

FINDING “TE WHERRO” IN ŌTĀKOU

Māori and the early days of the Otago gold rush

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Abstract

The history of Māori miners at the Aorere gold rush in 1856–1858 is well documented in research by Hilary and John Mitchell. Philip Ross May examined the multi-layered history of Māori in the goldfields of the Buller and Westland, and the full story of the convoluted machinations of government agents and miners and their dealings with the Māori of the Coromandel are becoming known as Treaty of Waitangi hearings examine the past. However, the story of the Māori miners of Otago has remained relatively unknown, beyond a few legends offered as exotic participants parenthetical to the real events of the gold rush there. On closer examination it is clear that the true history of Māori miners in Central Otago is far richer, more complex, and much older than is widely known. This article examines this history until the mid-1860s.

Keywords

gold, colonialism, prospector, Māori miners, Otago

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Introduction

Nearly every piece of writing on the subject of Māori and Otago gold begins with the statement by Vincent Pyke: “That the Maoris¹ were aware of the occurrence of gold, before the arrival of European colonists, is a tolerably well established fact” (1887a, p. 2). This article examines the narratives of Māori gold-finding in Otago up to the mid-1860s to reveal how widespread Māori engagement with the gold rush was. It is Pyke who highlighted the two names Māori gave to gold. In his 1887 *History of the Early Gold Discoveries in Otago*, he says Māori used “the word ‘wherro’ [*sic*] ... meaning ‘red,’ [or] more generally to indicate anything brightly coloured”, and “‘Simon’ which ... is probably a corruption of ‘timata’, [which] means ‘heavy’—and in this connection, ‘heavy stones’” (1887a, p. 122).

Pākehā perceptions of Māori involvement

No journal written by Māori miners from the early days of the Central Otago gold rush is known to exist and in the heady days the early 1860s, when swarms of miners crossed and re-crossed the province in a headlong scramble for gold, only newspaper reports and the perceptions of other miners reveal the involvement of Māori in gold-finding. But the newspapermen who wrote of Māori participation tended to produce a stilted, shallow semiotic of native-ness, where Māori kaupapa disappears into the tangled haze of Victorian ideas of indigeneity (O’Leary, 2001).

An example is the 1857 editorial of the

Otago Witness which, when it became apparent that there was gold in Otago, warned:

We believe the danger to be greater than most of our readers will imagine it to be. The discovery of gold and the development of digging may attract lawless and reckless characters who, in coming in contact with the Natives, may be less careful in avoiding an encounter and as it is the custom amongst the Natives not to seek out the perpetrator of a crime, but to make the whole tribe answerable, any violence committed by a white man would be revenged upon the Europeans indiscriminately. (“Editorial”, 1857, p. 4)

The land wars of the north tended to be characterised in the Otago press as “savage” Māori (“Editorial”, 1860; “Editorial I”, 1862; “Native War in New Plymouth”, 1858; and others) fighting a war of rebellion with the crown. This tended to lead to a prevalent theme in many commentaries constructing Māori as inherently unreliable at best, and dangerous at worst.

This was seized upon by Australian gold-fields newspapermen who, dismayed at losing population to Otago in 1861, raised the spectre of hordes of Māori as an inducement to stay in Victoria: “It is to be hoped that those disposed to try the new field will count the chances before they start ... [and] the chances of a rush of Maories have also to be considered, as though the natives are not in any strength in that part now, they have a keen appreciation of the value of gold, and will soon be on the spot” (“Mining Intelligence”, 1861, p. 2).

Nevertheless, without other sources, and remaining aware of these limitations, analysis of the history of Māori gold mining is reliant on these unreliable newspapermen’s occasional, but largely incomplete and mostly tangential, mention of Māori gold miners.

It has been traditionally believed that in the other rushes worldwide, few indigenous people were mining, although recent scholarship by Kier Reeves (2005) and Fred Cahir (2012)

1 Throughout this paper, the word “Maoris” or “Maories” for referring to groups of Māori is used by 19th century newspaper and report writers. This is incorrect, since the Māori alphabet has no letter “s”, but the original spelling, and that of misspelt names, when they appear, is maintained to reflect the original historical sources.

refutes this for Australia, and Native American mining at California has been a growing field of study since the 1970s (Rawls, 1976; Starr, 1998). Otago Māori miners in the early 1860s have a far more complex history than has been previously discussed, and it started before most have assumed it did.

