful sketch of the country as you proceed, following the course of the rivers Grey and Taramakau to the sea, and surveying the country between the rivers'.

The term of employment was eight weeks, and on his return Drake had to 'furnish a map and full scale report'. Drake's terms were £2 and two shillings a day for himself, £1 one shilling for his assistants [Sherrin and Lauper], including the cost of all provisions which he had to provide for himself and party. Cass budgeted £150-200 for the survey, which included a £20 gratuity for the natives. The actual cost was '£289-5s-6d'.

It was a fast trip, surveying as they went. They crossed the saddle on the 16 January, and Osborne 'got knocked up' and had to return. They found only three white men at the diggings and reported that 'ten or twelve' had gone up to the Buller. The diggers thought they had been hoaxed by Dixon and Oakes. Sherrin also tried for gold at Dixon's site at the Taramakau but according to his published journal found nothing. However, in a memorandum to the Government Observations relative to the Gold Fields on the West Coast Sherrin suggested that the Taramakau valley was indeed auriferous, and would one day yield 'payable gold'. It's not clear whether Sherrin provided this advice on his own bat, or the Government had asked for such information beforehand.

By 1 February the Drake surveying party had reached the coast. Here Drake bought 100 lbs [50 kg] of flour from Tarapuhi, and by the 12 March they were back at Taylor's Station on the east side.

Second Voyage of the 'Emerald Isle', Martin and Sherrin parties, 1863

Dixon and Oakes, undaunted by the Governments' rejection of their first claim, made a second voyage on the *Emerald Isle*, which left the Heathcote River in April and arrived at the Grey on the 3 June 1863. They carried two fresh prospecting parties on board, Martin's and Sherrin's, as well as two settler families, Mr and Mrs Freeth and family, and Mr and Mrs Rae and child.

John P. Oakes later disparaged the Martin party, which did seem a curious assemblage. They consisted of William Martin, John George Price, Isaac Sargeant, Henry Follett and Frederick Fisher. Their equipment consisted of 'a military bell tent, a bull dog, a double-barrelled gun with powder and shot, a pair of pistols besides sundry daggers and knives'. Apparently they had heard that the local Maori were unfriendly.

> 'The personnel of William Martin's prospecting party seemed as odd as the equipment it carried. The nominal leader, John George Price, was a retired police sergeant with a weakness for drink and (according to John Peter Oakes) more interested in hunting down criminals thought to be hiding on the West Coast than searching for gold. Three of Price's mates were recent arrivals from the West of England — farmer's sons who knew nothing of gold-digging; only Martin, who had been two years in Otago, understood alluvial mining'.

They prospected around Kapitea Creek just south of the Taramakau River, where they got colours, and then went onto the Hohonu/Greenstone diggings to join Ihaia Tainui and 'Simon' Tuakau and their families. Sherrin's party joined them for a while, and all three groups expended a good deal of energy on building a pitsaw, tail races, sluice boxes, and even a canoe, but they had very little prospecting success. Despite their initial apprehensions of the Maori, Martin and Price got on very well with them. William Martin in particular became close to 'Simon' and Patahi, and recorded their life at the Hohonu/Greenstone in exact, and at times almost idyllic, detail.

But there was still no gold and once the snows had cleared from the ranges, they decided to head back over Harper Pass by October 1863.

The other party on the *Emerald Isle* was Richard Sherrin's, who were as much interested in exploring as prospecting. William Sherrin and his partner had walked overland, and teamed up with his brother and four others at the Grey. The party of seven consisted of his brother William Sherrin, McFarlane, a 'remittance man', 'Andrew' (a runaway sailor from the *Emerald Isle*) and two Maori guides. In June, the Sherrin party explored up the Hokitika River, finding traces of gold everywhere, including close to the place Jakob Lauper had washed some specks.

> 'A little gold will be found in the Kokatahi, but I did not have the time to prospect it thoroughly'.

Sherrin returned and met the struggling James Hammett on the 2 August, who announced that Howitt and two men were missing. With Charles Townsend, Sherrin had a rather difficult trip ('Oh! The unutterable misery of that journey') back up to Lake Brunner, in an unsuccessful search for the missing Howitt. They left on the 14 August, and returned on the 8 September, just in time to see Arthur Dobson in the schooner *Gipsy*, wrecked on the north beach of the Grey River.

Captain John McCann and his crew of four trudged up the coast to the Buller, whilst Dobson's party of three prepare for the survey. There were also two diggers aboard the wrecked *Gipsy*, who according to Smart were 'Pat Sweeney and Docherty'.

William Sherrin, Richard's brother, was lucky to escape with his life on October 8, when the whaleboat with himself, Charles Townsend, Peter Mitchelmore, Horomona 'Solomon' Tuapaki and 'Simon' Tuakau, capsized on the Grey River bar. Only Sherrin and Tuakau survived this tragedy 'the West Coast is indeed but a melancholy appendage to our Province'. Arthur Dobson's men had had enough and deserted the coast, and advised Dobson to do the same. Still undaunted by this succession of disasters, the Sherrin brothers ventured down the coast in September and October as far as the Waiho River.

On his return, according to Martin, Richard Sherrin took up the responsibility of finishing Howitt's track on his own account 'presuming their endorsement of his unauthorised action he determined to take up the work of cutting the bridle track Mr Howitt had so far carried through'. This was about early October 1863 according to W. H. Revell's note that

> 'Messrs Sherrin and Ferguson have cut a track through and are packing with two horses to the Taramakau and three horses from the Ohono to the Greenstone'.

By 23 November 'Sherrin and party' were heading back to Christchurch, which they reached in early December, where Sherrin's lengthy journal was published in the Christchurch *Press*.

The Ordeal of James Hammett

If ever a man was doomed for an inconsiderate amount of suffering, James Belgrave Hammett was that man. He was a track cutter with Charlton Howitt's gang at Lake Brunner in June 1863, and when Howitt and two men disappeared Hammett's story begins. For twenty days in July he waited and searched the Lake Brunner area for the missing men, in increasingly miserable conditions.

> 'Tuesday, July 7 — Rain pouring as hard as ever. I feel lonely, miserable and cold indeed. No fire. Nothing to eat save a little flour and cold water. To tell all the imaginings which are continually passing through my mind would do no good. Frequently, during the past few days, while sitting in this down pouring rain, and while perfectly awake, have I fancied that I could see Mr Howitt and the others walking towards me, first in one direction and then in another. By an effort I have shook off this depressing dullness, and have spoken with my faithful dog, as though it was a Christian. Again I wonder whether I shall be enabled to recover the bodies, that I may be enabled to give them burial in a place which I may be enabled to point out to their surviving friends. No human being can conceive my almost maddening thoughts. If it should please God that I become insane, what will become of me?'

He trudges down to the sea beach, taking nine days, with 'each foot as big as my head'. Finally he meets the Maori, and is taken to the Government Depot by Tarapuhi and Charles Townsend on August 7. Rather ill-advisedly, he set off with several Maori (one of whom was Peter Mutu) along the sea-beach to the Buller River on August 10. In

life details

William Martin

Born in England in 1838, William Martin went to sea at14. He joined in the rush to Gabriel's Gully at Tuapeka in 1861, and Martin was fortunate in becoming accepted in James Kirby's team of 7-8 men, for Kirby was a shrewd gold-digger who knew most of the tricks. He took a tape measure to other men's claims and invariably found they were working more than their 24 foot allowance and so gained several good claims in this highly legal but unpopular fashion. Gold was worth about £4 per ounce then, so Martin's £300 in four months is about 75 ounces, a good haul, about $20,000 in today's money.

Martin then ventured to the West Coast in the 'Emerald Isle' and later settled in Oamaru, working first as a carpenter, and then opened a coal mine in 1867. Probably this venture was unsuccessful, or else Martin was a venturesome spirit, because he joined a survey party to Martins Bay in 1870, and established a joinery business in Oamaru in 1873, where he married Eliza Gaudin. He took his wife and family to settle in the new settlement of Martins Bay in 1877, a disastrous move, for they left the Bay 'stone broke' in 1879 and returned to Oamaru. He subsequently became a bailiff at the Magistrates Court in Oamaru, an usher at the Supreme Court in Dunedin, and retired in 1909 to a bush property at Papatowai, where inspired by the scenery he wrote a 16 page poem 'A Seaside Reverie'. He died in 1921 aged 83. William and Eliza had nine children.

The fate of the others in Martin's prospecting party on the West Coast was diverse. John Price still continued his practice to overindulge in drink, and went off to fight in the Maori wars. This seems a little ironic, for Price had donated two pistols to Tuakau and Tainui for their help, and as Martin succinctly remarked, it was very likely the pistols found their way up north. Henry Follett went back to Devonshire, Frederick Fisher was drowned on the steamer the City of Dunedin that was shipwrecked with the loss of all hands, and Isaac Sargeant settled in Ashburton and it was said 'became prosperous'.

the Charleston area, his companions were compelled to go ahead because they had no food left.

> 'Knowing they were hungry I did not complain. At length losing sight of them and being unable to discover any sign of their tracks, I took one of my blankets to make myself some shelter, feeling so tired and weak that I cared not whether died or lived, for, since the loss of my companions, I had been miserable, lonely, and wet, and felt as though life had but few charms for me'.

Meanwhile, on their arrival at the Buller River, Hammett's companions triggered the alarm, and Reuben Waite sent out a search party (which included Charles Money) which was initially unsuccessful, but a second search party fired guns which alerted Hammett 'who crawled out of the bush'. Hammett's faithful dog had brought him wekas, which he ate raw, he also managed to eat some of the 'glutinous stuff' beche-de-mer for several days. Feeling he 'had a duty to perform' and that he 'may as well get wet in walking as lying down', Hammett had roused himself after almost a week comatose in one place, racked with diarrhoea and depression. The search party gave him a glass of brandy and Reuben Waite paid for a passage to Nelson.

Drake's Second Survey, late 1863

J. C. Drake was appointed in late 1863 after Charlton Howitt's death, to continue with the track from Lake Brunner to the Taramakau. Unfortunately the details of this survey and track cutting expedition have been elusive and so far little information has come to hand on the names of the track hands, when they were hired, and when they were discharged. Of course the most interesting hired hand was Albert Hunt.

According to John Peter Oakes, J. C. Drake was offered 'a ridiculously small sum' for this track-cutting and surveying contract

> 'which the poor man was obliged to take, for the very pressing reason — the want of something better'.

The Government would not advance Drake money on the contract, so Oakes offered to grubstake Drake.

> 'I then came forward, and bought and paid for the implements, provisions and other necessities for Mr Drake and his men; I also engaged all his men, amongst whom was Mr Albert Hunt, whom I knew since he was a small boy. I gave him all the particulars respecting the gold, also to the others, they having agreed to return to the Taramakau country after the completion of their engagement through me with Mr Drake, if they found the country auriferous, or in any way equal to my representations. They, however, started to the fulfilment of the contract, during which time they prospected when opportunity served; and finding gold obtainable almost everywhere, they resolved to go back'.

This arrangement looks as messy as it sounds. It seems that Drake had to tolerate some gold prospecting from his hands, in return for Oakes supplying goods, a situation bound to cause problems, and indeed it seems likely that Drake probably had a hard time trying to keep his men from prospecting for gold. John Price, who was manning the Government store, makes a comment in his journal on the 28 December 1863:

> 'The men who are cutting the track came for rations. I could not give them any as the Maoris told me they were found Gold digging at the Hohonu'.

Drake did not have the nous or self-help enterprise of Howitt or Dobson, and on top of all his problems was the weather. George Dobson met Drake in February:

> 'The poor man seemed rather down in the mouth about his contract. He has had nothing but wet weather and he says his men will not catch game, so eat an enormous quantity of flour'.

The last we hear of this unfortunate survey is from William Smart, who met the trackhands after they had been discharged:

> 'The men from Drake's party who came down had finished the track, and were going to the Grey to get some stores to carry them onto Christchurch, where they had to go to get paid'.

He does not give a date but it seems to be late February or early March 1864.

Summary

By the end of 1863 and early 1864 the Taramakau River was quiet, and apart from an occasional group of Maori prospectors, the Hohonu/Greenstone diggings saw little activity.

There was no reason to believe that the diggings would yield any payable amounts of gold when several European prospectors had already tried and failed. Of course many of the Europeans were inexperienced amateurs, and their meagre gold-getting skills were no match for the foully, dank forest of the West Coast. That it was at the Hohonu/Greenstone River that the West Coast gold rush started, owes more to the persistence and diligence of the two Maori prospectors, Tainui and Tuakau.

By now the provincial government was having serious reservations about West Canterbury; the numerous drownings had been depressing, and expensive. Whitcombe's widow and 'large family' were granted £1000. Once Arthur Dobson's survey was complete it was decided to cut their losses and close the stores depot, and leave the West Coast to languish in the obscurity it probably well deserved.

life details

James Berlgrave Hammett

Hammett's subsequent life was eventful, but short. He acted as a messenger for the Canterbury Provincial Government, and made several journeys to the West Coast and back. With John Revell he witnessed Albert Hunt washing four and a half ounces, and they arrived in Christchurch on 28 July 1864. But on 14 August 1864, at the Central Hotel in Christchurch, he died of what the inquest later decided was 'from an attack of delirium tremens'.

The newspaper account of the inquest makes interesting reading. Hammett's mental state was possibly not the best, because he had received a blow from a cab driver in an argument over a fare. A 'James Hammet' is recorded as applying for a miners' licence at Tuapeka on 9 September 1861.

And for pet-lovers, what of the faithful dog? George Dobson reported that he was looking for Hammett's dog at Loch Katrine, so the animal must have gone astray during one of Hammett's subsequent crossings.

life details

J. C. Drake

It's not currently known when J. C. Drake arrived in New Zealand, but it must have been early, as his 1845 map of Johnny Jones' farm at Waikouaiti shows. He spent some time in Otago surveying before shifting up to Canterbury. There should have been plenty of work for a surveyor in those days, but it appears that he had personal problems.

A one James Charles Drake was described in a magistrates' court in 1863 as a 'habitual drunkard' and Arthur Dobson commented that 'years afterwards Mr Drake was drowned in one of the streams between Collingwood and Takaka'.

Sources for Chapter 5 — Gold Prospecting, Taramakau River

Comings and Goings

• Philip Ross May *The West Coast Gold Rushes* p88-89.

• Charles Townsend, letter 13 June 1863 *Inwards Correspondence to the Canterbury Provincial Government* National Archives, Christchurch Office, CH287, CP39, ICPS 1099 2/6/63. As well as the two pre-fabricated Government stores '160 pieces, galvanised iron roof', the *Crest of the Wave* also landed such stuff as '47 casks of flour, 16 casks of sugar, 8 chests of tea, 44 bags of potatoes, 20 casks of beef, 4 rabbits' '(three lost)'.

