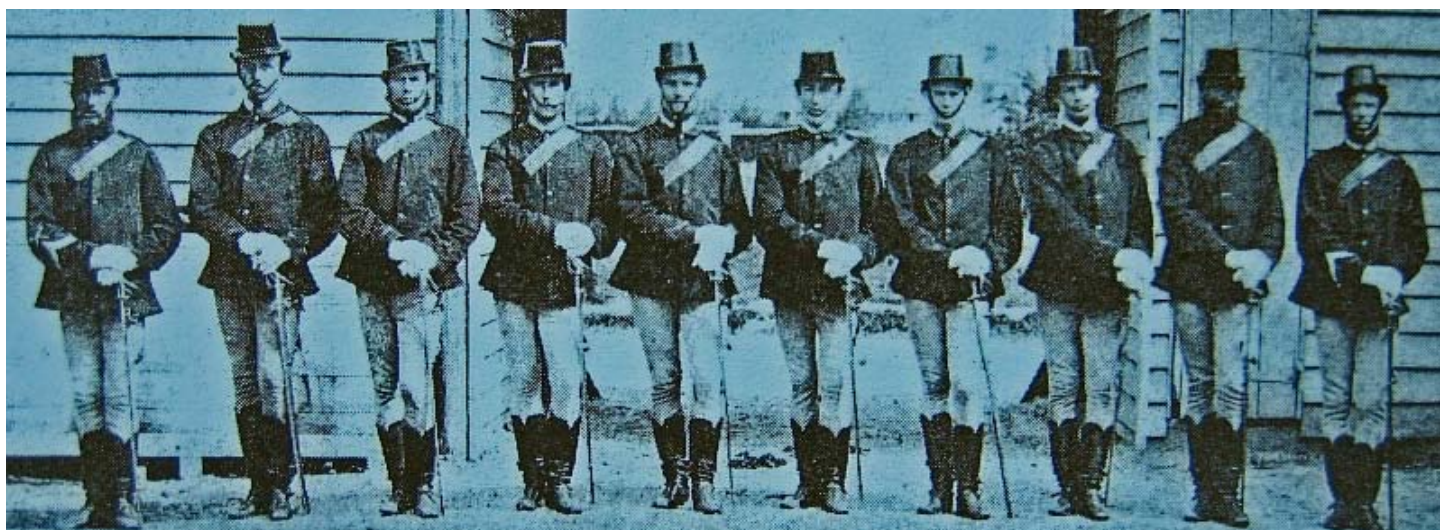


Guns of the New Zealand Goldfields



Canterbury Provincial Armed Constabulary Gold Escort through the Southern Alps in 1865, courtesy NZ Police.



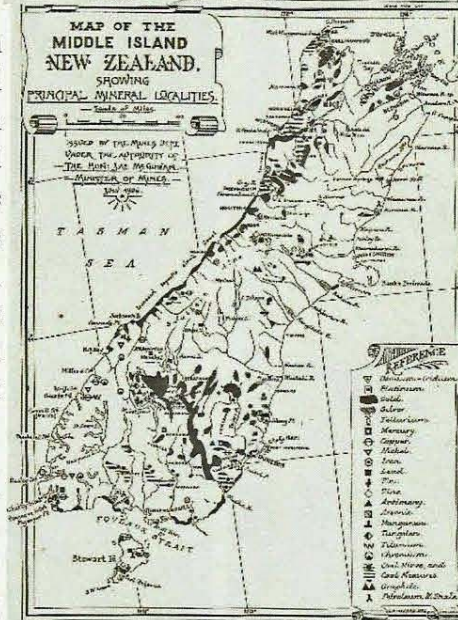
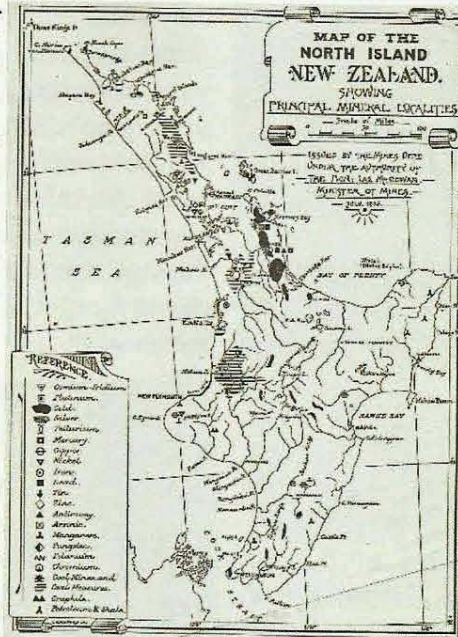
West Canterbury Mounted Goldfields / Gold Escort Police armed with a carbine, revolver & P1821 sword, c1868