De Blosseville's mines

Jules de Blosseville, midshipman of the French expeditionary vessel *Coquille* under M. Duperrey who visited Australia and the Bay of Islands in 1824 (Marchant, 1966), interviewed “Pākehā Māori” James Caddell and his wife Tokitoki in Sydney (Hall-Jones, 2012) and transcribed Captain Edwardson’s journal of an 18-month trip around the South Island in 1822–1823. His accumulated knowledge was distilled into his *Essai sur les mœurs et les coutumes des habitants de la partie méridionale de Tavai-Poénammou*, which was sent to Paris and added to the encyclopaedic *Nouvelles Annales Des Voyages de la Géographie et de L’Histoire* (de Blosseville, 1826). A comment in *Tavai-Poénammou* about the resources of the South raises an intriguing question:

Fine trees, useful for all maritime purposes, flax in abundance and numerous seals whose furs are very valuable—these are the resources that *Tavai-Poénammou* has to offer ... If some day these lands are colonised by Europeans, the South Island will only be a branch of the North, unless some valuable mines concealed in its ranges and already talked of by the natives give the island an importance later on, which it is at present impossible to foresee. (de Blosseville, 1826, p. 32)

Is the reference to “some valuable mines concealed in its ranges and already talked of by the natives” (originally, “des mines précieuses, recelées dans ses montagnes et devinées déjà par les naturalistes”) the first hint by South Island

Māori that there is gold to be found in the mountainous interior? If so—and this pre-dates Te Pouho’s Ngāti Tama tauā from Wakapuaka to Tūtūrau which resulted in nearly all Central Otago-resident Māori being killed (Mitchell & Mitchell, 2004)—then clearly Māori recognised that the gold they had seen in the interior had value to Pākehā, knew that it was there in abundance, and had talked of this.

Tūhawaiki’s knowledge

Some Māori passed on what they knew; A. H. McLintock wrote in 1966 that “according to one popular tradition, Tuhawaiki is said to have told [New Zealand Company Surveyor] Tuckett of its presence as early as 1844” (McClintock, 1966, para. 4), although I have not found any mention of this in any of Tuckett’s diaries or letters.

The first historian to write of Māori and Otago gold was the goldfields commissioner, Vincent Pyke, who talked with Māori who had heard the earliest knowledge of gold, and assembled material to write a history of gold discoveries in the province. Pyke’s (1887a) oft-quoted comment on the subject forms the basis of much of what is written of Māori attitudes towards and knowledge of gold:

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 “Tuawaik,” 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 was the

place where it principally occurred. ... Other Natives freely made similar statements when they observed the value that the new-comers seemed to place upon golden coins and ornaments. (p. 2).

To write his history, Pyke met some key players such as Hakaria Haeroa in their homes, and solicited letters from Pākehā like Palmer and Gabriel Read. Nevertheless, some of the history of gold-finding escaped Pyke.

Captain Howell and the *Amazon* at California

In 1849, whaling ship captain and founder of Riverton John Howell built a 130-ton whaling schooner called the *Amazon* and crewed it with his Māori in-laws and some Pākehā. On his first voyage, Howell was engaged to take French immigrants unhappily resident at Akaroa to Tahiti. On arrival, he found that Papeete

was buzzing with news. The discovery of gold in California was the one topic. Vessels were badly wanted to take prospectors to the new El Dorado. Captain Howell would have preferred to go back to New Zealand. But the Maoris wanted to see more of the world—and particularly to see more of this gold they heard so much about. They had their way, and with would-be gold-seekers as passengers to pay for the cruise, and a crew eager to see what California was like, made the trip in good time. The Maoris and the two or three white men, including Captain Howell who comprised the crew of the *Amazon* took a hand at this digging for gold. Materially they prospered, but it was not a happy prosperity. The Californian fields had far more than the usual goldfields' share of ruffians from every quarter of the world. And the Maoris seemed easy game. A white man, one of the mates on the ship, was killed defending the gold the party had won; there was a prospect of

further trouble, and the whole party decided that New Zealand was much more peaceful and desirable. In any case, the Maoris were disappointed with gold; Captain Howell had been struck dumb when, after the party had found its first valuable strike of gold, some of the Maoris said that it was a waste of time coming so many miles for the stuff. They had it in New Zealand. Later events proved how right they were, too. But when the party returned to New Zealand the Maoris would not take Captain Howell to areas where they said gold might be. Perhaps their experience of California made them doubtful of the wisdom of exploiting New Zealand's gold deposits. ... [John Howell] in later years told the joke against himself that he took a party of Maoris thousands of miles to find gold when the same stuff existed, and they knew existed, in the district from which he set out. ("Maori Miners Amazing Expedition", 1937, p. 10)

In July 1848 the *Amazon* arrived in Sydney from the whaling grounds of the South ("Shipping List", 1848) and departed for New Zealand, from where it made coastal runs and small trips to the South Pacific ("Advertisements—for California", 1850) with nothing recorded until its arrival in Otago Harbour in December 1849, giving the possible dates for their Californian adventure. The narrative is repeated in J. H. M. Salmon's authoritative *A History of Gold Mining in New Zealand* (1963) but does not feature in any other goldfields historiography.

Howell's great-granddaughter Eva Wilson collected the oral histories of her family to write *Hakoro Ki Te Iwi—The Story of Captain Howell and His Family* (1976), a narrative which largely confirms the earlier report. Wilson says the man killed was Captain's mate Watson and suggests that he was slain by former convicts from Tasmania. Her grandfather described how Howell had told him that ancient superstitions about a terrifying "lost tribe of Red-headed Hawaiis" dwelling in what is now Central Otago played a part in the reluctance of

the Māori miners to reveal the location of the gold on their return, rather than a reaction to the events in California (Wilson, 1976).