• Arthur Dobson, letter *Lyttelton Times* 17 November 1863.

• Herbert Charlton Howitt *Diary of Mr Howitt during his late search for Gold*, dating from the 16 February 1863 to November 30 1862, and the much fuller C. H. Howitt's *Journal* dating from January 1863 to the last entry of 20 June 1863, manuscripts Alexander Turnbull Library.

• Richard Sherrin's first journal *Christchurch Press* 21, 24 & 25 March 1863.

First Voyage of the Emerald Isle

• *Lyttelton Times* 20 December 1862.

• Philip Ross May *The West Coast Gold Rushes* p88-89.

• MacKillop's letter *Inwards Correspondence to the Canterbury Provincial Government*, National Archives, Christchurch Office, CH287 CP32 ICPS1920/62. MacKillop's reference to his 'journal' is intriguing, for I have so far been unable to locate this document.

• Richard Sherrin's first journal *Christchurch Press* December 21, 24 & 25 March 1863. Philip Ross May suggested that the 'man' that worked for Sherrin may have been Andrew Hughes, who worked for Arthur Dobson for a while, then for W. H. Revell, the government storekeeper, from March to May 1864.

• William Martin's *A Pioneers Reminiscences*, Papatowai, 1863 manuscript MS-0205 manuscript Hocken Library.

• W. H. Revell, National Archives, Christchurch Office, CH287 CP54 ICPS1368/1864 (McFarlane).

• On McFarlane

For what it's worth, there was a John and Malcolm Macfarlane who were brothers running the Whiterock Station from 1853 to the late 1860's, see *The Early Canterbury Runs* L. G. D. Acland p254-256. Malcolm Macfarlane was said to have drowned in 'the upper Selwyn River or on the West Coast' in 1867 or 1868. According to Shona McRae *The Sons and Daughters* (1991) Malcolm Macfarlane died whilst droving cattle to the West Coast (p43). There is no confirmed evidence that this Macfarlane is the same person, but it would not surprise me. And yes I know it's spelt differently.

• On the 1856-1857 voyage of the *Emerald Isle*

In 1895 Thomas Oakes petitioned the Canterbury Provincial Government for a gold reward

based upon John Peter Oakes voyage in the Emerald Isle down the West Coast in 1857, where it was claimed some two and a half ounces were washed out from Jackson's Bay, and six ounces from Hokitika. The full text of this petition can be found in Philip Ross May's book in Appendix III. This claim is interesting, because in terms of gold discoveries it is by far the earliest and largest amount of gold uncovered, and a descendant of the Oakes family, Alan H. Oakes later wrote a document elaborating the claim. Philip Ross May wrote:

'The Oakes expedition of 1857 was not included in Chapters Two and Three because I was unable to satisfy myself that there was such an expedition. This does not necessarily mean that the Oakes story is false. However, no original source material, other than the memorial of 1874 and the petition of 1895, has been found to support it. The accounts given by John Peter Oakes and by Thomas Oakes are, besides, open to question'.

Alan H. Oakes argued for a 'secret voyage' between the 4 December 1856 and the 9 January 1857, but May had already concluded that there was scarcely sufficient time for such a voyage. Other doubts were raised by the two gold claims made for the Coromandel, subsequently withdrawn, discrepancies between the memorial and the petition, and the long delay in coming forward with a gold claim. Alan H. Oakes suggested that this delay was because John Peter Oakes was waiting for a larger reward to be posted. If this was so, then when the gold bonus was raised to £1000, it was surely odd that John Peter Oakes made his gold claim in 1862 on the basis of a scanty 30-40 grains, rather than the more impressive eight and a half ounces. Philip Ross May's final comment still stands: 'Unless fresh evidence is found, the Oakes expedition of 1856-7 must be considered not proven'.

• Alan H. Oakes *Who Discovered Gold in West Canterbury?* manuscript Alexander Turnbull.

• Philip Ross May *The West Coast Gold Rushes* p523-527.

Thomas Dixon, life details

• Philip Ross May *The West Coast Gold Rushes* p523 footnote.

• *New Zealand Shipwrecks* p97.

• John Peter Oakes, see *G. R. Macdonald Dictionary of Canterbury Biographies* Canterbury Museum Library O4.

Over the Harper Pass

• Charles Money *Knocking About in New Zealand* p28-56. Unfortunately, Money gives a date of 2 January 1863 for when they leave Taylor's for the Harper Pass for the last time, but this is completely contradicted by Smart's record of meeting Davies and Money on 1 January 1863, returning with a 'Frenchman and a German'. Smart's record however may not be an actual diary written at the time, but transposed later, which may help to explain some of the contradictions.

Note: Several of the key memoirs over the Harper Pass (William Smart, Charles Money, Richard Sherrin and Charlton Howitt) do not all agree, and at times it is hard to get some harmony in the comings and goings of the various prospecting parties. It was a discreet and irritating practice in the European style of writing, to often avoid mentioning full names, or simply refer to the man's Christian name. Howitt for example, mentions 'Charlie', Harry', 'Jack', 'Fred', 'Jem', 'Bob' and others, as part of his track-cutting team. Is 'Slater' a surname or a Christian name? Needless to say,

this heightens the detective work involved, and in many cases it is impossible to know for certain the full name of every person, or the accurate composition of a group.

• William Smart's *Journal* p86-96 manuscript, Mackay Collection, University of Canterbury.

The Dark Prospectors

• William Smart *Journal* p90 &126.

• Richard Sherrin first journal *Christchurch Press* 21, 24 & 25 March 1863.

• Mike Johnson *Gold in a Tin Dish* p338-339.

• Christchurch *Press* 30 May 1864.

• Charlton Howitt C. H. Howitt's *Journal*.

• Nelson *Examiner* 1 September 1863.

• W. H. Heinz *Scrapbook*, volume 1, p174 West Coast Historical Museum.

• Charles Money *Knocking About in New Zealand* p34-56. I was initially doubtful of linking all the various 'Johnsons' into one man, mainly because it bothered me that Money never mentions that this man was a negro. But the dates all fit, and Johnson's uselessness seems a fairly consistent trait.

• There is some doubt if 'Samuel Johnson' was his real name, because it is a name that crops up far too frequently on the goldfields of the time: a little like 'Joe Blow', or 'Joe Bloke', a sort of universal name that was adopted by people who wished to retain some anonymity.

• Arthur Dobson *Reminiscences* p111-113.

• Vincent Pyke *History of Early Gold Discoveries in Otago* p98-99.

• Cookery was largely regarded as an unskilled and unpopular occupation, so it might help to explain why so many blacks became involved with it. It was a permitted activity, rather in the way that the Chinese were allowed only to work old gold workings.

Further proof of the enduring link between 'darkies' and cookery (should such proof still be required) is provided by Vincent Pyke who states that the dancing negro at the Tuapeka diggings was an ex-ship's cook, and his mate the Indian Edward 'Black' Peters was also a cook. Arthur Dobson once engaged a 'coal-black' man called Alexander Campbell Cameron in Collingwood in late 1864, who was a 'wonderful cook'.

A good deal of these 'African' black or negro people must have originated from America. Many of these black cooks may have jumped ship.

'Darkie' was a common epithet of the times, and in many later accounts of the West Coast goldfields, there is frequent mention of someone called the 'blackfellow' or 'darkie'. 'A coloured man named Vincent', 'an enterprising colonial gentleman' named 'darkie Jones' running the 'Harp and Eagle' in Charleston. 'Darkie Addison' was a famous prospector whose strikes began rushes both near Point Elizabeth (spring 1865) and at Addisons Flat near Charleston (autumn 1867). A well known Dan 'darkie' Brown was involved in the Kumara rush of 1876, there's a photo of him in W. F. Heinz's *Bright Fine Gold*. 'William Thomas, a coloured man, a miner' was in the Shotover in 1863 and a crew of coloured men were reported to have deserted the brig *Amherst* at Bluff for the local goldfields in 1866.

Walker Brothers

• *Christchurch Press* 4 April 1863 or *West Coast Notes*, typed manuscript, Mackay Collection, University of Canterbury.

• *Illustrated London News* 14 October 1865. The information and sketches were supplied by Albert Walker. The reference to the gold-digging Maori probably refers to the Hohonu/ Greenstone.

Drake's First Survey

• Sherrin's first journal *Christchurch Press* 21, 24 & 25 March 1863 for very full account of this journey by Sherrin. There are several letters from Sherrin in the *Inwards Correspondence to the Canterbury Provincial Government*, one of the more interesting is his letter on 24 March 1863 National Archives, Christchurch Office, CH287, CP40, ICPS 1311 30/6/1863 'Observations relative to the Gold Fields on the West Coast'.

He thinks gold prospects are good and noted that 'Solomon's' brother 'Albert Tuapeki' had got '5 ozs 6 miles from above the [Hohonu?] junction... he washed 2 dwts and 12 grains of gold from 5 dishes of dirt'. Though Sherrin's judgement erred when he stated 'payable gold can hardly be expected near the sea'.

The pastoralist Isaac Freeth had left a stock of flour in charge of the Maori chief in 1863. It's not clear whether Tarapuhi had permission to sell the flour or was faced with little real choice in the matter, as he was being confronted with hungry prospectors practically every week. Tarapuhi was careful only to supply enough flour to get the starving diggers to the Buller, or back over the Taramakau. See Smart Journal p80.

• Thomas Cass, letter 30 December 1862 *Inwards Correspondence to the Canterbury Provincial Government* National Archives, Christchurch Office, CH287, CP32, ICPS 1928 20/12/1862.

Herbert Charlton Howitt, life details

• Charles Money *Knocking About in New Zealand* p28-56.

• Letter 3 September 1862 *Inwards Correspondence to the Canterbury Provincial Government* National Archives, Christchurch Office, CH287, CP30, ICPS 1375 8/9/1862.

• *G. R. Macdonald Dictionary of Canterbury Biographies* Canterbury Museum Library H821 & H820.

• Montgomery/Howitt claim for land 12 January 1863 *Inwards Correspondence to the Canterbury Provincial Government* National Archives, Christchurch Office, CH287, CP33, ICPS 81 12/1/1863.

J. C. Drake, life details

• *G. R. Macdonald Dictionary of Canterbury Biographies* Canterbury Museum Library D436.

• Arthur Dobson *Reminiscences* p57.

• *Matanaka* p12 Knight/Coutts.

Second Voyage of the Emerald Isle • Martin and Sherrin Parties

• On William Martin

• *Lyttelton Times* 21 March 1865 (letter John Peter Oakes).

• Philip Ross May The West Coast Gold Rushes p93-94.

• Carl Pfaff *The Diggers Story* p93-99.

• William Martin *A Pioneers Reminiscences*, Papatowai, 1863 manuscript MS-0205 manuscript Hocken Library.

One comment of Martin's is interesting for

he mentions a schooner arriving with three prospectors on board, with three years supply of food and clothing. One of these prospectors however did not like the looks of the Taramakau and returned to Christchurch with the Martin party.

• On Richard Sherrin

• Philip Ross May *The West Coast Gold Rushes* p93.

Philip Ross May suggests that Sherrin saw Sealey Pass, but in fact Sherrin only travelled up as far as the forks of the Whataroa and Perth River, and he encountered thick mist on his only attempt to climb a hill ('Mount Hourst') and get a view. His reference to a 'remarkable break' up the Whataroa comes from an observation as he was travelling down the coastline. What he actually saw is a matter of conjecture, but it certainly was not Sealey Pass, as this 1722 m (5600 ft) pass is tucked behind some peaks over 2700 m (8,000 ft) high. Sherrin has a problem with passes or 'breaks', for he also supposed that the saddle he saw from the Hokitika River was 'Whitcombe's Pass', when in fact it is Frew's Saddle (see sketch *The West Coast Gold Rushes* p144). God knows why, but the author of The Colours is considering writing a brief history of the passes to the West Coast. Nothing better to do I suppose...

• Sherrin's second journal *Christchurch Press* 12, 15, 17, 19, 21, 22 & 25 December 1863. Mr Sherrin is rather prolix and perhaps his second journal is more conveniently sourced through *West Coast Notes*, a typescript copy taken from the original *Press* account. The Notes also include the account by the Walker brothers and two letters by Arthur Dobson.

R. A. A. Sherrin had taken up two pastoral runs along the Kokatahi River in early 1865, but made no attempt to stock them, and his licence was sold on. He subsequently became a significant editor and writer, amongst other work editing *The New Zealander* from 1879-1880 and the *Early History of New Zealand*, from earliest times to 1840. Born in 1832 and died in 1893. See *G. R. Macdonald Dictionary of Canterbury Biographies* Canterbury Museum Library S301.

• William Smart's *Journal* p122.

• Arthur Dobson *Reminiscences* p74. Arthur Dobson's account of this tragedy does not match Sherrin's and Martin's. Martin states that 'Patai' was not present, but had a dream fortelling of the accident. Since William Martin became quite close to 'Simon' and 'Patai', and had first hand accounts from them, it seems that his view of events is more correct. It also more closely matches William Sherrin's account.

• W. H. Revell, letter and report 10 October 1864 *Inwards Correspondence to the Canterbury Provincial Government* National Archives, Christchurch Office.

The Ordeal of James Hammett

• James Hammett *Nelson Examiner* 1 September 1863. Hammett gives two different versions of who accompanied him up the coastline to the Buller. The newspaper account says there were 'several Maoris' one of whom was 'Peter' Mutu. But in his letter to Townsend on 24 August 1863 (ICPG) he only mentions' Peter Mutu', and says that the other Maori were angry that 'Peter' had left Hammett without 'no ki' and threaten to fine 'Peter' £200 or 'hang him'. Richard Sherrin's account also suggests the second version.

• Reuben Waite *A Narrative of the Discovery*

of the West Coast Goldfields p9.

• Philip Ross May *The West Coast Gold Rushes* p94.

• Hammett's statement taken by R. Sherrin 7 August 1863 *Inwards Correspondence to the Canterbury Provincial Government* National Archives, Christchurch Office, CH287, CP43, ICPS468A 18/9/1863.

Richard Sherrin undertook to continue the track work left unfinished by Howitt, and signed an agreement with various men to help him, including 'Walter' McFarlane. See *Inwards Correspondence to the Canterbury Provincial Government* National Archives, Christchurch Office, CH287, CP44, ICPS 566A 5/10/1863.

James Hammett, life details

• *Lyttelton Times* 16 August 1864 (death notice) 18 August 1864 (inquest).

• George Dobson's *Diary* p8, in Arthur Dudley Dobson papers 1859-1922, Canterbury Museum Manuscripts Collection.

Drake's Second Survey

• *Lyttelton Times* 21 March 1865 (letter, John Peter Oakes).

