



The New Zealand Goldrush Journal

Edited by Kae Lewis

Volume 1 (2017)

THE WAIPORI GOLDFIELD: A Brief History

by David Still

The route to the diggings

In 1861 the shortest route from Dunedin to the diggings at Gabriel's Gully was via West Taieri (Outram) and the Maungatua Mountain into the Upper Waipori valley, across the river and along the leading ridge before dropping down to Gabriel's Gully and Wetherston's. On the way to Gabriel's Gully several parties paused to prospect creeks on the way.

Gold discovered at Waipori

On 17th December 1861, O'Hara and his mates reported a new gold field at Waipori that they had found enroute to Gabriel's gully. Constable Garvey was sent by the Commissioner to the scene, and on the 20th December 1861 he found about 400 miners working on the banks of the Lammerlaw Creek and its tributaries. Soon there were tents and some stores scattered all along the creek, and the entire population was calculated to be about 2,000.

The Township of Waipori

The place called the township was a wretched site, perched on the cone of two small hills, difficult of ascent and limited in area. Five miles further down at the junction of the Waipori River and Lammerlaw Creek there began to form another township on level ground near the old road and ford, and so the town (first known as Waipori Junction) was born.

Store keepers

The earliest known stores were Broad, Blakemore & Co. and D.K. Campbell up the Lammerlaw Creek in February 1862. Then Cable and Drummond set up a store and Post Office in the new town. This store became the heart of the town and meeting place for all and sundry and was later sold to the Knight Family.

The years 1865 and 66 saw businesses like Charles Cartier, H. and J. McCay, Benjamin Lewis, John Lomas and Samuel Mayne. Mrs. Ann Knight set up her bakery and for many years was the sole provider of freshly baked goods. By 1867 were added J. Ritchie, John Lomas and Thomas Dickson. Others were William Hancock, T. Lees and Richard Pilling. In 1871 the first Chinese store was opened and operated by Ah Sin. In 1872 Robert Webb arrived and served the district well for many years as carpenter, builder and undertaker. During 1873 came Cox Bros and J. Ritchie. Another Chinese Store run by Sing Gong Sing, (competing with Ah Sin), T. Dickson, W. Hancock, and R. Pilling were all in business.

Knight's Store

William and Ann Knight moved to Waipori in 1864 with sons F. W. and W. E. S. Knight, Only a year later on the 12th July 1865, William Snr. passed away. For 20 years after this, his wife Ann continued the business until her sons could take over during 1882. Frederick William Knight became the store keeper at Waipori in 1882 and kept on the bakery as well as operating a butchery. Tom Webb, Billy Riordan and Eric Knight would pack out groceries to the miners in the hills. Fred's brother William Edward Short Knight also followed mining interests. The extended Knight family were involved with Waipori right until the town was dismantled.

Cotton's Store

Irish-born Robert Cotton arrived in Waitahuna in the 1860s, having first driven a bullock wagon to the Dunstan goldfields. In 1875 at Waipori he married a widow, Margaret Dickson (nee Atkinson). In partnership with Sam Henry, another teamster, he purchased Waipori Station in 1877. During May 1897 Mrs. Margaret Cotton and Co. erected a large store opposite the Bridge Hotel.

Blacksmiths

Several Waipori blacksmiths did well and put their savings into other ventures. Patrick McLedowney in 1867 took over the Bridge Hotel from James Smith-Vial. Others were John Vial, Mathew Ferguson, Peter Pegus and James Glover, George Phillips, Thomas Eaton, Mark Schinere also known as Shenerhan, William Turner, James Claffey, William Smith, J. Claffey, Grant and McLedowney partnership, William Redpath (who later became a Dredge master and died in Malaysia), Albert Edward Hanley, James Drew, Andrew Goodlet, Sam Coard, George Raynes, James Thomas Riordan, William Smith and Charles J. Sandager, William Turner, Frederick Buchanan, Charles Monson and James Drew with Sam Ferguson working at Waipori Falls.

Bakers

The first baker recorded was Whittington in 1863. Ann Knight began in 1864 followed in 1865 by James Harris. In 1866 there were three bakeries; Henry Cable & Co., Henry Raggitt and Ann Knight who continued to sell bread until 1883 when she retired. Her main baker (John Fraser) continued to bake for the Knight Brothers' store until 1912.