Thomas Archibald's Beaumont expedition

With the rush to California and recent rushes to New South Wales and Victoria filling the columns of local newspapers, comment from Otago Māori that the local rivers had gold in them proved too tempting to ignore.

On the basis of these rumours, expeditions were organised. The first was launched in 1852. This escaped the notice of contemporary newspapers, but in 1862 the *Otago Daily Times* printed Vincent Pyke's précis history of gold discoveries in Otago, which began with the introduction discussing Māori knowledge of gold quoted above. It then described the first prospecting efforts:

In 1852, ... Mr. Thomas Archibald, formerly a resident at the Pomahaka, [wrote] "Nearly all the Maori residents at the Molyneux at the time of our excursion were strangers, having been only a few years in the place. There were only a man and a woman who knew the country between the mouth of the River and the Lakes. The man, Raki Raki, 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 Molyneux, but did not know its 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 Molyneux. ... we had the services of a Californian miner, who had left a whaling vessel in the Bay. We made a party

of five, and started up the river in March, 1852, in a whale boat which I brought from Dunedin. We prospected the bars and the banks of the river, as ... the Beaumont. As none of us knew anything about gold-seeking except the American, and getting nothing more than the color, we resolved to return, after having nearly a three weeks' cruise." ("Editorial II", 1862, p. 4)

After its feature in the *Otago Daily Times*, this became part of the official record in Pyke's *Report on the Gold Fields of Otago* for the House of Representatives' 1863 session and was reproduced in Pyke's 1887 *History of the Early Gold Discoveries in Otago* and in the *Otago Daily Times* Otago Jubilee Edition in March 1898.

In the Jubilee Supplement which appeared in the following week's *Otago Witness*, a letter challenged Archibald's version:

Mr James Crane, of Waihola, writes "[Thomas Archibald's story] ... is quite incorrect. ... In the year 1851, while I was at Henley, some natives came there from the Molyneux. All the talk at that time was about the finding of gold in Australia. As we were talking about it, one of the natives, by name Raki-raki, told us that when towing his canoe up the Matau, near Te Houka Beach, he picked up a stone the colour of a Pakeha sovereign. He carried it in his hand for a while, and then threw it in the canoe to the children. That story roused us somewhat, so we made up our minds to go and look for ourselves. William Palmer, James Whybrow, John Bennett, Teraki and Tuera (2 natives), and myself, went to the Molyneux, and got Mr Redpath's boat, and went as far as the Pomahaka Falls, where natives were eeling, but came back without doing anything. In the beginning of the following year (1852) ... [we went] with Mr Thomas Archibald, as he wanted to go and see the country, that he should take his boat. We started and got as far as the mouth of the Tuapeka. ... I must blame

Mr Archibald for us not finding the gold at that time. ... We were only three days away—two going up and one coming back. We got no specks for the reason that we never tried to get any, and we had no time or chance to do so.” (“Otago Settlement Jubilee”, 1898, p. 25)

Crane’s group included James Whybrow, one of the first settlers at Toi-Tois (sometimes written Toe-Toes) on the Maitara coast, who retired from whaling (“Reminiscences of the Fifties”, 1893) to live beside Sam Perkins (infamous in 1861 for leading the Blue Mountain Duffer Rush) and other former whalers who lived with their Māori wives, living as subsistence farmers and labouring for nearby runholders (McClean, 1989). Palmer had set up and managed the Tautuku whaling station in 1839 and is almost certainly the “old whaler” who wrote to Pyke in 1862 and is quoted in *The Story of the Early Gold Discoveries in Otago* (Pyke, 1887b). According to Beattie (as cited in Mitchell & Mitchell, 2004, p. 137), Palmer was briefly notorious for being the owner of the preserved severed head of Te Pūoho (killed at Tūtūrau), before he sold it to an antiquities collector in Sydney. Teraki had guided Otago Company Surveyor Frederick Tuckett in 1844, while John Bennett achieved a small notoriety for finding 1 pennyweight of gold in the Maitara in 1855 and was the first to write to the *Otago Colonist* to request that a reward be offered for finding a payable goldfield (“Biographical Sketches”, 1898).

One intriguing aspect of both of these narratives is the mention of the Ngāti Māmoe chief, Raki Raki. Whereas A. H. McLintock noted a tradition that speculated that Tūhawaiki told Tuckett about gold in Otago, Raki Raki’s involvement in early surveys is more certain. He was employed by J. W. Barnicoat and Tuckett as a “native guide” in their survey work, and Raki Raki’s sketch of the lakes of Central Otago appears in Barnicoat’s journal of 1843–1844 (Barnicoat, 1844). This would suggest that if anyone was advising Tuckett of gold in the

interior, it was probably Raki Raki, who was Waitaha, Ngāti Māmoe and Kāi Tahu, and given that his name kept cropping up in the early stories of gold, he deserves a more prominent place in the narrative than heretofore.

The first, hesitant “rush” in Otago was to the Maitara River, following Surveyor Charles Ligar’s 1856 disclosure that he “found gold very generally distributed in the gravel and sand of the Maitara River at Tūturau” (“Provincial Council”, 1856, p. 3). Māori mined there alongside the scattered local farmers, shepherds and assorted amateur miners who were attempting to work the gravels without the benefit of experience (“Gold Dredging Industry”, 1899).