• John Price's 'Journal' October 1863, *Inwards Correspondence to the Canterbury Provincial Government* National Archives, Christchurch Office. See Philip Ross May.

• George Dobson's *Diary* 20 February 1864 in Arthur Dudley Dobson papers 1859-1922, Canterbury Museum Manuscripts Collection.

• William Smart 's *Journal* p42.

William Martin, life details

• William Martin's *A Pioneers Reminiscences*, Papatowai, 1863 manuscript MS-0205 manuscript Hocken Library.

• William Martin's *Experiences of William Martin as a goldminer at Gabriel's Gully in 1861*, related to and written down by Miss Beatrix Howes manuscript MS-0203 Hocken Library.

• John Hall-Jones *Martins Bay* p93-96 (also photo). Most of my autobiographical notes on William Martin are derived from here, and note that according to Hall-Jones Martins Bay was named after another unknown 'Martin', not William Martin.

• Tuapeka Mining Licences *Register*, August 19 to 1 November 1861, manuscript Alexander Turnbull Library.

• Undoubtedly, all of William Martin's manuscripts deserved to be published in full.

Chapter 6

Claim and Counterclaim

Taramakau River 1864

Just when it seemed that the Taramakau River was a failure, the discovery of gold under a greenstone boulder triggered a race between Buller diggers and Christchurch prospectors.

The main prize was not so much the gold itself, as the gold reward, which everyone mistakenly believed was still being offered by the Canterbury Provincial Government.

This chapter looks at the hectic causes and consequences of the race.

Chronology of gold discovery in the Taramakau 1864

January

Haimona Tuakau and Iwikau te Aika find a large boulder of greenstone, and gold underneath it, in Hohonu/Greenstone River.

February

Tarapuhi goes to Buller and tells Smart and French of find.

Smart, French, Tarapuhi leave from the Buller, meet Albert Hunt at the Grey.

Hunt heads over Harper Pass to get a prospector's party together.

April

Smart and French head for Hohonu/Greenstone diggings, find Albert Hunt and three mates, go onto Taipo prospecting. Return to Hohonu/Greenstone and find Hunt alone, he has collected 7 ounces. His three mates have gone back over Harper Pass. Hunt heads for Grey to get more provisions.

May

French and Smart strike payable gold at Hohonu/Greenstone.

Smart and French lodge claim for gold bonus with Revell, but Revell not permitted to supply prospectors, so duo head for Buller. Hunt guided by Tuakau to greenstone boulder site.

June

Smart, French arrive at Buller, tell Isaac Blake, who carries letter from Smart to Waite in Nelson.

Hunt returns to Grey, claims he has 15 ounces and makes application for gold bonus and prospector's claim (20 June).

July

Revell goes to Hohonu/Greenstone diggings and Hunt shows him four and a half ounces washed in one day. Tuakau shows five ounces washed in four hours (11 July).

Letter from Smart to Waite published in *Nelson Examiner* (12 July). Smart's letter published in *Christchurch Press* (16 July).

Waite left for Grey with 60 diggers, 25 picked up from Buller (18 July).

Revell leaves for Christchurch, carrying Hunt's letter (19 July).

Steamer *Nelson* arrives with Waite and 85 men, who race for diggings (22 July).

August

Hunt's letter published in *Christchurch Press* (6 August).

Maori try to conceal diggings, and Waite's store attacked.

September

300 men at Hohonu/Greenstone diggings. Hunt driven off diggings by disgruntled miners.

December

Nelson crosses Hokitika bar, a total of 800 diggers on the coast by now.

‘Good Coarse Gold’

‘Attempted suicide — On Thursday morning, a miner of the name of David Smith, retired into the flax, opposite the English Church, and drew a knife across his left arm. A constable was fortunately near the spot, and at once took the man to the Hospital. He was for a long time very weak from the loss of blood, but otherwise there were no apprehensions of anything serious resulting from the trifling wound. We understand the man had lately returned from one of the goldfields, where he had been unfortunate’.

At the beginning of 1864 the situation at the Taramakau River seemed unclear. The Provincial Government had issued orders to the depot not to give stores to prospectors, except perhaps enough to get them on their way back to the east coast, or up to the Buller storekeepers. Later on, the Government decided to close the depot completely. The Hohonu/Greenstone diggings had looked a dud, despite the wealth of colour found in the area.

The Provincial Government had withdrawn the gold prospectors reward by this time, perhaps reflecting the ambiguity that Canterbury members already felt about goldfields in general. But the withdrawal was done so quietly that nobody seem to notice, although this hardly mattered as news from the goldfields seemed only discouraging.

Then, quite abruptly, the tempo changed. ‘Simon’ Tuakau’s and ‘Samuel’ te Aika’s discovery of a large greenstone boulder in January 1864, and the gold underneath it, sent people scurrying. ‘Samuel’ and ‘Simon’ headed to Christchurch, both for the purpose of getting hold of ‘Martina’ [William Martin] to claim the £50 he offered to them, and to get implements to break the boulder. Tarapuhi went north to the Buller for similar reasons, to get implements to break the greenstone boulder, and also to tell Smart and French, who came back with Tarapuhi, and reached the Grey pa around the 16 February. Here they met ‘quite a young man’ named Albert Hunt, who had just completed his stint of track duty with J. C. Drake, and in his part time prospecting rather liked the looks of the area.

Whilst Hunt went over Harper Pass to put together a prospecting team, Smart and French helped shift the depot store from where it was being threatened by an eroding bank, and in return for this six weeks' labour, they were given sufficient stores by W. H. Revell to go prospecting again. They left on the 19 April for the ‘Tipo’ [Taipo] River, and when they get to the Hohonu/Greenstone, found Hunt and three others already digging.

The crucial matter in this to-ing and fro-ing is that ‘Simon’ Tuakau and Tarapuhi had obviously not revealed the site of the greenstone boulder yet, but Hunt has had some success, for when Smart and French come back from the Taipo they found Hunt on his own with seven ounces in his pocket. Hunt’s party of Grant, Burns and Flynn had been unable to get stores, and despite wash-

ing 12 ounces in one week in February, decided to back to Christchurch, bringing an ‘excellent example of scaly gold’, and a report that ‘specks of fine gold mingled with sand’ could be found on the entire beachline between the Taramakau and Grey.

According to Smart, he and French offered to do a deal with Hunt.

> ‘I had then 100 lbs of flour, which I offered to share with Hunt if he would go further up the River Ohonu with us to see if I could find a payable prospect, but he declined as it was very bad weather’.

Hunt, who has run out of food, decides to try and wheedle some stores out of Revell, and whilst he is gone, Smart and French strike payable gold over the next ‘18 days’, but they also have to follow Hunt to the Grey to get provisions, and arrive on 22 May 1864 at the Government store.

Revell has been under instructions not to sell stores to the prospectors, and refuses Smart and French. What Albert Hunt has been doing the last three weeks is not clear, but Revell records that on the same day as Smart and French arrive, Hunt turns up, and shows the seven ounces he has obtained over ‘eight days’ to Revell. Smart and French have made a formal claim for the gold bonus with Revell, but have resigned themselves to heading up to the Buller for more stores. Smart states that in fact he and French gave stores to Hunt.

> ‘We got all the stores that Mr Revell would allow us to buy and gave them to Albert Hunt to go up the Greenstone with the Maoris prospecting’.

It’s not clear why they did this, or even how they managed to get enough provisions to both give to Albert Hunt and go up to the Buller. Perhaps some sort of agreement was being struck, that Hunt might look after their interests while they went north. It’s possible, and it might explain Smart’s annoyance with Hunt ‘...Hunt behaved very badly to us and also the Maoris afterwards’.

It’s also puzzling why Revell supplied Hunt but not Smart and French, but Revell’s journal clearly records Hunt receiving a ‘fortnight's’ store on the 23 May 1864. Perhaps the seven ounces that Hunt demonstrated was more convincing than the vague statements by Smart and French, that ‘men could be certain of making a little

every day', and that '£10-£12 a week per man' could be obtained from some areas.

In any case, Hunt gets the jump on them. He has managed to persuade Revell to give him stores, and perhaps obtains extra stores from Smart and French, and has already (it's not clear how) persuaded 'Simon' Tuakau and others to reveal the site of the greenstone boulder at Maori Point. Perhaps Tuakau was Hunt's mate? A month later on 20 June Hunt was back at the Stores Depot to make a formal claim to Revell:

> 'He reports that during the last two months he has obtained about fifteen ounces of gold of which he has shown me some fine specimens both scaly and nuggetty, some of the latter weighing nearly two dwts'.

James Hammett had come over Harper Pass with instructions from the Provincial Government to close the store, but Revell is now reluctant to do so. Smart and French, the Maori, and now Albert Hunt are all getting good gold, and he is convinced that a payable goldfield is about to be rushed.

However, he still wanted to see for himself, so on the 11 July he and Hammett go up to the diggings. They find three parties of Maori, and 'one European' working separate claims. He commented that he thought that the Maori diggers were wasting gold, but that Hunt 'thoroughly understood his business' and 'he has had a Maori assisting him for the last four days'.

> 'Shortly after my arrival he [Hunt] came to his tent with the proceeds of his first days washing with sluice boxes which he supposed to be about three ounces, but on being weighed proved to be four ounces and five dwts of good coarse gold'. Hunt pronounced himself well satisfied and reckoned he had 'not worked regularly more than half his time'.

'Simon' Tuakau also showed Revell 'five ounces' of gold, 'which he had washed out with a tin dish in about four hours'. Revell believed Hunt had 'in his possession some forty ounces of gold', and that between Hunt and the Maori, they had 'fifty ounces'. He obtained one ounce as a sample 'good scaley quality'. It was proof enough, and Revell and Hammett set off for the Harper Pass to inform the Provincial Government that they had a payable goldfield in their most distant province.

This seems all well and good, except that Revell's opinion of Albert Hunt underwent a sea-change after he had returned to the newly blossomed goldfield.

In his letter for the gold bonus Hunt had claimed that he had obtained 38 ounces, but W. H. Revell derided this as a 'tissue of falsehoods'. He thought Hunt had never gleaned more than 12 ounces in total, meaning presumably, the seven ounces he first showed to Revell on the 22 May, and the four and a half ounces at the Hohonu/ Greenstone diggings on the 11 July. Certainly, apart from these two amounts, which witnesses had actually seen, Hunt produced very little gold. Of his 'fifteen ounces' only 'specimens' were shown to Revell, and the figure of 'fifty ounces' must have seemed very strange to Revell when the Maori showed fifty ounces to Reuben Waite barely two weeks later. The figures did not add up, and when Revell heard accounts of Hunt's later 'flourishing' claims he became distrustful.

It is no accident, that when he was asked in June 1865 by the Provincial Government to give an assessment of the competing claims, he dismissed Hunt's, saying that 'no reliance can be placed on his statements', and plumped for Smart and French. The pity is he did not consider the Maori prospectors, but of course they had not made a formal claim.

Two Letters

Meanwhile Smart has given a letter to Isaac Blake, a storekeeper on the Buller River mouth, who takes it to Nelson and gives it to Reuben Waite. Waite sees that it's published in the *Nelson Examiner* and promptly charters the steamer Nelson and gets a willing crowd of diggers. Hunt's letter is in charge of W. H. Revell who trudges back over Harper Pass to Christchurch, where the letter is published in the *Lyttelton Times* and the *Christchurch Press*.

The *Nelson Examiner* published Smart's letter on 12 July 1864. This turned out to be the trigger event for Nelson people, who started to take the West Coast diggings seriously.

'We have been favoured by Mr Waite with the perusal of a letter from Mr William Smart. It contains the following.

'I have found very fair prospects at the Grey but could get no provisions from the Government [Canterbury] store, their agent has orders not to sell any more. I got in several places four grains to the dish. It was gold similar to the old diggings [Buller] gold; and I consider it far before the Buller, for we could get gold wherever we tried. I saw a 'paddock' put down in the back of the river for a trial; it was in very indifferent ground; and the men knew where much better places were; they were nearly eight days at work at the 'paddock' and got seven ounces. Three of the men left for Canterbury, and one is now stopping on the claim living on potatoes till a craft comes with provisions. [This was Albert Hunt.]

The country is very accessible, and plenty of feed for pack-bullocks. The Maoris have horses down there, as have Mr Dobson and his party, and these they use for packing on their survey'.

So satisfied is Mr Waite with the above information, that he is now in treaty for chartering the steamer Nelson for a trip to the Grey, for the purpose of taking with him a large quantity of provisions'.

In fact Waite had doctored the letter slightly and added certain extra details. He had increased the original three grains to 'four grains to the dish', plus adding 'the men knowing better ground', 'feed for pack bullocks', 'and Maoris have horses', which were as Smart commented all imaginative interpolations 'of my friend Reuben Waite'.

They did the trick.

On 16 July the *Christchurch Press* published William Smart's letter and on 6 August 1865 a letter by Albert Hunt.

'The letter which we publish below from Mr Hunt confirms the news brought over by Mr Revel a few days ago, as to the fact of there being a good paying goldfield in the province of Canterbury'.

> 'July 15 1864. Sir, I have been on the West Coast since the 15th April, prospecting the Hohonu, as far as Perounui [sic], and several gullies running into the Big Hohono River; and found payable gold for five miles on the Hohonu. I can get the colour at any place; the prospects are from half-pennyweight to three pennyweights to the dish. I have got about 38 ounces of gold; a party of four might make about £150 per week on the banks of the river. I tried a hole and went down seven feet, and got about a pennyweight to the dish, but could not bottom, the water coming in to fast. There is room for a large population. * * * * The road is very rough. There is plenty of splendid timber. There are no wild pigs, but diggers ought to fetch a gun and plenty of ammunition. I have been on the Australian and Otago diggings. There are no provisions here; I have been living on 'spuds' most of the time. I remain yours, obediently, Albert Hunt.'

The *Press* wrote an editorial on the coming goldfield: '... there is no mincing the matter now. The thing is coming upon us' and made it plain that for Canterbury to receive any benefit from this new discovery 'the gold must come to Christchurch'. The *Press* urged the investigation and construction of a dray road, reminding readers of the pass recently discovered by Arthur Dobson.

The *Lyttelton Times* published a famous editorial on the 30 July 1864 as well as details of the find, which largely confirmed the *Press's* account, apart from the persistent use of 'Arthur' Hunt. They also credited Albert Hunt with a prolonged prospecting burst in 'the accessible hill districts of Canterbury for many months' and in 1863 he was supposed to have prospected through to the Wairau on his own. They note the location of the find 'about five miles up the Greenstone Creek, above the junction with the Hohonu' and that he had the 'very inefficient assistance of one Maori'.

Yet Canterbury settlers did not drop every tool and rush to the goldfields, indeed the discovery was largely ignored, for reasons that are not difficult to see.