Butchers

In 1862 Allan McDonald and Ross Robertson, were operating from a tent, as were other trades. Then came George Lane, Thomas Butler and in 1866 there was added Isaac Butterfield and William Morgan who sold out to James Wright. Later J. Shaw and Brother's began their "Free trade butchery." While On Tie catered for the Chinese community in 1873. James Wright sold out to Robert Cotton during March 1879. At the local Chinese Camp, Kwong Sing Yoon was butchering in 1880. F. W. Knight turned the old Bank of New South Wales building into a butchery and then came Patrick J. Rogers. In 1897 Robert Cotton and Co. set up a butcher shop next to Cotton's General Store by the bridge.

Banking at Waipori

The Bank of New South Wales, managed by Claudius Beresford Cairns, followed by the Commercial Bank of New Zealand (H. B. Anderson.) Next manager was Andrew Lees until late 1866 when the bank closed. As well as the two banks mentioned above, the local storekeepers, Henry and James McCay were agent for the Bank of New Zealand operating from February 1862 and closed about the end of 1871.

Boot makers

During 1865 Stephen Bendacio advertised. Later came Archie Leckie, C. Pasceo, William Farrant, Isaac Peters. Sarah Leckie was still operating in 1881. Others were Mr. James Dunbar, William Wilson about 1895, marrying Widow Elizabeth Dunbar in 1897. Another shoemaker was Patrick McNamara. Other trades were: Alf Needham, painter and sign writer: James Kilpatrick, Hairdresser and Greengrocer John Cumner.

The Churches of Waipori

The Roman Catholic Church (St. Canice) was established in 1868 near the township with the building being used for both church and school purposes; the first Catholic teacher being Miss Donnelly, afterwards Mrs. John McNamara of Christchurch.

The Wesleyan Church (Methodist) acquired their building in July 1871, which was opened by the Rev. Henry Bull. The Rev.'s W. H. Beck and J. Law often travelled to Waipori to conduct services

but parish numbers slowly declined, and in 1903 the church building was sold to the Anglican Church. (The Church of England)

In 1868 Mr. Wilson [School teacher] read the English Church service in the school-room, until 1903 when the old Wesleyan Church building became available. Services of the Church of England were then conducted fortnightly by Canon Richards of Lawrence. In 1926 after the closing of the township and as the new lake Mahinerangi rose, the church building was moved to Waipori Falls.

Alluvial Mining

From working with only a shovel and pan, prospectors soon built sluice boxes and cradles. Water needed to wash up the gold meant over 600 water races were constructed in the district, some over 20 km long. Under pressure the water enabled hydraulic monitors to sluice down faces and push the gold laden wash into the sluicebox in large volumes.

The hydraulic elevator was introduced to Waipori in late 1889, lifting wash gravels to the top of a long sloping sluice box raised on a trestle framework, where the gold settled behind riffles in the box. The O'Brien Brothers and Messrs Robertson & Hardy may well have been first to use this principle at Waipori on Jutland Flat and Nardoo Creek areas. Some of the claims were huge, like Cotton's hydraulic elevating claim, the Waipori Amalgamated Company and J. T. Johnston's Bakery Flat elevator which used two lifts of 70 feet to achieve a total of 140 feet.

Other hydraulic elevating claims were; Sew Kew, who sold out to the Russell family, Knight's Pillings Terrace claim, Gare's Golden Padlock which had been Eaton's Golden Key claim, O'Brien's Golden Point claim, the Farrell's Deep Lead (later let on tribute to Cotton) and the Waipori Hydraulic Mining Company. In the Post Office Creek area J.R. Parker, William O'Brien, Pearsall & McMillan, and Munro & George did well.

Quartz Mining

Six Shetland Islanders located a gold specked reef in March 1862, about 2 miles from the Waipori Junction. This became known as the Shetland Quartz Reef and was the first quartz mine in Otago. It was soon taken over by the Otago Pioneer Quartz Mining and Crushing Co., which became known as the O.P.Q. Although many companies worked along the reef the O.P.Q. name stayed on. Over many years more than 70 quartz mining activities were set up or attempted in the Waipori area such as the Canton (started by a group of Chinese miners), Devil's Creek, the Maud, Maori, Undaunted, Victory, Cosmopolitan, and A.B.C. and Cox's reef to name a few.