Central Otago miners: Tuapeka

When the rush to Gabriel’s Gully broke out in 1861, the editor of the *Otago Colonist* said “a considerable number of Maories have already gone” (“Latest from Tuapeka”, 1861, p. 3). An early arrival from Australia wrote to a friend in Bendigo (Victoria) that “Maories have brought down several nuggets from the high ranges, where a good lot of them are dwelling” (“The Rush to New Zealand”, 1861, p. 3) which would indicate considerable prospecting activity on their part. The Otago Correspondent to Melbourne’s *Argus* wrote in one of his reports:

There is a camp of [Māori] at Gabriel’s Gully. ... and are uniformly well conducted. ... Men and women together, there are about 50 of them. They are amenable to authority in a marked degree ... To the questions of [Tuapeka Warden Strode] they only had one reply, “Kia koi te tikanga” (Do as you please). Not so tractable have been the European miners. (“The New Zealand Goldfields”, 1861, p. 5)

The “Yankee Gold-Digger”, writing in *Otago, or a Rush to the New Gold-fields of New Zealand* (as cited in Hutchins, 2010, p. 461), estimated that at least 100 of the locals picking

at Gabriel's Gully were Māori. There were enough Māori at the Tuapeka that one of the richest gullies in Upper Waitahuna was named Māori Gully ("Waitahuna", 1862), although the former miner William Ayson commented in his *Pioneering in Otago* (1937) autobiography that "a good many Maoris came to the Gully, but did not stay long" (p. 58).

Māori Jack

The first Māori miner to achieve fame was initially renowned for his bravery. After working at Hamilton's sheep station at Mavora Lakes as a shearer, a man known as "Māori Jack" headed north ("Old Memories of Southland", 1889). In 1861 he arrived at the western end of Lake Wakatipu with another Māori called Bill Leonard on William Rees' whaleboat bringing up supplies for the shepherds tending a flock there. According to Rees' journal, Jack and Bill came "with the intention of making their way to the West Coast to look up some other Maoris said to be there", implying that they also sought gold (Pyke, 1887a, p. 82). They tested the Dart and Routeburn rivers, finding nothing remarkable and joined six other Māori whom Rees had engaged as shearers. Shearing complete, Māori Jack and the other men returned to the Rees' homestead, where Jack was offered a permanent job (Duncan, 1969). It is clear that Māori Jack continued prospecting for gold, and at some point, found it, possibly as early as May 1861 (Pyke, 1863).

Before his fame as a gold prospector, his courage as a life-saver was the talk of New Zealand. William Rogers of Glenquoich Station and John Mitchell, a recently hired farm cadet on William Rees' Shotover Station, were headed down the lake, back to Roger's farm with Māori Jack at the helm of Rees' small sailboat. The craft capsized in a sudden squall, Rogers was drowned, and only the herculean efforts of Jack saved Mitchell from a similar fate ("Fatal Boat Accident", 1862). A grateful Rees and

Otago Provincial Police Commissioner St. John Branigan organised a subscription to allow Māori Jack to purchase a dray and oxen so he could go into business on the nascent Wakatip [sic] goldfield ("Mr Rees", 1862), and upon the application of Rees and Mitchell, the British Royal Humane Society awarded the society's medal to Jack for his actions ("Editorial", 1863).

One of Māori Jack's workmates was Mr Thomas Wilson who, with Jack and a few other employees, visited the Shotover River one Sunday and found fine gold about a quarter of a mile above the modern-day bridge. When Wilson wrote his recollections 50 years later, he recalled Rees' anger when they showed him the gold and he apparently told them "that a gold diggings would ruin his partner and himself" ("Otago Settlement Jubilee", 1898, p. 25). In August 1862, Jack turned up at Rees' station door bearing a shovel of wash from the Arrow River, in which gold could be clearly seen (MacKenzie, 1948). Again, Rees was none too pleased. As he later wrote to Pyke, "I then felt certain (for I had been at the Turon, N. S. W., in 1852) that it was only a question of a few months before I should be surrounded with diggers" (Pyke, 1887a, p. 82).

When the enormously rich Arrow goldfield was discovered, it was widely known as "Fox's Rush", after the larger-than-life veteran of the rushes to California and Victoria, William Fox (Hearn, 2012). But Vincent Pyke, who had talked at length to Māori Jack when he provided guiding services to the Pyke's Provincial Government-funded expedition over the Haast Pass in late 1865 ("Lake Wanaka to the West Coast", 1865), was unequivocal:

The association of Fox's name with this rush has caused him to be generally regarded as the discoverer of the Arrow Gold-field. ... The first person who became acquainted with the auriferous capabilities of the locality was Mr. McGregor. He commenced mining operations on the 4th October, and five days later Fox

traced him to the spot. But even McGregor rather developed than discovered the field. The real discoverer was the well known Maori Jack, who obtained a fine sample of gold from the same Stream in May, 1861. (Pyke, 1887a, p. 82)

Māori Jack's real name is not agreed. Pyke insisted that he was from Thames, and his real name was Hatini Waiti, or Anthony White ("Death of Mr Rees", 1898). Rees' shepherd, Alfred Duncan, who knew and worked with Jack, insists that he was Jack Tewa and proffers as proof the name Mitchell inscribed on the watch he awarded Jack for his bravery (Duncan, 1969). Māori Jack, it is abundantly clear, was the original prospector of much of what became the Lakes District Goldfield, including the Shotover, Arrow, Glenorchy and Skipper's Canyon fields.