The goldfield was inconveniently located on the wrong side of the ranges, with no easy track across to it. Access would have to be via Nelson, or Southland, and the recent Wakamarina rush had showed how insubstantial gold-

fields could be. The *Press* had covered the Wakamarina rush in detailed, and often glowing accounts, indeed it still was doing so at the time of Hunt and Smart's letters, but it was now becoming embarrassingly obvious that the Wakamarina was not an Otago, and was a restricted diggings, quickly being overwhelmed by diggers who could find no space to make a claim. Even allowing for the difficulties of communication, the Press did not want to be a false prophet again, and their reports on the Grey diggings were brief and circumspect throughout the rest of 1864.

Then in February 1865 the glorious significance of the West Coast dawned on Canterbury with the news that parcels of gold up to 1375 ounces and 1000 ounces, had been shipped from 'Okitika'. As the February *Christchurch Press* editorial put it bluntly, Canterbury had 'woken up' and the rush was on.

But whilst Canterbury had dithered Nelson had got enthusiastic. Smart's letter had perfect if accidental timing, and had galvanised the frustrated local miners, large numbers of whom were milling aimlessly around the Wakamarina. The first batch of diggers arrived almost simultaneously at the Grey River mouth in July 1864. A large party from the Lyell, led by French, tramped down the beach line, and arrived at the Grey, as the steamer *Nelson* pulled in with seventy or so eager diggers from Nelson and the Buller. Soon the *Nelson* was back on her second trip and towed in the Mary, which had William Smart on board. Now the fun really started.

Concealment, Confusion, Confrontation and... Gold!

What happened next is a little unclear, but it seems that the Maori attempted to conceal the Hohonu/Greenstone diggings, and disguised the track, proceeding to make large holes in an irrelevant part of the Taramakau riverbed. The first diggers followed the Maori example and of course quickly found nothing on this spot, and in an angry hoard rushed back to abuse Reuben Waite, the storekeeper who had masterminded the rush from Nelson.

Waite had landed with provisions and sold them rapidly to the diggers, spurred on by the rumours of gold up the

Hohonu/Greenstone River. Although Waite had seen 'fifty ounces of the finest gold I had ever seen' dug out by the Maori, the diggers returned very aggrieved, having found nothing and prepared to take out their feelings on the first likely figure — ie the man that made profits from the business.

Starting a 'duffer' rush was a heinous crime in a digger's eyes, and false claims caused some of the worst outbreaks of violence on the goldfields. Waite was advised by two white men (probably Smart and French, who also beat a retreat):

> 'to get out of the way, as the whole party were close at hand, and were coming to ransack my store, and hang me'.

What happened next is best told in Waite's own words.

> 'It was rather an exciting moment as, stepping outside the store, the thought struck me that my life hung as it were by a thread – that the weight of a feather would probably turn the scale either way. I was there standing accused, though wrongfully, of having wilfully brought a number of my fellow-countrymen to an outlandish district, probably to suffer want and ruin. I knew that nothing but self-possession would avail me, so I made the most of my position, and put my trust in Providence. I shall never forget the impression of that scene as it first met my gaze; the bright glare of the huge coal-fire, the motley group of roughly attired figures around it — some silent and thoughtful, others fierce and clamorous, with every species of anger and revenge visible on their countenances — the solemn and monotonous roar of the distant breakers, together with the surrounding mountain scenery in all it's pristine grandeur, formed a romantic picture, rude and wild in the extreme'.

Despite appearing to trust in Providence, Waite knew that the Maori were prepared to help him, perhaps a little embarrassed at this extreme turn of events. Waite did not show the angry diggers the 50 ounces of Maori gold, because he suspected, probably quite rightly, that the diggers would not have believed him. A Dutchman, well tanked up on a case of gin he had 'borrowed' from Waite, asked the first question.

> 'Vell, vot did you cors dis rush vor?' I answered I did not cause the rush... I thought there was gold in the country, which I still believed, and that a proper trial would prove it. The next question put to me was by a Cockney, I am sure he was, for he so murdered the letter 'h'. 'Vell, Mr Vaite, 'ow wud you like to cum 'ere without money, an 'ave to starve as ve 'ave to do?' My answer was, that I did not ask him to come; he had pleased himself. 'Vell Mr Vaite, you seems to treat this 'ere matter werry lightly, but hi thinks hits no joke to come down 'ere and spend hall vun's munny, and not to git any gold'. The aforesaid Dutchman then spoke up again, and said. 'Vell poys, ve vill tak vat ve vants vrom Vate's store, and ve vill hang him afterwards'.

At this crucial point, a man collapsed with a fit, and despite a scuffle or two, the hanging did not eventuate, but Waite did have to buy back many of the stores he had sold a few days before. Then more prospectors turned up who showed promising gold results, Waite demonstrated his parcel of Maori gold, and the rush was back on with a vengeance.

> 'Then came a rush for stores again, and those who had been among the grumblers I charged an extra price, as they had compelled me to take back their stores and tools. From that time commenced the great rush, which up to the present date has brought out of the earth forty tons of gold, and for which I was to be hanged, because those first arrivals chose to call the expedition a duffer rush'.

Even so, matters were touch and go for a while, for the Hohonu/Greenstone were small workings, and it was plainly evident to the first batch of miners that there would not be enough room for everyone.

A bit of drink, one man with a tongue, and the gold not quite ready to be picked off the ground, and the miners could form themselves into a nasty if temporary hot-headed mobile vulgus, 'the fickle crowd', the mob. W. H. Revell, the government stores manager, recorded these incidents on the 24 August.

> 'Smart and French have had a narrow escape from being severely handled by a mob of rowdy diggers who returned to the Grey in search of them, but they got away into the bush and

> concealed themselves for a fortnight, getting stores from the Depot. My brother got a cut on the head from a stone from the same mob and later was pelted with stones when returning across the lagoon in a boat'.

The same fate had already happened to Albert Hunt, and once he was chased off the Hohonu/Greenstone diggings, he headed back to Christchurch in September or October 1864 to claim his reward.

Needless to say, William Smart was annoyed that Hunt got the credit for discovering the gold. He explicitly claimed in a letter to the Canterbury Government, in support of his gold claim, that he had told Hunt there was payable gold.

> 'He did not find it, for I told both him and the Maoris that there was payable gold in Greenstone Creek'.

But this raises the issue of whether the Maori beat both Hunt and Smart to it. Smart made mention of the fact that in January 1863 he and Day worked with 'Isaiah Tinui' at the mouth of the Hohonu, but did not find 'payable ground'. Yet some Maori prospectors had promptly delivered 50 ounces to Reuben Waite on his arrival at the Grey, which is, by any gold diggers standard, a payable amount. One gets the suspicion that both the 'Simon' Tuakau and Ihaia Tainui parties had been garnering more gold than they were letting on.

In the end, Hunt got a memorial and a £200 gratuity, Smart and French had two peaks named after them on the Hohonu Range, and the Maori? Well, Werita Tainui's earlier fears of the European invasion of the West Coast were well founded, and although the income from the rents at Greymouth was some compensation, under the remorseless impetus of gold immigration, the Maori saw their lifestyle change from one of respected tangata whenua to neglected outsiders.

William Horton Revell

'Big' Revell was born in Northern Ireland in 1829 and arrived in New Zealand sometime in the early 1850's, where he joined the Kaiapoi Armed Constabulary in 1854. He was promoted steadily and was appointed sub-inspector and clerk of the courts in 1861, with an annual wage of £175 for the police officer's duties (including 'forage and travelling expenses') and £75 for the clerk's.

Revell was working as an Inspector of Police at Timaru when he was discharged quite suddenly, an action that brought forth a local petition signed by 42 people. They complained that Revell was sacked for an 'implausible reason but for the sake of economy' and wanted him retained. However, after Charles Townsend was drowned, Revell accepted the appointment of Government storekeeper on the remote West Coast in May 1863, rather a bad career move one would have thought.

But on the contrary, the discovery of gold launched him on a rapid rise in executive power, first Resident Magistrate in late 1864, then Warden of the Greymouth District after the proclamation of the goldfields. He was also Returning Officer and Coroner. He was a thorough and conscientious public officer as the ample correspondence to the Provincial Secretary indicate, and with a sense of humour.

'A woman had brought the father of her child before court to obtain maintenance money. The defendant was supported by four witnesses, all of whom were prepared to swear that they were as likely as the defendant to be the father. 'Big' Revell, silencing the objections of his clerk of the court, judged that the defendant and his four witnesses should each pay 2s 6d. maintenance money weekly'.

Revell married in 1867 and shifted to being Warden of the Westport-Reefton district in 1885, then Lawrence in Central Otago in 1886. He died in Timaru in September 1893 aged 64. The main street paralleling the sea-front in Hokitika is named after him.

life details

William Smart

Smart was born in 1830, a Canterbury builder, but in August 1851, he and Charles Brown Turner took up a run between the Styx and Waimakariri Rivers. After the gold rush he sold his interest in the run, and in 1872 he and William Wilson opened the Whiterock quarries, North Canterbury. They also developed a coalmine.

Smart must have kept his prospectors keen eye for the Press on the 15 May 1883 recorded that Smart has found a large white topaz in the creek near the colliery, as well as small 'rubies and garnets'.

There is also a mention of a William Smart having a share in a run on ‘Kaiapoi Island’ with George Day in the late 1850’s. He died in 1900, aged 70, leaving a wife, but no children.

Smart’s Journal seems to be a copy based upon an original diary, which has never been found. It contains many interesting drawings, some of which were cut out of the original diary and glued into the journal. Several of these appear in Barry Brailsford’s The Greenstone Trails.

Sources for Chapter 6 — Claim and Counterclaim

'Good Coarse Gold'

• Philip Ross May *The West Coast Gold Rushes* p98-100.

• W. H. Revell letters and journals, *Inwards Correspondence to the Canterbury Provincial Government* National Archives, Christchurch Office. (Not selling stores and seven ounces) CH287 CP57 ICPS1895 1864, (shortly after my arrival, fifty ounces) CH287 CP58 ICPS1999 1864, (tissue of falsehoods) CH287 CP60 ICPS2404 1864. I suspect Revell knew he'd been 'had' by Hunt, which accounts for his strongly worded criticisms later.

The day-to-day journals that W. H. Revell kept at the store, plus his monthly, sometimes weekly reports, gives a good picture of what happened on the Hohonu/Greenstone in those crucial weeks, and the Provincial Government (and history writers) were probably grateful to have such a conscientious and accurate reporter on the spot. However, there is conflicting evidence, and some second guessing is required to arrive at the most likely sequence of events. Probably a further detailed study of the papers might reveal more useful material. Revell persists in called Hunt 'Arthur', which is presumably how Hunt identified himself.

William Smart, life details

• L. G. C. Acland *The Early Canterbury Runs*, photo Canterbury Museum 1830-1900.

Two Letters

• *Nelson Examiner* 12 July 1864 (Smart's letter).

• *Christchurch Press* 16 July 1864 (Smart's letter), 6 August 186 (Hunt's letter) February 1865 (editorial). The asterisks in Hunt's letter are the Press's not mine, whether this indicates some material has been omitted is not clear.

• *Lyttelton Times* 30 July 1864 (editorial). The comment about the 'inefficient help of one Maori' now seems to me quite ironic, for assuming Tuakau was Hunt's mate, it was actually Tuakau who was getting most of the gold, and getting the very inefficient help of one pakeha.

• *Lyttelton Times* 21 March 1865. John Peter Oakes, in a long letter to the newspaper, stated that Hunt's party consisted of 'Thomas Bryne, John O'Connor and John Flynn'.

• William Smart's *Journal* p146.

• W. F. Heinz *Christchurch Press* 13 April 1974.

Concealment, Confusion, Confrontation and... Gold!

• Reuben Waite *Narrative* etc p13-15 (Same passage also accessible through *Banking under Difficulties* G. O. Preshaw p99-102).

The threats against Waite must have seemed real enough to him at the time, as they would have done to Smart, French and Hunt, but

despite the raucous tempers of the diggers and the readily available lubrication of alcohol, there does not seem to be a single example in the West Coast gold rush of a vigilante hanging or execution. There were plenty of threats, the occasional thief got a bit of a beating, the odd store was trashed occasionally, but there is little evidence of really life-threatening riots beyond the 'stoush', which was the daily stuff of life to the boisterous miners.

• W. H. Revell letters and journals, *Inwards Correspondence to the Canterbury Provincial Government* National Archives, Christchurch Office, CH287 CP59 ICPS2238 1864.

William Horton Revell, life details

• *The Golden Reefs: An Account of the Great Days of Quartz-Mining at Reefton, Waiuta and the Lyell* Darrell Latham p381-382.

• Philip Ross May *The West Coast Gold Rushes* p307.

• Timaru Petition, November 1863 *Inwards Correspondence to the Canterbury Provincial Government* National Archives, Christchurch Office, CH287, CP45, ICPS 945A 20/11/1863.

Chapter 7

Albert Hunt

Unfortunately there are far more gaps in the career of Albert Hunt than definite information. This chapter attempts to piece together his life, and also some of the history of his brother, William Hunt.

It is remarkable that two brothers can both claim to have discovered a goldfield in New Zealand in the 1860's, and puzzling as to what became of them.

Suggested Chronology of Albert William Hunt

1840-1850?

Born in Auckland, son of a publican

1861-1862?

Hunt claimed to have worked on Otago goldfields, his brother had a claim on the Shotover River

1863?

Newspaper claims by Hunt that he prospected around Lake Wakatipu, inland Canterbury and Wairau River

1864

On Drake survey party

(December-January-February)

Travels to Christchurch, returns with three mates (March)

On Hohonu/Greenstone diggings

(April-May-June-July)

Revell witnesses Hunt washing 4 ounces of gold

(11 July)

Prospecting Taipo with Donnelly

(September)

Chased off by diggers, and travels to Christchurch for reward

(September-October?)

1865

Lead sea-beach gold rush to Bruce Bay

(September-October)

In Christchurch to claim gold bonus reward for West Coast rush

(December)

1866

Gold-digging in Southland

(April-June)

A Chimera

'The golden dreams indulged in during the past week have been dispelled, and miners, as well as business people, are fully aware that they have been completely sold. Everyone in Bruce Bay is lamenting; and find vent for their feelings by heaping curses on Mr Albert Hunt'.

West Coast Times.

Albert Hunt's place in the history of the West Coast goldfields is assured, though his reputation is not. He has become something of a bogeyman, a hero to some, an idle braggart to others. In this penultimate chapter I try to unravel the many tangled threads in the tale of Albert Hunt and piece together some sort of biography of a man so central to this story, yet so hard to place.