Guns of the NZ Goldfields

By Dr John Osborne MG PhD FSG. Copyright retained by Author

Gold. Two years after the Treaty of Waitangi was signed, gold was found by a pioneer settler at Murderers Bay, Nelson Province and on the Coromandel Peninsula in 1842, this was ahead of California discovery in 1849 and Australia in 1850. In the Coromandel resistance by hostile Maori deterred further prospecting. During the 1840s more gold was found in the north western South Island which was renamed Golden Bay. In 1851 Gold was found at Goodwood, Otago and in September 1852 up to a 500 pound reward was offered by a group of Auckland businessmen for discovery of a payable gold field. Charles Ring fresh from the California diggings arrived in Auckland aboard an American Whaler and within a week he had found a payable goldfield on the Coromandel Peninsula, for which he was later granted 200 pounds reward. Note: of the 200 or so Whaling ships that worked New Zealand waters in the 1830s through to the 1850s, about 150 were American.

In 1856 Matura, Otago yielded gold but the news was suppressed by the Scottish Presbyterian settlers who did not want to be overrun by gold diggers. In 1856 New Zealand's first gold rush occurred when about 2,500 men, British Settlers, local Maori and experienced diggers from the California and Australian fields descended on the Aorere River Valley district of Nelson looking for the easily picked alluvial gold. At a meeting in February 1857 diggers developed a set of rules later used in goldfields around New Zealand. The Nelson Provincial Government, organized special goldfields policing and had a new town named Collingwood laid out on the plateau. Also in 1857 Leonard Harper during an expedition to the West Coast of Canterbury took back to Christchurch a nugget he found in the Taramakau River. In 1861 a party of road-makers picked up some nuggets in the Lindis River near Lake Wanaka in Otago.



Gabriel Read an experienced digger from California and Australia found a workable claim in the Tuapeka, where in one day he panned out eight ounces of gold. This find earned him the Otago Provincial Government's reward of 1,000 pounds. Shortly afterwards, Read with two other men extracted more than 1600 ounces of alluvial gold in two weeks. Henceforth the site became known as Gabriel's Gully. Later Horatio Hartley and Christopher Reilly negotiated a 2,000 pounds reward for telling the whereabouts of their Upper Clutha River find near modern day Cromwell.

Digger's arms. Most diggers armed themselves with a pistol, some with a rifle, carbine or shotgun. American and British made arms were in predominance but French and Belgian arms were also fairly common. For a few shillings a digger could purchase an American 'Bootleg' pistol or an English single shot pocket pistol. For about 10 shillings an English Pepperbox revolver or a Transition revolver for 15-20 shillings. A single action London made .31" calibre Colt pocket revolver for

about 50 shillings. A double action .44" calibre Beaumont Adams holster revolver cost 120 shillings or 155 shillings in an oak case with accessories. A large leather waist belt holster was 16 shillings and 50 rounds of ammunition cost one shilling. For comparison an P1853 Enfield rifle cost about 50 shillings and a Terry breech loading carbine including bullet mould 180 shillings. Terry carbine ammunition sold at 10 rounds for one shilling. Single and double barrel percussion muzzle loading shotguns sold for 50 shillings and upwards, pin-fire breech loading revolvers and shotguns for considerably more, many later converted to centre-fire by NZ gunsmiths.



Examples of handguns used by diggers.

- Left: percussion pocket pistols:** top down 1. American .36" under-hammer boot leg pistol. 2. English .44" breech loading box lock pistol. 3. English .31" 6 chamber pepperbox revolver. 4. English .31" 6 chamber transitional revolver. 5. English London Colt .31" 5 chamber revolver.
- Centre: breechloading pocket revolvers:** top down 1. Belgium 9mm 6 chamber pin-fire revolver. 2. American Sharps .30" spur trigger rim-fire 4 chamber (revolving striker on hammer). 3. American Smith & Wesson .32" spur trigger rim-fire 6 chamber revolver.
- Right: percussion holster revolvers:** top down 1. English Webley – Bentley .40" 6 chamber revolver. 2. English Adams .44" 5 chamber revolver. 3. English London Colt (Ex RN) 36" 6 chamber revolver. 4. American Remington Army .44" 6 chamber revolver.