Māori Jack is next mentioned heading off to Garston on a prospecting trip in January 1863 ("The Gold Fields", 1863) and in 1865 he accepted a commission to guide 40 miners from the Dunstan field across Haast Pass to the new West Coast fields ("Facts and Scraps", 1865), something he completed several times. Later in 1865, Alfred Duncan met him in Queenstown, where Jack had just deposited £400 as his share from a rich claim in the Shotover. Jack told Duncan that since he now had the means, he wished to travel to England to be introduced to "Queen Wicataria" and pleaded with his old friend to accompany him on the trip and to make the necessary introductions at court. Duncan demurred and said it was the last time he saw "that good-hearted giant, Māori Jack" (Duncan, 1969). In 1867 Jack found a pass to the Coast which was more northerly than the Haast and which now bears the name "Māori Pass" after him (Roxburgh, 1957). It was briefly suggested to be more navigable than the Haast Pass, but was later found to be too difficult for wagons ("Christchurch", 1867).

It is intriguing to see how old attitudes are sometimes maintained in modern New Zealand.

In 2012, Arrowtown residents erected a plaque commemorating the prospecting work of Jack Tewa. The text chosen reads:

X Marks the Spot

In August 1862, Jack Tewa, known as Maori Jack, found gold near the spot. Tewa was employed as a shearer by William Rees, run holder and the founder of Queenstown. Tewa was not particularly interested in gold mining but the word of his find got out to those that were. This led to the great Wakatipu Gold Rush that drew miners from around the world and laid the foundations for the town of Arrowtown.

Despite the evidence provided by William Rees' journal and a considerable body of historical evidence, Jack Tewa, since he was Māori, could not possibly have understood the value of gold according to the residents of Arrowtown in 2012.

After the last encounter with Duncan, Māori Jack disappears from the historic record. Other "Māori Jacks" appeared, but none were Jack Tewa, most were not Māori, and in the semiotic of the nickname, each confirms the inherent stereotyping that typified some prevalent attitudes towards Māori. On the West Coast in 1866, "John Reid, alias Maori Jack" was a "well-known most notorious scoundrel, a native of America, aged 27 years, of low build and very dark complexion ... an old sailor ... [who] was sentenced to two years' imprisonment, with hard labour, for garrotting" ("Editorial", 1866, p. 2); another was a horse thief called Mr B. Davis ("Local and General News", 1867). In Otago an incorrigible called James Anderson with convictions for sheep stealing and hotel robbery ("Editorial", 1874) was known as Māori Jack, and John Bright, the gold prospector who in 1880 found the Coronerville field between Nelson and Westport was "better known as 'Maori Jack'" ("A New Rush", 1880, p. 3). An Australian Māori Jack—who, unlike the West Coast men, *was* Māori—is quoted

among the early miners at the Gympie diggings, one “Emmanuel Thompson, better known as Maori Jack, a nephew of the celebrated Wiremu Kingi” (“The Gympie Diggings”, 1869, p. 3).

Conflict on the Shotover

In early 1863, Māori were at the Lakes District. They became the team to beat in good-natured sports competitions “between Britons and Maories”, held at Queenstown on the weekends, featuring Cumberland wrestling, rowing matches (comfortably won by the Māori crew, with upwards of £500 changing hands on the event) and a 200-yard foot-race between “the Māori Byers” and Telford, a sprint specialist (“The Lake Country I”, 1863, p. 5).

Māori miners made a significant find in the Rees River at the western end of Lake Wakatipu, which they attempted to keep quiet, but in February 1863, a boatman returned from a supply trip and breathlessly reported that the “Maories were getting gold by the tin dishful” (“The Lake Country II”, 1863, p. 4). This sparked a rush and subsequent reports said “brilliant glowing accounts are coming in ... the report of the discovery of a pound and a-half weight nugget is spoken of. ... I can vouch for numerous nuggets from one to ten ounces each” (“The Lake Country III”, 1863, p. 5). Later the same writer reported that “men were at the time simply ‘nuggeting out’ with knives, very heavy gold being found” (“The Lake Country I”, 1863, p. 5).