Hotels

Prior to 1865 some hotels were mentioned only once before the owner moved his tent or temporary premises. Such as the Bull and Mouth Hotel, Jutland Flat and Union Hotels and the Butcher's Arms which may have become Barrows Hotel. Altogether there has been at least 20 hotel names connected to the Waipori District. Barrow's Hotel. (Joshua Proverbs Barrow a Negro) also known as Barrow's Emerald Hotel before being renamed the Imperial. The Criterion Hotel in Nuggety Gully may have originally been named the Oddfellows Arms, Provincial, Whittington's renamed the Waipori Junction Hotel and later called the Waipori having shifted into the old Provincial building, The Shamrock Hotel, The Bridge Hotel, Commercial, Prince of Wales, The Crown was later the Camp hotel, The Diggers Rest. Note also that James (Maunsil Blackmore) took up a building once owned by the Commercial Bank of New Zealand and named it the Prince of Wales Temperance Hotel. The boarding house also housed a cash store. Later it was run by Mrs. Elizabeth Hynes.

The Bullock Teams

Robert Cotton, a pioneer in the district, first earned his money from driving bullock wagons laden with goods for early prospectors. Along with Mike Hunt and Sam Henry, they formed a trio to keep a regular supply of goods coming into the Tuapeka gold fields.

Charlie McCann was also one of the well known bullockies. Ned Tohill, another Waipori man, would always try to get his team to cross the ford near the town, while he crossed dry shod on the bridge. Other Bullockies were Sandy McStay who often carted wool from Waipori as did Brensill who carted to Outram. John Tighe of Waipori, whose wife and child died in sad circumstances during 1870, was also a bullock driver at that time and Mick Hunt, R. Caffell and C. Ireland also drove bullock teams.

Coaches and Carriers

Emmertson and Co's Express line of Royal Mail Coaches began services in October 1865, travelling from Dunedin every Friday via Lee Stream and Eldorado (Hotel) to Waipori until at least December 1865 when it was bought out by James Carmichael. Several months later Cobb and Co. bought him out. Another coach to serve Waipori was George Christie in July 1870 and Hugh Craig was a well known driver who operated from Lawrence. At Waipori, Michael Tohill drove a coach

and Ted Pearson (well known publican) also owned coaches. In later years George E. Bertenshaw of Waipori set up his business as did Alex E. Bateman and Edward Tohill followed by William Edward Jones.

The School

Mr. James Edward Wilson was appointed as teacher in 1866 and later under his real name of James Payne Baker. From 1871 – December 1872 Mr. Edward Webber was the teacher, Mr. Walter Dunkley took over next assisted by Miss E. McLaughlan. In January 1874, Mr. Robert Neill, accepted the post of teacher at the school with the assistance of Miss Neill for sewing. Then Mr. Walter Reilly assisted by his wife and later Mr. Pilling.

Charles Kerr was the next Master of the Waipori School, being appointed in 1882 and staying on for 22 years. In 1900 Miss Tillie became Assistant followed in 1901 by Miss Agnes Crowley (Author of "Waipori Whispers"). Amy Cotton assisted from 1902-04 and also assisted the next teacher, Mr. Thomas Harrison through from 1905-1907. John Peter Hawkes along with the capable Miss Cotton taught 14 pupils in 1908. He was replaced for 1909 and 10 by Mr. Edwin Harold Heward who again with Amy Cotton taught 15 pupils. In 1911, the school was reduced to one teacher from then on. The teachers then were; John William G. Beattie; Hercules Colquhoun; Elfrida Mary Knight; Flora Greer; Nellie Susan Mitchell; George E. Dewar; Eleanor Cowan; Clarisse Greene and Eva Le Gal; Beatrix C. Louden and in 1925 Catherine O'Reilly.

The Gold Dredging

Dredging at Waipori began in November 1889 with the 'Upper Waipori' dredge being launched just below the town. This dredge was not only the first but also the longest running dredge at Waipori. It was joined over the years by the Golden Shore, Perseverance privately owned by McNeil and Party. Others were the 'Jutland Flat', Big Flat, the Broad Creek, the Oceanic Steam Dredge Company purchased the dredge from the Big Flat Gold Dredging Co. Ltd. then re-erected the dredge to operate near the junction of North West Creek. The Success Dredge, Empire No.1. Empire No 2, Golden Shore Dredge was bought from the Waipori Gold Dredging Company (that owned the Upper Waipori Dredge) and was originally the Golden Bar dredge from the Shotover Junction. The Enfield Dredge, Quilters, (This was the smallest dredge in the valley being only 51 feet compared with the Upper Waipori dredge at 90 feet.) the Lower Enfield converted in 1902, the and the Waipori Consolidated. The cost of getting fuel to the dredges was huge but Waipori miner and inventor William O'Brien devised and patented the water powered (hydraulic) dredge.