Otago Gold. When the news broke the Otago Gold rush was on and men came from the world over. Otago's population doubled in a year and quadrupled in four years. Some men found rich rewards, four men won 1,000 pounds worth of gold in two months from the Shotover River at Arthurs Point near Queenstown. Maintaining Law and Order became a problem. On 7 October 1861 James Mill's Gunshop, Dunedin was burgled. In a gully near Murray on 13 October 1861 Donald McInnes was robbed of all his money by a man with a revolver. On the 18 October 1861, 24 miles from Dunedin at the base of the Maungatua Range, seven masked men 'The Garrett Gang' armed with two revolvers, in one day, waylaid, tied to trees in a nearby gully and robbed 15 men of all they possessed. On 8 March 1862 near Gabriels Gully, Mr Liversey was garrotted and robbed by three men, also on 8 March 1862 near Weatherstone the 'Sullivan Gang' robbed a man of 27 pounds. The Police tracked the gang down. Following a gun fight two were arrested but three others escaped. The following day Police arrested Richard Burgess and Thomas Kelly, who subsequently received six months imprisonment for possessing stolen firearms and three years hard labour for shooting at Police with intent to kill.

Alcohol was outlawed in many mining camps, but 'slygrogers' were common place. In 1862 American born captain William Henry (Bully) Hayes wrecked his dilapidated armed barque 'Cincinnati' in Otago Harbour. Lured by gold Hayes moved to the Arrow River town-ship and built a goldfields hotel out of sods with a sapling roof. He named it the 'Prince of Wales Hotel and Theatre' and acquired a vast amount of grog and hired a collection of dancing girls. He advertised 'Vocal and instrumental music every evening by talented Artistes'. By 1863 Hayes had worn out his welcome in Otago and he went back to sea, where he engaged in various illegal activities including gun running to Maoris in the North Island. Bully Hayes' end came on 31 March 1877 whilst 'Black Birding' (slave-trading) in the Marshall Islands, as captain of the heavily armed schooner 'Lotus', when he was lost overboard after being shot with a revolver and bludgeoned during a fight with the ship's cook 'Dutch Pete'.

About 150 Central Otago gold diggers drowned in the floods or were buried in landslides caused by exceptional rains in July and August 1863. In 1866 some Otago gold diggers moved out looking for more lucrative pickings elsewhere. The Otago Provincial Government encouraged Chinese miners to continue, often reworking European tailings. Chinatowns grew

alongside the European settlements. There were about 1,200 Chinese diggers in 1868 rising to about 5,000 in the early 1870s but racial prejudice was rife.

British Military. One hundred soldiers of the 70th Regiment, armed with P1853 Enfield long rifles and socket bayonets, Sergeants with P1856 Enfield short rifles and Yatagan sword bayonets and officers with Beaumont Adams revolvers and swords, were sent from the North Island to enforce law and order in the West Coast goldfields. They remained there for 18 months but did not make good policemen.

Government for use by the mounted Goldfields Police. In addition 37 (12 fitted with pearl grips) .36" calibre Colt 6 shot P1853 London made revolvers, ex British Royal Navy. The Colt's revolving carbines proved unsatisfactory, inflicting serious injury to the hands and fingers forward of the cylinder during a multi chamber discharge. As no remedy could be found, and it was impractical to hold the carbine with both hands to the rear of the cylinder, Colts revolving carbines were withdrawn from service, being replaced with 20" barrel Enfield 17 bore single shot muzzle loading carbines which were normally loaded with



Goldfields Police (like Victorian Goldfields Police) were armed with Lovell's Pat. 1844 17 bore (.66" calibre) 20" barrel, smooth bore carbines and either (left) Lovell's Pattern 24 bore (.57") (ex British sea service) or (right) 17 bore (.66") 6" barrel, smooth bore special constabulary pistols and Pat. 1821 British cavalry troopers sabre'.