Given the bonhomie of the sporting matches of a month earlier, it was therefore with some concern that a correspondent reported an alarming event, writing about Rees’s River: “A conflict is said to have taken place between the Europeans and Maories. It requires confirmation” (“Narrative of Current Events”, 1863, p. 5). What happened is not known, because there is nothing in the Warden’s Court records and no subsequent reports in the newspapers, but it may be surmised that one of the

reasons this was not elaborated on was because another confrontation happened at around the same time which has entered the realms of goldfields legend. It is found in the summary report collated for transmission to Melbourne in February 1863:

Seven of the [Māori] men held an amalgamated claim some distance up the river, and it is an extremely valuable one. They were jumped by the “professionals” upon the grounds that a “white man” should be entitled to a claim before any other color. The jumpers proceeded to throw in their own tools into the claim, and to throw out those of Maories. After some altercation the latter withdrew and went up to their tents. The jumpers as may be supposed were in high glee at their easy victory and had already commenced trying the value of their newly obtained claim. In the height of their exhilaration and noisy congratulations, they saw the seven Maories returning in single file, each with a tomahawk in his belt. The Maories proceeded very deliberately to collect their tools, replace them in the claim, take out their tomahawks and prepare for work. The intruders did not relish this kind of work and upon second considerations thought discretion the better part of valor. They withdrew, stating that they should bring the Commissioner. It is needless to add that they did not upon further consideration, in this instance, consult that gentleman. (“Narrative of Current Events”, 1863, p. 5)

This narrative, which is repeated in nearly every local history of the Otago gold rushes (Glasson, 1957; Salmon, 1963), sometimes with supplementary narrative embroidery which adds a haka (Gilkison, 1930), traditional weapons *and* a haka (Hutchins, 2010; Knudson, 1968), actual violence and even death (MacKenzie, 1948), was never referred to in the contemporary newspapers again. It is an example of restraint by Māori which was at variance with their characterisation in the popular press

around the wars in the north. There is a degree of moralising implicit in the tale which suggests that the writer felt that the Māori had been wronged and did well in righting this without recourse to violence, even if later accounts added this, to suit their own perceptions of Māori.

What is not so widely known is that Māori prospectors were finding the very richest areas in Central Otago.

“The Maories” of Māori Point

In April 1863, it was disclosed that as a sign of the increasingly favourable prospects of the Shotover goldfield, a party of three Welsh miners bought a 20-foot by 40-foot area of stream bed at Māori Point from its Māori owners for £800 (“Otago, Latest”, 1863). This was the first of many articles about the richness of the Shotover River at Māori Point, including a party of six miners celebrating a haul of 60 pounds of gold per man gained in just 6 weeks and a second group that netted £20,000 out of a beach claim, a little upstream from the Point (“Our Lake Correspondent”, 1863). Vincent Pyke first visited Māori Point

to settle a complicated dispute, originating in the institution, by the Warden, of imaginary boundaries in the flowing water. In the course of the hearing before Mr. Nugent Wood and myself, a Maori waded into the river up to his armpits, and plunging a shovel into the rapid current, he succeeded after a few failures in bringing up a fine show of heavy gold on that implement. (Pyke, 1887a, p. 87)

It was not until October that the rest of Otago learned the origin of Māori Point’s nomenclature. Pyke’s *Report on the Gold Fields of Otago* (1863), written for the Secretary of the Goldfields in Wellington, was published in the *Otago Daily Times*:

Higher up the Shotover numerous rich gullies were discovered, principally on the western watershed; and the beaches of the river itself were successfully prospected for a distance of more than 30 miles, the miners crossing the adjacent ranges, and descending to the stream wherever it was found practicable to do so. One of these beaches is known by the appropriate name of “Maori Point”, owing to its discovery by two natives of the North Island, Dan Ellison, a half-caste, and Zachariah Haerora, a full Maori. As these men were travelling along the eastern bank of the river they found some Europeans working with great success in a secluded gorge. On the opposite shore was a beach of unusually promising appearance, occupying a bend of the stream, over which the rocky cliffs rose perpendicularly to the height of more than 500 feet. Tempting as this spot was to the practised eyes of the miners, none of them would venture to breast the impetuous torrent. The Maoris, however, boldly plunged into the river, and succeeded in reaching the western bank; but a dog which followed them was carried away by the current, and drifted down to a rocky point, where it remained. Dan went to its assistance and observing some particles of gold in the crevices of the rocks, he commenced to search the sandy beach beneath, from which, with the aid of Zachariah, he gathered twenty five pounds weight (300 oz.) of the precious metal before night-fall. A systematic investigation of the locality ensued, and resulted in the discovery of valuable and extensive auriferous deposits. (Pyke, 1863, p. 10)

This report was reprinted in the Appendices to the *Journals of the House of Representatives Mining Report* for 1863. In 1886, Pyke revealed that his source for the narrative was Hakaria Haeroa. When the partners sold out to the Welsh, Haeroa returned to the Otago Heads, which was where Pyke found him in September 1863:

I had heard the story when on a visit to the district in the winter season of 1863 and on my return to Dunedin, I persuaded the Harbour Master Captain Thomson to take me in his boat to the Maori Kaik at the Heads, where we found Hakaria. His narrative was interpreted by Mr Riemenschneider and recorded at the time in my official report. (Pyke, 1887b, p. 14)

I have not succeeded in finding out what happened to Hakaria Haeroa after Pyke met with him, but given that he was living back with his family in the Ōtākou kaik in late 1863, presumably he retired there to farm like Ellison. More is known about Haeroa's mining partners.