This process piped water under pressure onto the dredge to drive the bucket ladder and winches and eliminated the steam engine along with all its expenses. The water was conveyed via a pipe-line to the dredge in a patented flexible submerged line supported by floats. The life of dredging was extended by ten years not only in New Zealand but throughout the world. The second invention attributed to William O'Brien was the "Automatic Hydrant Operator" that was introduced in September 1908. Financed by Knight, this invention became known as the "OK" automatic hydrant operator, being the initials of O'Brien and Knight. Another invention from Waipori came when John T. Johnson built his "Hydraulic Nozzle Dredge" which combined the water powered dredge and the hydraulic elevator, adapted to the requirements of a dredge. The dredge was worked at Waipori for up to 1902 before shutting down.

The Chinese at Waipori

During 1865 the first Chinese arrived at Waipori where many hundred lived near the town and through the hills with little animosity. Names of nearly 300 are recorded. One of these was Ah Tan the storekeeper at the Chinese Store known as Kwong Wye Kee.

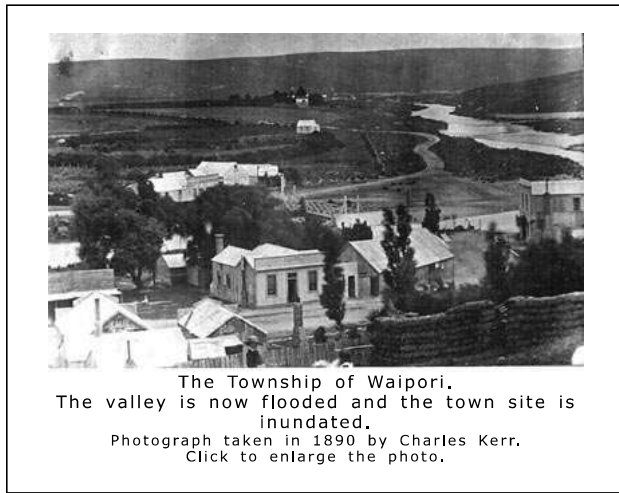
Police at Waipori

One of the first Officers was Sergeant Paschen who was at Waipori in February 1862. He was followed by Constables John Dunne, Cummings, George Comyn, George P. Purdue, Morkane, Donald Boyd, Charles Dunnett, Archibald Blair, William Stream, Constable Quinn, Constable Michael Greene who stayed on and off for eight years before he finally handed over responsibility to Constable Bowman in 1887.

Storms and Floods

Being at a higher altitude (1282 feet) the district was often subject to weather change. Snow not only fell in winter but could strike through the year when least expected. Some deaths occurred in the snows of mostly Chinese miners high in the hills.

Flooding had long been a problem to the miners, who having dug a deep hole, could return to the claim following rain to find it inundated. Worse were the rivers rising and flowing into claims and often sweeping equipment away. In 1870 the river was like the present lake, flowing up the main street and into shops and hotels.



However! The biggest flood was yet to come. As mining declined in the district, the rise of electric power use was increasing. The Waipori Falls Electric Power Co. Ltd. was formed to generate power from the Waipori by several prominent men from Otago including Waipori Run holder, Robert Cotton. Some time later the Dunedin City Corporation purchased the Power Company. Mining properties, houses businesses, claims and farmlands were purchased by the Dunedin City Corporation, buildings removed to other areas or dismantled.

In 1924, the signing of the documents was done on 'Settlement Day' at Waipori and the mining days drew to a close. The waters of Lake Mahinerangi spread up the valley, slowly covering all traces of the golden days of Waipori.

Waipori Descendants Mark the lost town's 150th Jubilee: [Southland Times 27 March 2016.](#)

150-year-old Waipori Murder Commemorated: [Southland Times 14 January 2016.](#)