From a distance, writers who are performing a third-hand assessment of Albert Hunt tend to be favourable, and give him considerable credit, courage and ingenuity. However those that knew him personally, such as prospectors William Martin and William Smart, and the storekeeper Reuben Waite, had serious reservations. To be blunt, they thought he was a bludging scoundrel, who owed his entire success to the Maori who guided him to the right spot. Like all good stories, the truth probably lies somewhere in between.

On one matter everyone agrees, Hunt was an enigmatic character. No one seemed to be quite sure of his origins, and even less sure of what happened to him after he left the West Coast. Even his movements on the West Coast goldfields are obscure, he just seemed to pop up, announce his presence with a prospectors claim, and disappear again.

Hunt's mining experience is in doubt. He himself claimed that he had had experience in Australia and Otago, and at one time the *Lyttelton Times* noted Hunt had left Lake Wakatipu to prospect on the West Coast in 1863. They had also noted that Hunt was prospecting in the Canterbury area and had walked overland to the Wairau valley. However, all of this information seems to come from Hunt himself.

The first suggestion of Hunt's existence came from the unfortunate Fantome expedition to the Buller River in 1860. It is interesting that Phillip Ross May stated in his thesis states that the person named as 'William Hunt' is actually Albert, but there is no corroboration of this from any other sources at present. None of the people on Hunt's prospecting party to the Taramakau River seem to have been on the *Fantome* voyage, and in fact it is likely that this was actually William A. Hunt, Albert's older brother.

So the first that we genuinely know about Albert Hunt starts from late 1863 to early 1864, when he turns up as

a track-cutter on Drake's party, which was finishing off cutting a route from Lake Brunner to the Taramakau river mouth. Charlie Howitt had started this track some six months earlier, and he and two mates had been drowned in Lake Brunner.

It now seems certain that all of the men on Drake's gang, including Albert Hunt, were partly employed by John Peter Oakes to look out for gold. Oakes already knew Hunt personally from Auckland, and when Hunt and his mates returned to Christchurch after the track-cutting was completed, it was Oakes who grubstaked them again, this time for an all out gold-digging expedition.

As we have seen, Hunt's role was important, if not altogether honest. Hunt was quite active once the Hohonu/Greenstone rush had begun, for W. H. Revell noted on the 31 August that Hunt had come in to buy some flour and was prospecting 'tributaries of the Taramakau above the gorge', which Hunt claimed was 'a good prospect'. In September 1864 'Hunt and Donelly' were prospecting in the Taipo river, according to William Smart, but at some stage Hunt was back on the Hohonu/Greenstone again.

Although nearly all accounts agree, it's still unclear why Albert Hunt was chased off the Hohonu/Greenstone. The diggers were notoriously volatile, and perhaps they thought the results not good enough and sought to put the blame on the original prospector. William Smart, who was no friend of Hunt, puts in his anecdote.

> 'Hunt persuaded some men to jump some of the Maories ground at Maori Point, himself armed with a gun to assist. The Maoris, not wishing to have a general row gave these men a portion of their ground. This was deep ground in the creek, and turning out badly they [the other diggers] fell out with Hunt'.

William Revell was more explicit.;

> 'I have to inform you that Albert Hunt, the original prospector, has had to leave the locality and has returned to Christchurch. He met several prospective diggers on the track and gave them a flourishing account of the diggings, stating they were taking over 21 lb a day of gold [10 kilograms] and that there was over 2000 ounces in the hands of the police. He said he had made his 'pile' of 60 to 100 ounces and was going to claim the reward, whereas if the matter was known, I believe he has never

> made more than 12 ounces since he began to prospect, and that his statements to me from time to time have been nothing but a tissue of falsehoods and cannot be relied on'.

Hunt made several attempts at the gold reward, all unsuccessful until almost a year later. In June 1865 a proposal was put to the Provincial Government for Hunt to be rewarded the £1000 bonus for discovering a payable gold field (see 'Haggling Over Hunt'). This was declined, but Albert Hunt was reported by the *Lyttelton Times* to be in Christchurch again in December 1865 to make another claim, and jostle along the members for a decision. This time they agreed on a £200 gratuity.

Haggling Over Hunt

In June 1865 W. H. Revell was asked by the Provincial Government, to assess the various claims for a reward for discovering the West Canterbury goldfield. The Government was now thoroughly sick of all the tiresome (and tireless) claimants, and wanted to bring the matter to a final rest. There was no 'legal basis' to make a reward, but the Government felt obliged to make some token remuneration.

Revell considered five principal applicants: Ihaia Tainui, Captain Dixon, Jakob Lauper, Albert Hunt and William Smart. Revell dismissed Tainui and Dixon's claims because no evidence of a payable goldfield was demonstrated, and Jakob Lauper's claim was put aside for similar reasons. In balancing Hunt's claim against Smart's, Revell favoured Smart, but the Provincial Government was not initially enthusiastic.

> 'The Provincial Council, has, by a large majority, refused to recognise any claim on the part of Mr Hunt to a reward for gold discoveries on the West Coast. Mr Barff moved the adoption of an address to the Superintendent praying for £1000 to be placed on the estimates. The motion was seconded by Mr Prosser. Mr Jollie said the advertisement offering a reward was withdrawn in 1863, a year before Hunt discovered gold in paying quantity, and two years before he made any claim for reward. Mr Hawkes agreed with Mr Jollie that Hunt had 'no legal claim'. Mr Jollie professed a

> willingness to award Hunt a sum of £200 for 'his services' rendered to the district. Mr Barff proposed to amend his motion by substituting £500 for the £1000. Mr Hawkes moved £250 as an amendment, which Mr Barff accepted. After a good deal of desultory discussion and haggling about the exact amount to be awarded, leave to withdraw the motion with a view to its re-introduction in another shape, was refused on division by twelve votes to ten, and in the final division on the reduced sum of £250, the result was, ayes four, noes nineteen.'

Eventually the Government settled upon giving Albert Hunt a £200 'gratuity' for recognition of his services that he 'has rendered to this Province in exploring and developing the resources of it's western portion'.

Bruce Bay Rushes

Between about October 1864, after Hunt was chased off the Hohonu/Greenstone diggings, and September 1865, there is a biographical gap, almost a year in fact. Presumably he had drifted back to the diggings on the West Coast, because by September 1865 he was working at Bruce Bay. This was the start of a merry saga, and one of the juicier moments in New Zealand history, told and retold so it is sometimes hard to disentangle the myth from the reality.

There seems to have been two rushes to Bruce Bay, the first genuine in September 1865. According to newspaper accounts Hunt arrived on a cutter and worked the sea beaches, and was quickly followed by up to 200-250 men. This spot was eight miles north of the Bay at the place now called Hunt's Beach. Successful digging parties were getting '£1 per man per day', but this modest largesse did not last long. Prospectors thrashed inland from Bruce Bay and up several of the major rivers in the area, justifying the correspondents hopeful end note that 'important discoveries will yet be made there', but the results were nil. The diggers, although drifting away, were still suspicious of Hunt, though he was acting sensibly.

> 'Hunt declines up to this time to leave his beach claim, which is paying, and show the precise spot which some deduce he knows of'.

After food ran out and everyone was reduced to ‘mussels and fern-tree tops’, the steamer Alhambra fortuitously brought fresh supplies in November and many diggers left on her. By early December only 25 miners were at Bruce Bay, and by the 23 December only a ‘Mr Beveridge’ was left to ‘keep watch over a madman, who is his only companion’.

It seems hardly fair to call this first Bruce Bay rush a ‘virtual duffer’, as many did and even unfairer to blame it all on Hunt. His sea-beach workings were profitable, as were the claims of many other diggers, but beach workings were notoriously fickle and easily worked out. The truth is, that there was plenty of hot air and credulity amongst the miners and many late comers who did not get any immediate satisfaction, had plenty of time to sit around and blame their problems on the prospector who started the rush.

But the second Bruce Bay rush in March-April 1866, was a different affair entirely and became the greatest ‘duffer’ rush on the West Coast and arguably on any other New Zealand goldfield. The bounds of credulity stretched and snapped.

The facts are plain. Albert Hunt was granted a prospector's claim on 23 March at Bruce Bay, his party consisted of his brother, William Hunt, one Charles Bradley and a Samuel McMeikan, known universally as ‘Black Sam’. The claim was issued from Okarito, with the prospect of four grains to the dish, in other words, nothing brilliant. The ground lay six miles south of Bruce Bay and nine miles inland, up the ‘Waitemaiti Stream’. This stream is not marked on current maps, but it may be the same as the Ohinemaka River and the Blackwater Creek on the low saddle between the Paringa and Mahitahi Rivers. There is a hill overlooking the saddle marked Hunt Hill, but this area would only be five miles inland at the most, and the stream outlet only three miles south of Bruce Bay.

> ‘In the official notice posted by the Warden it was distinctly stated that the amount of payable gold was exceedingly limited — certainly not more than enough to support two or three hundred men’.

However, the vast bulk of diggers safely ignored the facts.

> 'The general opinion of the miners is that Hunt got better prospects than he stated, but that he did not wish to cause too general a rush'.

Some hope. The vast majority of diggers had no real skill in gold prospecting and were reliant on a few experienced prospectors to locate the gold, whereupon they would then dig it out by the proverbial barrel load. Hunt had a reputation, and his comings and goings were always followed closely. 1500 hundred miners took off from Okarito following the wild rumours:

> 'Whether he liked it or not Albert Hunt had been credited with discovering a great new goldfield'.

Storekeepers also rushed down hoping to get the best sites, paying as much as £30 for miners to remove their tents from likely looking spots.

Hunt arrived late on the 26 March 1866, 'escorted' by another 500 or so miners, and the thing quickly became a grand farce. The mob of miners closely watched Hunt, guarding him with firearms, some of them literally holding onto the prospector's coat. Hunt set off from Bruce Bay around Heretaniwha Point, followed by a jostling, shouting, excited crowd of diggers. The spectacle must have been extraordinary. At the next broad bay after the point, Hunt took off up a side-stream, then turned abruptly into the bush, setting a furious pace.

> 'A rush was at once made towards Hunt's track, but owing to the presence of the scrub and supplejacks hundreds came to grief; nothing could be seen but boots sticking up out of a net of supplejacks, their owners struggling to extricate themselves, whilst yells, shouts and execrations on supplejacks rent the air'.

Hunt pressed on, and passed the camp of the renowned prospector Bill Fox.

> '...suddenly came the cry 'Hunt is gone, Hunt has bolted'. All were at once brought to a standstill in the soaking rain, and no one knew what to do, whilst a dense cloud of steam arose from the smoking bodies and clothes of the exhausted miners'.

Hunt was recaptured, but as things began to get nasty, claimed he had to climb a tree to get his position better, and slipped away again. It was now quite dark, and many diggers just had to accommodate themselves any how in

the squalid, wet bush. Many had left their blankets behind in the mad rush from Bruce Bay. It rained heavily, and after a miserable night (one of the miners got 'swamp fever'), they stumbled and swore back to their campsites at Bruce Bay. Then began the riot, and the miners vented their damp spleens on the storekeepers (usually fiercely disliked in any case because of the high prices they charged) and looted five or six stores. Mr Price the Warden was verbally threatened, but he swore in special constables, and by evening the whole sorry affair had collapsed. 'Weld Town' at Bruce Bay must have almost the record for the shortest lived town in New Zealand – three days.

It might have been a hoax. Albert Hunt may have been aggrieved from his treatment on the Hohonu/Greenstone claim, and he might have enjoyed this somewhat dangerous joke. The *West Coast Times* correspondent mused in one of his few charitable moments that perhaps Hunt was misunderstood.

> 'I am inclined to believe that Hunt means well, because some short time before he was missed, I conversed with him, and he told me that he did not wish the miners to go into the gully in a bunch, but separately if possible.'

Others made the point that the prospect was small, and Hunt was only trying to keep the claim for his mates, not the two thousand who turned up. 'Hunt was as much the victim of his own reputation as the credulous mob which followed him', however, by now, he was thoroughly damned.

> 'The golden dreams indulged in during the past week have been dispelled, and miners, as well as business people, are fully aware that they have been completely sold. Everyone in Bruce Bay is lamenting; and find vent for their feelings by heaping curses on Mr Albert Hunt… It is truly a pity that there is no law that can reach him, and make him pay dearly for his deception'.

Hunt had completely vanished, though it is believed his camp in Bruce Bay was discovered in July 1866, but the adjacent ground did not prove payable. Indeed, with so many newly idle prospectors at Bruce Bay the ground got a thorough going over, but no gold-bearing ground was found inland at all. There was nothing for it, but to curse Hunt, and trudge back up the coastline to Okarito.

Actually there was an unintended and benevolent consequence of Hunt's rush to Bruce Bay, because the miners prospected at the beaches as they went north, and some got good results, notably at Gillespies Beach, where quite a rush developed in April 1866 with up to 1500 miners present.

It now seems likely, that after hiding out in the bush for a while, Hunt was taken off in a cutter operated by 'Black Sam' McMeikan, and they sailed into the sunset, and around to Southland. It is recorded that Hunt was in Invercargill by 27 April 1866, and in May was working the small Paihi beach-diggings twenty miles west of Riverton.

It is difficult to decide on balance whether Hunt was pulling a deliberate hoax or not. The 'granite gully' certainly looked mythical, because none of the other experienced prospectors found any gold inland at Bruce Bay. Even his own brother was apparently caught out, although he might have been just trying to save his own skin.

> 'Hunt's brother, who has been deceived as well as everyone else, called on Mr Price this afternoon and told him he believed the rush to be a complete 'humbug'.

Then again, perhaps the situation just got so completely out of hand that Hunt had to run for it, for nothing he could have said or done would have satisfied that mob. This would seem a reasonable verdict, except for a sensational new development at Riverton.

The Riverton Hoax, April-June 1866

In the *West Coast Times* in September 1866 was printed a dramatic headline 'Another Hoax by Hunt', that confirmed what everyone had ever suspected about Mr Albert Hunt.

The text was written by a 'Mr O'Leary', the gist of which was that several miners had met Hunt in Riverton, and he had persuaded them that there was still gold at Bruce Bay. Hunt and O'Leary became 'intimately acquainted' and after some wheeling and dealing, the hopeful party of miners set off from Riverton on the 8 June 1866 in 'Black Sam's' cutter, and arrived at 'Pareka' [Paringa] on the 13 July. The idea apparently was that Hunt would come later, and meet them there. Whilst they waited, they searched for gold, and found nothing. Hunt of course did not turn

up, so eventually O'Leary trudged up to Okarito with the sole purpose of doing the dirt on Albert Hunt, and warning fellow miners about this villain.

O'Leary writes in great detail, and the situation was farcially complicated, with Hunt 'waiting for money to clear his debts', and subsequently falling out with 'Black Sam', a matter that ended up in the 'R M Court', though according to O'Leary, 'Black Sam' and Hunt were reconciled.