Rāniera Tāheke Ellison (Erihana) was the son of Thomas Ellison and Te Ikairaua of Ngāti Moehau (Anderson, 2012). For some time Rāniera worked as a whaler. In *Maori and Missionary: Early Christian Missions in the South Island of New Zealand* (1954), Thomas Pybus recounts a story where “in the whaling days a ship was wrecked off the Otago Heads and Raniera swam out and rescued seven or eight persons of the crew” (p. 169). According to Gilkison, after his whaling work, Ellison worked as crew on the pilot boat at Otago Heads and it was from this that he left the coast in 1862 (Gilkison, 1930) to go gold prospecting with his friends, Hakaraia and Hēnare Patukopa (Anderson, 2012). Ellison added to the narrative Haeroa told Pyke; in a letter to the Dunstan Jubilee celebrations organising committee in November 1912, he mentioned that “when he rescued the dog he saw gold clinging to its coat” (Gilkison, 1930).

Apparently like Haeroa, Ellison returned to the kaik after selling the claim to the Welshmen, to go farming. He developed new farmland and offered one of his farms for lease as he expanded (“Advertisements, Farm to Let”, 1882). In 1882, possibly with the influence of Rev. Riemenschneider, who had served an earlier mission placement in the Taranaki (Pybus, 1954), he became converted to the cause of the exiled Parihaka leaders Te Whiti and Tohu,

when they visited the kaik at Ōtākou. He provided food for Parihaka followers imprisoned in Dunedin, and made trips to Taranaki, where he contributed funds to rebuild the settlement (Anderson, 2012).

In 1888, when the widely read “Warrigal” of the *Christchurch Press* turned his attention to Marlborough's Māhaki-pawa goldfield, he sailed to Anakiwa. On his arrival, he began walking to Māhaki-pawa and fell in with two other pedestrians, “an elderly gentleman in spectacles” who was “capital company ... for he has travelled much” and “a tall, well-dressed Māori” who was “none other than Raniera Erihana, the finder of that rich pocket of gold on the Shotover, and after whom Māori Point is named” (“The Warrigal’, The Mahaki-pawa Goldfield”, 1888, p. 6). Warrigal was, he declared, impressed with Erihana's “quiet pride and dignity” (p. 6). Files in the testamentary archives reveal his work as executor to several Māori estates (Otago Testamentary Register, 1906). Erihana died in 1920.

Pyke omitted Hēnare Patukopa from his narrative. Patukopa took his earnings from the sale and purchased the Sandy Point store and ferry in the Upper Clutha Valley off George Hassing and William Ellacott. According to Hassing,

Patu sent for most of the Maoris located at Moeraki to come up to settle and have a good time at Sandy Point. This invitation was cordially responded to, and John Mason, the Maori magistrate at Moeraki, and his wife Emma, Wirumu Pokuku and his wife Emily, Owen and his wife, Raware and his son Heneri, Peter Wahoo, Anthony John Murray, Adam Clarke, and several other Maoris came up and took possession. On the opening night they had a grand “haka”, which was kept going merrily till dawn. The Maoris appointed the late Robert Kidd, of Cromwell as managing director. Inside 12 months the manager owned the property and the aborigines had the experience. (Hassing, 1932, p. 30)

Hassing, a Dane with experience of life as a sailor, miner, log-rafter and teacher, was a man who was known as a friend and educator to the Chinese and seems to have been relatively race-blind throughout his life (“Memories of Wanaka”, 1908). The disapproval implicit in his conclusion of “Patu’s” tale is consistent with his well-known moral rigidity as a school and civic leader in Otago and Southland (“Obituary”, 1929). The area of the Clutha on the opposite side to Sandy Point carries a legacy of Patukopa’s time there. Like the area where he and his two mates found the rich ground in the Shotover River, this too earned the name “Māori Point”, a name which remains today.

Stories of pound-weight hauls from the area continued over the following 3 years, each referring to “the celebrated Maori claim” (“The Gold Fields’ Wardens Report”, 1863) as its reference point. One friend of the trio was Hēnare te Maire, who mined the Shotover beside the Māori Point trio and who left mining to reside at Waitaki in later life (“Shotover Gold”, 1932).

Other Māori miners in Central Otago

In early 1862, Mounted Constable Edward Garvey reported that eight Māori miners were the first group to new diggings on the Waipori, high above its confluence with Lammerlaw Creek. They worked an amalgamated claim and were, Garvey reported, “doing well” (“Waipori”, 1862).

At least two groups of Māori miners were in the Nokomai in 1863. One group of 10 from Riverton worked under the leadership of Solomon, the kaumātua who had supplied Southland Surveyor James McKerrow with descriptions of the lakes in the Hollyford and Waiau areas of the west-central region of the province (“Reconnaissance Survey”, 1863). This group worked an area leading into the head of Victoria Gully and were reported to be finding quite “a number of small nuggets ranging in size from 7 dwt to an ounce in the claim”

(“Southland”, 1862, p. 2). Another group was reported fossicking with knives on their claim prior to working it in the usual manner. By this rough-and-ready method, they recovered 12 ounces of “shotty” gold and made the decision—especially given the numbers from Southland who returned home empty-handed—to stay and persist with a claim at the Nokomai (“Southland, The Nokomai Diggings”, 1862). This group set the example for other miners in the area, developing their ground as a “dry diggings”, sinking into the side of the hill to recover the relatively heavy gold from the soil there (“Later News from the Nokomai”, 1862).