The newspaper correspondent was indignant about the whole affair, damning it as another of Hunt's 'systematic and heartless swindles'.

> 'One among the other discreditable features of his [Hunt's] proceedings is the fact that to 'Black Sam' he owed his escape from the locality [at Bruce Bay], and from the hands of the infuriated crowd, and that same 'Sam' was among the number of his dupes in this adventure'.

Oh, what a tangled web he weaves! Who, was cheating who? Undoubtedly Hunt was swindling Jeremiah O'Leary and his mates, but did Hunt really cheat his mate 'Black Sam'? And what about his brother left stranded at Bruce Bay, and still working there up to August 1866? Was he a victim? Or were these ploys of the party, to make the gullible even easier to swindle? According to O'Leary, one of the reasons Hunt could not come with them to Bruce Bay, was that he was waiting for his brother to come down from Auckland!

It is hard to unravel what really went on, but one thing is definite, Hunt does remove himself from Riverton and the Paihi diggings, and the next time we ever hear of any Hunt associated with a goldfield is at the Coromandel in 1867.

And what of 'Black Sam'? Well he seemed to keep busy, and rather surprisingly kept up a supply line to the isolated groups of miners working on South Westland beaches after the Bruce Bay debacle. For a while there were 50-60 miners at Cascade Point, and most beaches had some diggers scratching on them. 'A small cutter, which trades between the Bay and Riverton, supplies them with provisions'. There is another mention of a 'cutter from Riverton' rescuing a man with gunshot wounds' from Barn Bay in October 1866, and in November a report states that 'Black Sam's' crew are working at the gold diggings at Haast.

Thames Goldfield Rush, August 1867

Gold was first prospected in the Coromandel in 1852, and a claim for the gold bonus was made by Charles Ring. But the difficulty of extracting the gold, and the intransigence of the Maori owners stifled this first rush, problems which continued with the various small gold discoveries right up to the first big rushes in 1867. Only the ingenuity of the first warden of the Thames goldfield, James Mackay, and the sheer pressure of miners forced the Maori to permit the gold digging. Curiously, the goldfields proclamation was made in July 1867 (starting on the 1 August 1867), before any real evidence of payable gold had been substantiated and it was the Shotover or Kurunui Claim of early August that kick-started the Thames rush. A claim that a certain W. A. Hunt was closely involved with.

There are many different versions of how the gold was found. John Grainger *The Amazing Thames* (1951), W. A. Kelly *Thames: the First Hundred Years* (1968), A. M. Isdale *History of the River Thames*, Johnny and Zelma Williams *Thames and the Coromandel — 2000 Years* (1990) each give quite varying accounts and the *New Zealand Herald* (1867) has another version for good measure, but on certain points they (approximately) agree.

> 1) There were four names on the miner's licence which was made on the 12 August 1867: W. A. Hunt, George Clarkson, J. E. White, W. Cobley.
>
> 2) The gold was found in the Kuranui Stream, near or on a waterfall.
>
> 3) A Maori may have helped them to the site, or suggested a site to fossick in, or gave them permission.
>
> 4) Some secrecy surrounds the claim, and possibly there was a delay before the find was publicly announced. Various reasons are given for this.
>
> 5) Not all four men were initially involved in the prospecting and some at least may have been strangers to each other. There was a need to 'make up the numbers' for the licence.

Isdale notes that Clarkson 'fell in' with J. E. White who had a mate as a partner 'an experienced miner from the South Island, W. A. Hunt'. The name 'Shotover' was applied to 'Hunt's Claim', as the gold strike was first

called, in reference to a previous claim down in Otago on the Shotover River.

One of the most interesting versions of the gold strike is to be found in Kelly's book and is from Alfred Newdick, who claimed he and Hunt had been schoolmates in Auckland. Originally they had intended to go to the Coromandel together, however Newdick was delayed and Hunt went on ahead. On arrival at the goldfield Newdick saw Hunt and tried to catch him up, but Hunt seemed intent on evading him. He later learned that Hunt had pegged a claim and taken as mates the first three men he found hanging about the Warden's office. Newdick and another man William Howorth circumspectly followed Hunt and his party to the Kurunui and pegged next door to Hunt's claim. Isdale also mentions that Newdick established a claim next to Hunt's.

> 'Mr Newdick was quite certain that either Hunt or some other member of his party was laid on to the reef by a friendly Maori. He stated positively that Hunt told him he was aware of the existence of the gold two or three weeks before the field was proclaimed — that in point of fact, after learning of it through the Maoris, and assuring himself by personal examination, he confided his knowledge to Mr. Mackay, who advised him that he should keep his secret until after the proclamation was gazetted. It was when he came to the Warden's office on the question of title that he was informed that he must have three other men as partners to hold the ground. Thereupon, he sallied out into the street, met Cobley, White and Clarkson, and brought them in to be joined with him as future mates'.

Newdick does not mention if Hunt had previously worked the West Coast diggings, though he does add the crucial tidbit that 'Hunt's father being the licensee of a hotel at Epsom'. This matches the fact from John Peter Oakes, who stated that he had known Albert Hunt 'since he was a small boy'. Philip Ross May pointed out that the Oakes family were pioneer Auckland settlers.

There are several stories that indicate that on the night after the gold strike, the group of prospectors had trouble 'proving' the gold by trying to amalgamate it with mercury. Imagine the scene: a dark bush-clad gully, a morepork calling, only the flames from the fire illuminating the

tense faces of the prospectors as they leaned forward to watch this crucial test.

> 'Then began the dispute as to whether that which was taken for gold was really gold or mica. Opinions differed. Some really thought it mica; others pretended to do so, wishing to induce holders of claims to abandon the same as worthless. One man anxious to put the metal to the test brought down some quicksilver. The gold was placed upon it, but floated. It refused to amalgamate. The claim holders looked blue — the sticklers for the mica theory were exultant. At this critical juncture a man named Barry rushed out and returned with a shovel, and placing some of the gold upon it, held both over a fire till the shovel was red hot. The gold thus treated was again placed in contact with the quicksilver, and, lo! it no longer refused to amalgamate. The sulphur in connection with the gold, which the action of the heat had dispelled, had been the cause of it's not amalgamating at first. We need not say that a general feeling of joy and satisfaction was felt at the result'.

But what of this man 'W. A. Hunt'? Is this Albert or William?

Both William Heinz in *Bright Fine Gold* and Tony Nolan in *Historic Gold Trails of the Coromandel* suspected that the two 'Hunt's' might have been the same person, however this tempting theory seems unlikely. The *West Coast Times* 29 August 1865 ran this advert, only a short time before the first Bruce Bay rush.

> 'If this shall meet the eye of Albert Hunt, his brother William would be glad to hear from him. Address the office of this paper'.

As we have already seen, Albert Hunt's brother is mentioned in regard to the Bruce Bay duffer rush and the Riverton hoax. The clincher comes from the *New Zealand Herald* on 19 August 1867.

> 'Hunt's reef is still a main point of attraction, and were all who visit it be allowed specimens, the reef would be carried away. I had before neglected to say that Mr William A. Hunt, one of the discoverers of this reef, is a brother of Mr Albert Hunt, the discoverer of the Westland gold-fields'.

So do we have to accept that there are parents of such little imagination that they christen their two boys, Albert William Hunt, and William Albert Hunt? Well actually, no. Subsequent writers seem to have got muddled for the 'A' in William Hunt's name stood for Alexander. He was married on the 10 September 1868 to Jessie Fisken Russell, and the announcement was made in the *New Zealand Herald* on the 2 October 1868.

But herein lies another story...

The Romantic Hunt

Some reports suggested that the Hunt mining party on the Coromandel each made £40,000 — an extraordinary figure for the times.

It's said that Hunt sold his interest for £49,000, plus he had already received £12,000 in dividends. Isdale reckoned that Hunt had a coach 'gilded' so he could ride around Auckland in a 'golden coach', and later prospected in Australia because it was 'in his blood', and married a barmaid, a move Isdale thought was shrewd. J. E. White helped his cousin publish his *Ancient History of Maori*, Cobley went to Wales and built a large house, Clarkson thriftily kept the money 'in the family'.

Needless to say, none of these accounts of how the miners spent their wealth are particularly reliable. Kelly for instance claimed that none of the prospectors managed to hang onto their wealth, and some died in 'straightened circumstances', a polite Victorian term for poverty. According to Kelly, Hunt...

> 'figured as a defendant in the Auckland Supreme Court in a breach of promise case brought against him by a young woman to whom he had been engaged when he left for the diggings, and whom he jilted in order to marry elsewhere. The verdict of the jury landed him in £1000 damages'.

A. W. Reed adds his version of Hunt's fate:

> 'The four partners are credited with having made £40,000 each. They followed the example of gold-diggers the world over. Hunt's tandem and two-wheeler were to be seen at every race meeting; twenty years later he was grub-staked and employed on half wages

> prospecting for a syndicate, still hoping for his luck to change. Another of the partners who became a wealthy property owner at Devonport was in the end reduced to cracking stones on the Parawai Road'.

However, tales of suddenly wealthy miners coming into grief and misfortune, are the stock in trade of the goldfields, and cannot really be relied on. The ordinary digger felt the need to create a myth that the 'homeward bounders' never really achieved happiness with their riches, and that the soul of the goldfields lay in it's camaraderie and mateship.

W. A. Hunt was reported as being on various local worthy committees in 1868, and as a racehorse owner at the Thames races in 1869, and seemed to be living the part of a prosperous citizen... but, just for once, the historical gossips got it right.

For after his marriage in September1868, William A. Hunt was promptly taken to court by his ex-fiancee in a Breach of Promise suit, and the case became a sensation in Auckland. The case was held in the Auckland Supreme Court on the 17 & 18 December and was reported in great and glorious detail in the *New Zealand Herald.*

> 'This, which may be regarded as the first cause celebre of the kind in this province, was part tried yesterday. The large new Court was crowded to excess during the proceedings. There could not have been less than from 1000 to 1500 persons present at one time'.

The case seemed to be played for it's laughs as much as anything else, and the spectators seemed to treat the matter as theatre.

> 'The ladies gallery was full of well-dressed females, who employed their handkerchiefs with unfailing energy, for the day was exceedingly hot. Indeed, the appearance of the gallery had very much the appearance of a "grand stand", and the interest was scarcely less in the result of the love chase that was going on below, the more so as the odds were so great and the match so unequal. Those who evidently came to hear a lawyers notion of a broken heart must have been disappointed...'

The plaintive, Miss Knox, was asking for £5000 in damages, a huge sum, and one likely to have been influenced

by the richness of the defendant. She claimed that she had been engaged to Hunt before he went to the Coromandel goldfield, but was subsequently jilted by him when his wealth enabled him to choose a more prestigious partner in life. Neither she nor Hunt were allowed to testify so a number of witnesses were called to either confirm the engagement or question it. William Hunt must have squirmed, for there was little doubt that the gallery favoured the girl, and little doubt that the engagement had taken place. The couple had even had engagement photographs taken of each other, as the photographer recalled.

After two days in court the jury considered its verdict and came back with a verdict for the plaintive and an amount of £1300 in damages.

> 'The result appeared to surprise most people, for the general opinion was divided, some thinking the plaintiff should have received a greater amount, and others estimating the probable award at very much less. The ladies in the gallery appeared to have felt the most pleasurable kind of excitement, which they exhibited in many ways. The young lady was surrounded by her friends, and warmly congratulated upon the result of the trial. The other most conspicuous personage found many condolences on his way on foot to the turnquet [sic] which admits to the precincts of the Court. Carriages were in great requisition, and the scene, looking towards Provincial Government Buildings, was not a usual one for Friday'.

William A. Hunt must have paid up, and perhaps feeling humiliated by the whole affair, shifted to Australia, for there is a conspicuous absence of his name from the *Thames Advertiser* in 1870. We know that his wife was still alive in 1927 for it was recorded that she came from Sydney to visit relatives in Auckland then.

The Real Hunt

The problem with putting a picture together of Albert Hunt is that what might be lacking in historical substance has been more than made up for in romantic 'facts'. The picture of an adept scoundrel, hoaxing his way through the West Coast and beyond, is too good a story to resist, and in particular, Hunt's duffer rush on the Bruce Bay features

in several books. How goes the old adage? Don't let the truth get in the way of a good story.

It is usually difficult to assign a personal credit for a gold discovery on any goldfield, but it is particularly hard in the case of the Hohonu/Greenstone rush. Gabriel Read's discovery on the Otago diggings at Tuapeka was unusually clear cut, though you can argue, as some did, that Black Peters should have received more acknowledgment. It may seem a fine point, but there is a considerable difference between a person who finds gold, and someone who demonstrates that it is payable. Always that crucial word.

Albert Hunt's role is equivocal. Certainly he did not first prospect the Hohonu/Greenstone, the Maori had done that, with extra work by people like Martin and Smart. However, Hunt's party did produce some evidence of payable gold and twelve ounces in two weeks was reasonably convincing. On his own account Hunt claimed he had found seven ounces in eight days and washed four ounces in a day before the curious eyes of Hammett and Revell.

William Martin believed categorically that Hunt had been shown the site of the greenstone boulder at Maori Point, by 'Simon' Tuakau. Martin knew Tuakau well, and had previously offered £50 to him in October 1863, if 'Simon' found any reasonable amount of gold. Later, Martin 'stayed a short time with 'Simon and Patahi, his wife at the Teremakau', and gleaned the whole story of Albert Hunt's stay. According to Martin, Hunt 'idled several weeks' at the Taramakau, trying to persuade' Simon' Tuakau to tell him of the location of the greenstone boulder.

> 'The Maoris understood the position, and out of good nature Simon and his mate disclosed their finds to him, and directed him where to go, giving him a lift in their canoe to the Hohonua, where Tainui and Simon each had a whare'.

In the end this simple explanation is probably the closest to the truth, and perhaps the Maori were not just taking pity on Hunt. Several accounts mention that Hunt had a Maori mate, which could have been Tuakau, and possibly they agreed to an arrangement: Tuakau showed Hunt the location, Hunt showed Tuakau the best techniques for extraction.

Whatever the case, the European public would probably not have believed a Maori tale about payable gold. They had been suspicious of the 'Whakapohai' gold that Lee had brought back with Tainui in 1858, and mostly uninterested in Tainui's Kapitea Creek gold of 1862. Perhaps the Maori realised this, and decided that any chance they had for a gold bonus would have to come alongside a European.

Whatever the doubts about Hunt's merits as a prospector, and especially the doubts about his later double-dealing efforts at Bruce Bay and Riverton, Hunt did show tenacity. Munching on potatoes, wheedling stores out of the government storekeeper, cutting deals with the Maori, his methods were unappealing, but he certainly assisted in revealing a goldfield in the Hohonu/Greenstone River.