Scurvy did not impact on Māori, since their local knowledge provided them with the means to obtain the necessary nutrition, even in sparse Central Otago. It was therefore Māori miners travelling through Upper Shotover/Skippers that alerted the authorities to a serious outbreak of scurvy there, reporting it was “prevalent to a frightful extent, and already numbers its victims by hundreds”, and when they traversed the Sandhills, “in hut after hut they found none but sick men, some bedridden, others just able to crawl, none in any way capable of the exertion of travelling to the nearest point where fresh meat and vegetables, the only chance of life, could be obtained” (“Arrow River”, 1863, p. 5). From an inference made in the *Wakatip Mail* in August 1863, it is apparent that these Māori miners then advised where vitamin C-rich plants may be found, such as “Māori cabbage” (although one newspaperman wrote that this is “a nauseous herb, having all the flavour, and more than all the toughness, of boiled hemp” (“Tuapeka to Wakatipu”, 1863, p. 5)), sow thistle (pūhā) and spear grass root as well as contributing to the fund set up to provide medicines to the ailing residents of the Sandhills (“Arrow River”, 1863).

Whether their better health meant they could actively prospect while their Pākehā associates were recovering, or a level of local knowledge helped them, two Māori miners found a new field at Deep Creek in the Shotover in September

1863, causing a rush of up to 700 (“Arrow Gold Field”, 1863).

Other Māori like William Gilbert Mouat, a te reo-fluent grandson of Irihāpeti Motoitōi, and Richard Driver of Port Chalmers, were prominent in the later stages of the Otago gold rush. Mouat trained as a surveyor, became a shift manager in a quartz mine at Bullendale, owned a share in a rich sluicing claim at Bendigo, Otago (Carpenter, 2012), and worked as an engineer on Otago gold dredges (Mouat, 2003). Additional Māori miners were also working in Otago, but—and perhaps as a result of the polyglot nature of the mining population—ceased to be identified as separate to their mining brethren, in terms of the narratives in the records.

Conclusion

As soon as Otago Māori comprehended the value their new Pākehā neighbours placed on gold, they spoke up. They were quick to realise that a phenomenon they had always been aware of, that of heavy, shiny yellow stones and dust scattered on the banks of their Mata-au (later the Clutha), was exactly what the Europeans sailed around the world to find. What seems hard to believe is just how long it took for what was widespread knowledge to be comprehended by the new settlers.

Nevertheless, when information about the gold of Central Otago became widely accepted, Māori refused to be spectators, instead participating in and even starting rushes to some rich ground. Local knowledge also helped them to avoid the perils of flooded river crossings and diet-induced scurvy, and their collective power enabled them to fight off those who would dispossess them of payable claims merely on the basis of colour.

In the same way as the new settlers in Otago in the 1850s dismissed Māori knowledge of gold in the Mata-au/Clutha, most historians of the rush after Vincent Pyke have similarly ignored or minimised Māori miners and their

profound effect on the rush narrative. This has meant that when I have talked of my research with other South Island Māori, many have expressed surprise that their tipuna might have been gold miners. For this period of New Zealand’s colonial history, Māori have tended to be portrayed as bemused spectators, aware of but puzzled by the Pākehā obsession with gold, but content to let them scurry around in search of it. My research has revealed that Māori were far from content to be passive observers, and sought—and won—a share of the riches offered by the gold rush. It is not only Pākehā who are unaware of this history, but Māori, too.

For Māori, as active and equal participants in the Central Otago gold rush, the heritage of the rush period can be seen as one of the first areas of New Zealand society and converse where (despite some instances of exotic otherness raising comment) there was a degree of colour-blindness. The gold rush, at least until the anti-Chinese invective of the mid-1870s, allowed miners to succeed within the meritocracy of gold-finding and regardless of race. Some finds even established Māori gold miners as pre-eminent, and as such, these pioneers deserve to be regarded in the same light as the other legends of the early rush. Jack Tewa, Hakaria Haeroa and Rāniera Tāheke Erihana should join the famed discoverers of the Tuapeka, Hindustani Edward Peters and Tasmanian Gabriel Read, and Horatio Hartley and Christopher Reilly of the Dunstan and the others who occupy the pantheon of epoch-defining gold men in New Zealand. Because when it came to finding “te wherro” in Ōtākou, Māori were knowledgeable, diligent, worked cooperatively and, most importantly for gold mining, were lucky.

Glossary

haka	posture (sometimes war) dance
kaik	village (“kāinga” in the North Island)

kaumātua	elder
kaupapa	Māori ideology
Pākehā	New Zealander of European descent
tauā	war party
te reo	Māori language
te wherro	old spelling of “te whero”, meaning “the red”, or more generally anything brightly coloured
tīmata	start (Pyke defined tīmata as “heavy”, but he may have confused it with the word “taimaha”)
tipuna	ancestors

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