Some writers have claimed that Hunt was partly Maori, which explains why the Maori took pity on him in the Hohonu/Greenstone, and also helps to explain why his brother was lead to the Kuranui Stream site. Certainly there is a remarkable similarity in events on both gold fields involving the Hunt brothers: coincidence or connection?

However all the claims of Hunt's Maori blood are from second hand sources, and not one person who knew Hunt well ever suggested he was part Maori. William Smart, W. H. Revell, William Martin, some of these men had good reason to score points off Hunt by claiming he was a 'half-caste', but none ever did so. John Peter Oakes also never referred to it, and none of the vitriolic newspaper accounts of Hunt's doings at Bruce Bay ever made the 'accusation' that Hunt had Maori blood.

Still the possibility cannot be completely discounted that Albert Hunt might have had a Maori mother. It would certainly help to explain how this relatively inexperienced, and apparently not very hard-working young man, managed to have good relations with the local Maori at the Taramakau River. Hunt was 'quite a young man' in 1864 when Smart met him, and if he was New Zealand born, that gives him a birth date in Auckland of possibly between 1845 to 1850, very early indeed, which increases the chances of him having a Maori parent.

There are distant pictures of William Hunt and party in Kelly's and Isdale's book, in both cases W. A. Hunt is sporting a big bushy beard, but in William's book *Thames and the Coromandel Peninsula — 2000 Years* there are four excellent close-up photos of the by-now famous prospec-

tors, and Hunt has lost most of his beard. In a test of no particular consequence, how would you describe William Hunt's features — European? Chinese? Maori?

Whichever way you look at it, the history of the Hunt brothers makes an intriquing story. Two brothers, Albert William Hunt, and William Alexander Hunt, both individually discover a goldfield in New Zealand, both showed a knack for being in the right place at the right time, and both may have received help from the local Maori. One went on to become famous, the other infamous. One became rich, the other seems to have disappeared completely. Both got embroiled in rather dodgy affairs, and one cannot help suspect that there is still more to the remarkable story of the Hunt brothers than has so far been uncovered.

In any event, Albert Hunt got a memorial. It's on the obscure road to the Taramakau Settlement, where there is a plaque on a boulder. Apart from this memorial, there is Hunt Beach at Bruce Bay, and also a Hunt Creek and Hunt Hill. Hunt's Creek off the Taipo River also refers to him — 'Hunt and Donnelly came and worked a few weeks in a creek above the Seven Mile'.

Sources for Chapter 7 — Albert Hunt

The Chimera

• Letter by W. H. Revell 26 August 1864 *Inwards Correspondence to the Canterbury Provincial Government*, but easier access via article by W. F. Heinz *Christchurch Press* 30 June 1973.

• William Smart's Journal p149 & 154.

• Letter by William Revell 28 September 1864 *Inwards Correspondence to the Canterbury Provincial Government*, but easier access via article by W. F. Heinz *Christchurch Press* 7 July 1973.

• *Lyttelton Times* 5 Jan 1866.

• *Christchurch Press* 3 March 1865. The Press was commenting on a public meeting to discuss the urgent need for a dray road to the diggings, particularly over Arthurs Pass '...but a piece of information was given by Mr. W. Wilson which, to our mind, settles the question of this route. He stated that an experienced digger, named Hunt, had prospected the Otira Valley, and describes it as mostly open grass land' [sic]. 'If this is true, Mr Dobson's work is very trifling, and the route will be open in a few days'.

To those readers that are not familiar with the Otira River, it drops through a steep and spectacular gorge, and is edged by dense rainforest most of the way to the Taramakau River. The red rata flowers are very fine in summer.

Haggling over Hunt

• *West Coast Times* 15 January 1866, or *Lyttelton Times* 5 January 1866.

• Philip Ross May *The West Coast Gold Rushes* p521-523.

Bruce Bay Rushes

• *West Coast Times* (first rush) 26 September, 7 October, 9 & 11 November, 12 & 23 December 1865, which the Times called a 'moral epidemic', (second rush) 2, 3 10, 12 April 1866 for detailed and lively accounts. See also 12 May and 2 August 1866 for aftermath.

William Hunt's criticism of his brother may have been real or ingenuous. Certainly I can find no mention anywhere of Albert Hunt at the Thames goldfield, and the brothers' apparent falling out at Bruce Bay may have been genuine.

• Phillip Ross May *The West Coast Gold Rushes* p176 & p188-191.

The Riverton Hoax

• *West Coast Times* 13 August, 26 September, 5 October, 8 November 1866.

• *Southland Times* 14 May to 16 July 1866. Hunt and party are mentioned several times in connection with the Riverton and Paihi diggings, including a claim that they had dug out '400 ounces of gold at Toitoies'. I can find no mention of a court case at the Resident Magistrates Court in the newspapers. Jeremiah O'Leary had a letter published repudiating an earlier correspondent who had stated that 'Hunt's party' of which O'Leary was by now a member, 'knew of better ground' than the Paihi. O'Leary's version of events is reliable,

but there is no mention of the subsequent hoax in the *Southland Times*, and after the 16 July Hunt seems to have disappeared again.

Thames Goldfields Rush

• W. A. Kelly *Thames: the first Hundred Years* p7-15.

• A. M. Isdale *History of the River Thames* p30-34.

• Zelma and Johnny Williams *Thames and the Coromandel Peninsula — 2000 Years* p68-71.

• *New Zealand Herald* 17 & 19 August 1867. W. A. Hunt visited the Herald office on 21 August whilst he was in Auckland to get tools to 'commence operations'.

• Philip Ross May *The West Coast Gold Rushes* p191.

• John Peter Oakes letter *Lyttelton Times* 21 March 1865.

• Tony Nolan *Historic Gold Trails of the Coromandel* p25-26.

• W. F. Heinz *Bright Fine Gold* p52-54.

• *Appendices to the Journals* of the House of Representatives 1877 I 1-4. According to the Appendices there were '26 claims' for the gold reward for the discovery of the Thames goldfield. One 'Henry Keesing' claims that 'Mr William Hunt' of 'Hunt's Claim', followed Keesing to the Kurunui Creek, saw a specimen that Keesing collected and came back the next day 10 August 1867 and pegged off the claim, since known as the 'Shotover Claim'. Mr Keesing's claim was rejected by the Commission.

The Romantic Hunt

• W. A. Kelly *Thames: the first Hundred Years* p15.

• A. M. Isdale *History of the River Thames* p32-33.

• Johnny Williams *Racing for Gold* p28.

• *New Zealand Herald* 16 July & 22 September 1868.

• A. W. Reed *Auckland: City of the Seas* p106. There is no source footnote with this comment, however there is the mention of a William A. Hunt 'prospector' at Paeroa (see below), so there may be some truth in this story after all. I was also initially sceptical of the Breach of Promise case...

• 18/19 December 1868 *New Zealand Herald* (Breach of Promise court case). Interestingly, on the marriage certificate Hunt describes himself as an 'engineer'.

• *Thames Diamond Jubilee 1867-1927, Thames Goldfields: a history from pre-proclamations to 1927* p127 (Mrs Hunt).

The Real Hunt

• Albert Hunt features in many books and in as many guises. Writers either plumping for Hunt the Hero or Hunt the Hoaxer.

West Coast Yesterdays by Mona Tracy paints the picture of Hunt as a 'will o'wisp', who had come from Ballarat as an 'experienced miner' and was known under the pseudonym of 'Warrigal'. She blames the false rush to Lake Brunner that Charles Money describes so well, on Albert Hunt. However, nowhere does Money identify the real names of 'Warregal' and 'Kangaroo Jem', and Tracy's opinion at present seems doubtful. Phillip Ross May also discounts that Albert Hunt was part of

this rush. Bob Howe in his account in The Diggers Story states that 'Jimmy the Warrigal' was a mate of his, and caused a rush to Lake Brunner. He does not mention the man's real name, but you might think he would if it were the famous Albert Hunt. 'Kangaroo Lake' near Rotomanu is the probable sight of this duffer rush.

J. Halkett Millar's book *Westland's Golden Sixties* predates Phillip Ross May's great work, and was an earlier attempt to put together some sort of history on the West Coast gold-rush. Unfortunately his mix of fact with a good story lets him down in places. He states that Hunt was known as 'Hunt the Explorer', and paints a picture of the prospector as initially an opportunist. Despite the urgings of W. H. Revell, who was the government store keeper on the Grey, Hunt 'idled' around the Maori village until he could persuade 'Simon the Maori' to show him where he had earlier found gold. Hunt 'wheedled' stores out of Revell, 'sponged' off the Maori, and was eventually shown 'pity' by Simon who gave Hunt the secret gold location. Halkett Millar believed that the miners chased Hunt off the Hohonu/Greenstone diggings because they 'resented Hunt's endeavour to obtain the gold bonus' and 'were annoyed with Hunt for the way he lived off the Maoris'.

After this, Hunt underwent a personality change and 'completely abandoned his former way of life' and became a respected prospector, and then came the Bruce Bay rush, where, if we are to believe Millar, Hunt undertook another abrupt personality change and became once more a rogue. The picture Halkett Millar draws is plainly inconsistent, and shows the difficulties writers have had in placing the character of Albert Hunt.

In the *Handbook of New Zealand Mines* the author goes for Hunt the hero. An 'experienced miner', had been 'exploring the accessible hills for months', 'the only European in the locality for some time', 'in a few months got together about 20 ounces of gold', and when threatened by the other miners showed 'pluck and determination' and drove them off with a shovel after he 'knocked one fellow down'. William Smart disparaged this version.

'If all information is similar to this in Larnach's book [Minister of Mines] it is valueless as a true record'.

Then there is the oddest tale of all, told by Daniel Cuttance, referring to a false rush Hunt is supposed to have started up the Landsborough (he gives no date), but both Joe and Harry Cuttance were involved. After the failure to find gold the diggers 'tried' Hunt, and guarded him in a tent overnight, but Hunt was released by a miner taking pity on him. I can find no other reference to this extraordinary yarn, and can only put it down to the resilience of the romantic tradition around Hunt.

• Mona Tracy *West Coast Yesterdays* p94-101.

• Charles Money *Knocking About in New Zealand* p118-123.

• Bob Howe *The Diggers Story* p111.

• Philip Ross May *The West Coast Gold Rushes* p173.

• Halkett Millar *Westland* p182-195.

• W. J. M. Larnach *Handbook of New Zealand Mines* p116-117.

• William Smart's *Journal* p155.

• Daniel Cuttance's *Okura, Haast, Life History* p77-78, from the Murray Gunn collection of papers.

Further Information

• There was a 'W. Hunt' on petition from the Lindis Pass goldfield dated April 1861, see Vincent Pyke p23. Robert Booth's *Five Years in New Zealand* has an excellent description of the short-lived Lindis Pass goldfield with two interesting drawings, see p58 on.

• There was a William Hunt 'miner' at Kowai Pass in *Wise's 1880-1881 Directory*, and in the *1885-1886 Directory* there was listed 'Hunt, William A. prospector' at Paeroa (p26).

• Despite a detailed search of the birth records of Auckland, no information has yet been found on either of the Hunt brothers. An Auckland jury list of 1850 and 1851 mentions a 'Hunt, Richard, Jas., Princes Street, Publican'.

• A search of various photographic records in Christchurch and Wellington has not revealed any photo of Albert Hunt, which is perhaps surprising. It would not be unusual for a well-known gold-discover to get a portrait done, it happened on the Coromadel and at Otago, so I still live in hope.

• It is puzzling why so many people refer to Albert Hunt as 'Arthur'. W. H. Revell did initially, as did some of the first newspaper reports, and it is unlikely that they had all made a mistake. One has to assume that for some reason Albert Hunt was using the name 'Arthur', but why? This ambiguity of character does seem rather a trait.

Chronology of William A. Hunt

If one accepts certain dates and suppositions, then William A. Hunt's chronology would look like this:

1860 May, Fantome party on the West Coast.

1861 April, Lindis Pass, Otago.

1862-63? 'Shotover claim', Shotover River, Otago.

1865 August, somewhere on the West Coast goldfield.

1866 April, Bruce Bay, West Coast.

1867 August, Thames goldfield, Coromandel.

• My persistence in following William A. Hunt was partly in the hope that his brother Albert would turn up somewhere in the proceedings. After all, his brother was fabulously wealthy now, and running a big gold mine, he would need a brotherly hand surely? No such luck.

Chapter 8

After the Gold Rush

So who found payable gold first on the West Coast? Again the crucial word here is, of course, 'payable'. Many people spotted gold on the West Coast from 1857 onwards, indeed the Maori may have identified it before then, but who demonstrated you could make a living out of digging up gold?

The question, as we have seen, is not a particularly easy one to answer, but by a process of definition one can get very close to the truth. If one uses the criteria of who first brought out a convincing weight of gold, then the answer is relatively obvious: it was the Maori.

‘If a goldfield is after all to be forced upon Canterbury...’

This famous and satirical editorial in the Lyttelton Times 13 August 1864 has been frequently quoted, particularly the first two sentences, which have to a large extent been taken at face value.

‘If a goldfield is after all to be forced upon Canterbury, without the consent and contrary to the expressed desire of the settler, they must nevertheless submit to fate. And should the natural feelings of discontent, swelling up in their prudent bosoms when fortunes golden favours are thrust upon into their hands, be somewhat hard to subdue, the consolation exists that the gold field has turned up in the remotest corner of the province. Before narrating what we know of this matter, we beg to assure our readers that the odious details of rich gold-finding, to which we feel bound to give publicity, are not dwelt upon with any wish to create a sensation by exaggerating the horrors of the case; and on the other hand, that the alleviating circumstances of cold, wet, want, and hardships are as brightly painted as truth permits to our earnest desire of giving satisfaction. Had it been our no less painful duty to announce that the plague had broken out in Christchurch, but that the druggists shops were well stocked, we could not take more pains to tell the story truthfully than we now do in narrating the facts respecting a gold field which has broken out in Canterbury with extenuating circumstances’.

Payable Gold

'In once more referring to the first discovery of the gold, I would mention that the Maoris were, without a shadow of a doubt, the first to find and bring in gold in any quantity, and that they were the pioneers for a long time is, as I have before shown, quite certain'.

Reuben Waite A Narrative of the Discovery of the West Coast Goldfields p10 & p24.

Of course in a sense this is not a very satisfactory answer, since people like to have a clear-cut hero. One person alone, who, shouldering a swag into unknown lands, comes back with fabulous wealth and a tale to tell.

That's what happened in the great Otago rush of 1861. Gabriel Read, found payable gold, admittedly with the help of 'Black' Peter, and wrote a letter to the Otago Daily Times. However Dunedin folk were so surprised that they scarcely believed him and it took more letters and deputations from the city to convince people that Gabriel was perfectly correct: there was a ton of gold in the ground, come and get it boys.

Read's remarkable public spiritedness was rare, and he himself made no fortune from the gold rush, but he was a clear-cut discoverer, and credit was given. The same was true of Hartley and Reiley's sudden emergence with a swagful of gold from the upper Clutha, an astonishing moment. And even the great blusterer Bill Fox, and his rich secretive haul from the Arrow River, produced a nice headline for the papers for many days afterwards. The Otago rush had golden heroes, great discovers who paved the way — but that was not the case for the West Coast.

Several people tried to claim this role, but as we have seen, were mostly small-players in a much larger piece of theatre, and these quickly became submerged by other claimants. The most well-known claimant was Albert Hunt, and as we have seen he was quite an expert at 'massaging' his public image, and keeping himself before the Provincial Government's eye. They had their doubts at the time, but later general opinion seemed to plump for Albert and his little twelve ounces. A good example of what today we would call 'celebrity marketing'. It's not about the facts, let's have a hero.

How much gold would trigger sufficient public interest to start a rush?

In general it seems to be a figure of about 4-6 ounces, worked in a day or so. Of course the diggers were fussy, and after the easy gold, so less than that amount might still be deemed payable, but was unlikely to stir the public's imagination. Captain Dixon's 30-40 grains was not enough, neither was the 'pieces' of scaly gold brought back by G. W. H. Lee, or a 'sample' by Leonard Harper. Albert Hunt's party gleaned seven ounces in a week or

two, but that was not considered enough. But his four and a half ounces in one day, whilst W. H. Revell watched, was convincing. Gabriel Read in Otago showed 7 ounces 'in ten hours' with a knife and pan, that was enough too.

But the digger was a fickle beast, for despite Read's promising returns, the Otago rush was slow to get running, whilst two thousand diggers went nearly insane over Albert Hunt's miserable four grains to the dish at Bruce Bay. The question of credibility was always a factor. No one had yet heard of the steady, industrious Gabriel Read in 1861, whereas the wild, unreliable Hunt, was still being credited with the Hohonu/Greenstone rush.

Now the West Coast gold rush had it's credentials established in two areas: the Buller River, and the Hohonu/Greenstone/Taramakau area. The first parcel of gold to come from the Buller was brought by 'two Maoris', eleven ounces. That was certainly interesting, but how long had it taken them to extract it? Then some two weeks later some Maori prospectors brought '27 ounces', and three weeks later a parcel of 52 ounces appeared. This was quite a sensation. The Maori party had not been long at the field, allowing for travelling time there and back, and were quite possibly making 6-8 ounces a day. European complacency automatically allowed for Maori inefficiency, and Reuben Waite could see a prospect here for more experienced diggers.

There's no doubt that these two parcels of gold triggered the Buller rush, which would have been bigger, if it were not for the distractions of the Whangapeka and Tuapeka diggings at the same time. At the Lyell, it was the famous '30 ounce' nugget produced by Maori diggers, that got the newspapers excited and started the rush up the Buller.

On the Taramakau and Hohonu/Greenstone the matter is less clear, and most of the initial claims are essentially quite vague. In early 1863 Reuben Waite had met some Maori at the Buller who had journeyed from the Grey River:

> 'These Maoris had with them some very nice pieces of gold, which they said they had got in the Grey district'.

However, the first definite sized parcel of gold mentioned was obtained by the Hunt party, about '12 ounces' and Albert Hunt obtained 'seven ounces' on his own over two weeks or 'eight days'. As we have seen, this amount, plus the four and a half ounces, seems to be Hunt's sole proven amount.

However this was more than William Smart and Michael French were able to demonstrate, for despite stating they had found payable gold they actually showed very little to W. H. Revell at the stores depot. Smart only mentions 'fair prospects' in his letter published in the Nelson Examiner, and it was Reuben Waite who boosted Smart's claim by increasing the 'three grains' to the more attractive figure of 'four grains to the dish'.

What of the Maori prospectors? Richard Sherrin mentioned that 'Albert Tuapeki' had got 5 ounces of gold from the Hohonu/Greenstone River in early 1863. It is believed that Albert Hunt was guided to his second and more profitable gold site by 'Simon' Tuakau, but how much gold had Ihaia Tainui and Haimona 'Simon' Tuakau extracted in this time?

Haimona 'Simon' Tuakau had shown Revell 'five ounces' on 11 July, which he claimed had come for four hours work with a tin dish. What is even more impressive, is that when Reuben Waite arrived at the Grey River in June 1864 he was immediately presented by the Maori with 50 ounces of 'fine gold'. The gold obviously had come from the Hohonu/Greenstone, and probably was an accumulation of the three Maori digging parties observed by Revell. How long it had taken to extract seems conjectural, but it certainly suggested payable gold, at least it did to Waite, and was in fact in those tense June days of 1864, the only demonstrable proof that there was payable gold in the Hohonu/Greenstone and Taramakau area.

Tainui and Tuakau had worked their claims in a sporadic way for some two years at least, and it is interesting that neither William Martin, or William Smart, who both worked closely with the two Maori prospectors, ever mentioned that they had achieved anything more than a few colours and the odd piece of gold. Since Tainui's first claim for gold in December 1862 was so completely ignored, he may have deemed it a waste of time to make a second claim, and from their experience on the Collingwood fields and watching the European prospectors, the Maori may have decided that keeping their gold prospects secret was a sensible idea. Certainly, their behaviour at trying to mislead the first batch of diggers off the Nelson, suggests they were a good deal more 'savvy' at the gold game than anyone had previously supposed.

One cannot help but feel that the rush to the Hohonu/ Greenstone was largely engineered by the rivalry between the different prospectors chasing the gold bonus, and the profiteering of Reuben Waite. Without the evidence of the Maori gold, Waite might well have been tempted to slip off quietly before his store got wrecked, as it was, he got a bad scare. Philip Ross May again:

> 'That there were payable deposits was first shown by parties of Collingwood Maoris who, after April 1861, forwarded parcels of gold from the Buller River to Nelson. Their discoveries were proved by the pioneer prospectors who accompanied Waite and Rogers to the Buller in June 1861. Had not Otago broken out at the same time, somebody — it should have been a Maori — might well have received a bonus for finding payable gold on the West Coast'.
>
> *The West Coast Gold Rushes* p520.

If one is lofty enough to draw moral conclusions from the fascinating and tempestuous saga of gold exploration and discovery on the West Coast, then it is apparent that by and large the early discoverers were not particularly enriched.

Reuben Waite died in poverty, Jakob Lauper was noted as walking the streets of Christchurch ill and hungry, William Smart and Michael French got a mountain each named after them 'and that's all we ever got' Smart recalled bitterly. James Mackay junior died in absolute poverty and Leonard Harper failed spectacularly later in life, and had to hide from his creditors in the Channel Islands. Charles Money went back to England, Albert Hunt got £200 quid and a reputation, Ihaia Tainui and family probably made more money from the rents at Greymouth than they ever made from gold digging.

Townsend, Howitt, Tupaki, Whitcombe never left the West Coast alive. J. C. Drake became an alcoholic and drowned in Golden Bay, Tainui committed suicide, James Hammett died after fisticuffs in Christchurch. Both Captain Dixon and Francis Morris were drowned in separate wrecks in 1865.

Some of the characters in this brief period of history have disappeared from known records, and some undoubtedly persisted with a life on the goldfields, simply because it had glamour. It is sometimes difficult to remind oneself

that most of the characters in this story were mostly very young men: Leonard Harper was only 20 years of age when he crossed to the West Coast, Arthur Dobson was 22 when he went as a surveyor to the West Coast in 1863, Albert Hunt 'was quite a young man', perhaps not even twenty years old, Charlie Howitt died aged 25.

Gold prospecting on the West Coast was largely a young man's game, an adventure, a lark out with their mates, on the edge of wilderness, and a chance of fame and fortune. It is difficult to exaggerate the effects of this gold fever upon New Zealand's history, or to find an adequate modern analogy. It transformed the country and put this small isolated island quite literally on the map, at least for a while.

It is curious, that whereas the short-lived cowboy era of the American west has deeply etched it's way into the American consciousness, with all it's fantastic myths and trimmings, New Zealand's equivalent 'cowboy' era hardly rates.

These character-rich gold-diggers remain to a large extent quite anonymous. They worked and played hard and most of them came away with nothing to show for it but a good yarn. There is still gold there of course, but to make it pay you will need more than just the enthusiasm, vigour, tin dish and shovel of the early diggers. Men dreamt of gold and woke up to the rain. They still do.

The Coast Without Gold...?

It is perhaps idle to speculate on what might have been the state of the West Coast today if no gold rush had taken place. Hokitika for example, would probably not exist, and perhaps neither would Ross or Haast. Certainly the special settlements of Haast and Karamea may never have got started, for they were partly founded on the Micawber-like optimism on the part of the Provincial Government that some mineral or other 'would turn up'.

The Arthur's Pass road certainly would not exist, timber and coal would still be the main exports from the coast (nothing really changes), and the high cost of getting goods to market would have kept these operations heavily subsidised.

At this very moment conservationists and developers would be locked into a furious battle over the proposal to put a road over the Haast Pass, over which the Christchurch Press would remark in an editorial that the cost would be at least a hundred million dollars, and of what benefit would it bring to Canterbury?

A Note on Sources

All human endeavour can be considered as treasure hunting of one sort or another, whether it's digging for gold, stamp collecting, shopping or chasing a mate.

This history is no different. Because I was chasing personalities, rather than events, I had to spend a good deal of time browsing books and newspapers in the serendipitous hope that a relevant name might suddenly leap out. Even when a name was mentioned, it was often so brief, that it was only marginally helpful in providing a fuller picture, and it would be tedious to list all these minor sources. At times it was rather like piecing together a jigsaw, when you already suspect that at least some the pieces are going to be missing. However, it seems to me now that there always are sources, it is just a question of locating them.

A good deal of research has already been achieved about the West Coast goldfields, notably by Phillip Ross May in his outstanding book *The West Coast Gold Rushes*. Especially useful to me was the densely organised chapter 'Prospectors and Surveyors', where he carefully assessed the various comings and goings of the main players, indeed The Colours can be seen as a detailed exposition of this particular chapter. His book was an invaluable starting point to all my research. May also considered the claimants to the gold bonus in his Appendix III and brilliantly analyses the validity of the John Peter Oakes claim of 1857, but out of necessity May had to stick to bare facts and only hinted at the robust personalities underneath. All footnotes refer to the first edition which contains May's detailed source annotations.

It is also worth looking at May's earlier thesis *The West Canterbury Gold Rush to 1865*, for there is some material in here that does not occur in his later book. For example, there is a reproduction of William Smart's sketch map of the Hohonu goldfield, which he submitted with his claim for the gold bonus, and the mention of Albert Hunt as a member of the *Fantome* party to the Buller in 1860.

The best primary resources are the newspapers. Nearly all the journals of the early surveyors and explorers like Rochfort, Mackay and Sherrin were published in full, as well as numerous gold reports 'From Our Own Correspondent'. These local scribes had a simple dichotomy of language to describe a goldfield: either 'prospects were most sanguine' and 'everyone pronounced themselves completely satisfied', or 'it has been a complete sell' and 'the public are informed to steer away from this damnable duffer'. They also did not hesitate to state when matters 'were exceedingly dull' and there was 'very little to talk about today'. One can hardly imagine the six o'clock television evening news starting off with a terse explanation that 'nothing' happened today, although wouldn't it be nice?

Newspapers of the time were quite different from now. Advertisements occupied the front page, editorials were long, fulsome and parochial, court reports were detailed in the extreme, particularly if the case was of a 'sensational' or 'melancholy' matter. Type was small, perhaps 8-6 pt, the text was densely assembled, and even the major headlines rarely exceeded 12 or 14 pt in size. For example the text in this book is 11 pt. Readers must have had sharper eyes then. Over the period of the

gold rushes the main international news items concerned the American Civil War, the Taiping Rebellion in China, and Garibaldi's redshirts trying to unite Italy. The main local news item was of course the Maori Land Wars or civil wars, though the South Island was not particularly affected by them. New Zealand was patriotically a British Colony, and the arrival of the 'English Mails' was an important event, with the happenings in Yorkshire reported as if New Zealand were just another county.

Yet despite this wealth of overseas and local material, if a gold strike was made, it was hotly and hastily reported in all it's glorious spuriousness. The most cautious newsman of the day knew exactly what his public wanted, and as a consequence there is no shortage of comment, reports, anecdotes and editorials on the gold diggings. It was an exciting time, the hinterland was unknown and every crackpot amateur geologist could have a field day.

The *Christchurch Press* and *Lyttelton Times* are available in a complete run on microfilm in the New Zealand room of the Christchurch Public Library. The MacMillan Brown collection in the Canterbury University Library has some 'hard copy' *West Coast Times*, from 1865-1867, and the West Coast Historical Museum (Hokitika) Library has a complete collection of the *West Coast Times* on microfilm. The *Nelson Examiner* and it's Nelson rival *The Colonist*, are mainly available through the National Library (Wellington) on microfilm.

Several important hand-written manuscripts cover the prospecting period. Charlton Howitt (1862-1863) Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, William Smart (1862-1864) Canterbury University (Mackay Collection) Christchurch, and William Martin (1863) Hocken Library, Dunedin. Howitt's diary is terse, but reliable, Smart's journal is fuller, more interesting, and less reliable. It seems to be a re-iteration 'from the Diary kept by William Smart' and some of his memories seem suspect. Of the three, Martin's manuscript (of which only an edited shadow appeared in *The Diggers Story*) is by far the most well written, detailed and engrossing.

With manuscript or handwritten material I made some minor adjustments to spelling and punctuation to make sensible reading, unless it altered the sense of the text. I have always standardised common spellings like 'Taramakau', which was written in an astoundingly large number of inventive ways. The Waitaha called it 'Tatara Makau'. When in doubt over a word I have indicated this with a query [?].

Also of considerable value were the *Inwards Correspondence to the Canterbury Provincial Government*, held at the National Archives, Christchurch Office, which contain the letters and reports of William Horton Revell, the journal of John Price, letters by Thomas Cass (the chief surveyor) and much other useful material.

W. F. Heinz was a notable writer on goldfields history, particularly the West Coast, and two volumes of scrapbooks of newspaper cuttings, including his own articles, are kept at the Hokitika Museum. The museum also has a substantial biographical and subject index.

One of the best day-to-day diaries on gold digging, although not strictly relevant to this book, is Theophilus Cooper's *A Digger's Diary* at the Thames 1867. For a picture of the daily grit, grime, boredom, eccentricity and chaos of a prospector's goldfield, it cannot be beaten.

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