Goldfields Police. From 1861 several experienced Victorian Goldfields Police were recruited to organise an acceptable and effective Otago goldfields policing system. Initially the Otago Goldfields Police (like the Victorian Goldfields Police) were armed with Lovell's Pattern 1844, 17 bore (.66" calibre) 20" barrel smooth bore carbines, Lovell's pattern 17 bore 6" barrel smooth bore constabulary pistols and Pattern 1821 British cavalry sabres. Extracts from the Otago Constabulary Force Regulations of 1 April 1865. *'Each member of the Mounted Police will be issued with a carbine, sword and revolver. Each member of the Foot Police will be issued with a rifle, sword and baton. Water Police will be supplied with requisite arms to enable them to perform their duty efficiently'. 'The Police are armed to enable them successfully to overcome opposition to lawful arrests and to protect themselves against armed interference in the execution of their duty'. 'The sword and carbine should not be used on ordinary Police duty. The baton, with the addition of the revolver, will generally be sufficient, except on prisoner or Gold escort. The arms of an escort are invariably to be loaded and always in a state for instant use'.*

In May 1864 32 Root's -design (patented 24 November 1857) Colt made, side hammer .56" calibre, 5 shot 20" barrel London proofed revolving percussion carbines were purchased by the Otago Provincial

buckshot. These were in turn replaced by Snider breech loading carbines. Note: all English made revolving carbines and rifles were designed and made to be held by the trigger guard, eliminating the chance of injuries caused by multiple discharges. A few were trialled in New Zealand and owned by settlers.

By the end of the first year 187,000 ounces of gold (then worth four pounds an ounce) had been sent by stage coach from the Otago goldfields to Dunedin under the watchful eyes of an Otago Armed Constabulary escort. No gold escort was ever attacked. Goldfield Police were well paid; Mounted Constables received 12 shillings 6 pence a day. By 1873 Otago had produced 12,500,000 pounds Sterling of gold and the tax's made Otago a very rich province. With the demise of gold and the tax revenue generated the Otago Provincial Government was forced to cut Police pay. In May 1872 most of the Dunedin Police retaliated by going on strike, all of them being sacked. Members of the New Zealand Armed Constabulary Force from Wellington were sent to Dunedin to carry out law enforcement duties for the period of unrest. In 1876-77 the Provincial Governments and their policing systems were abolished and a nationwide New Zealand Constabulary Force took over, with the NZ Armed Constabulary Field Force based at Cambridge.



From the mid 1860s the Pattern 1858 Enfield 17 bore constabulary carbine, was introduced and either ex Royal Navy Pattern 1853 London made .36" Colt single action revolvers (left) or Pattern 1856 .44" Beaumont Adams double action revolvers (right), and the Pattern 1853 British cavalry troopers sabres'.



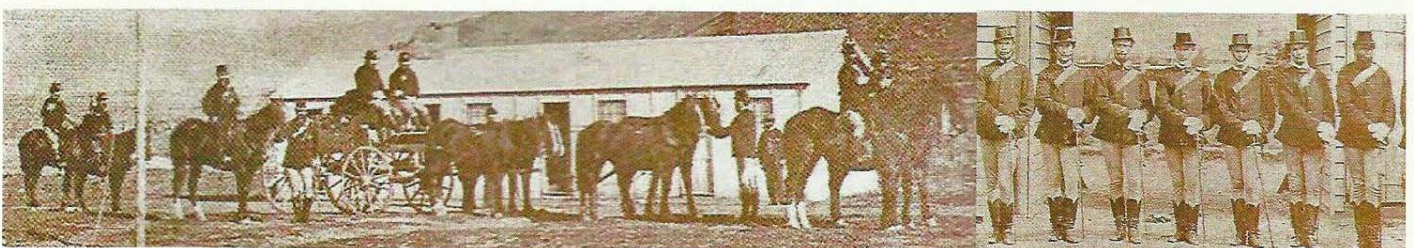
In 1864 the Otago Provincial Government purchased 32, London proofed Pattern 1857 Colt 20" barrel .56" caliber revolving carbines, but these proved dangerous to the user and were quickly removed from service

overland proved expensive and dangerous, and the idea was abandoned. It was cheaper and safer to send gold by steamship to Nelson or direct to Australia, much to the disappointment of the Christchurch merchants who had hoped to benefit from the gold bonanza. In April 1868 about 2,000 armed Irish Protestant (Loyalists)

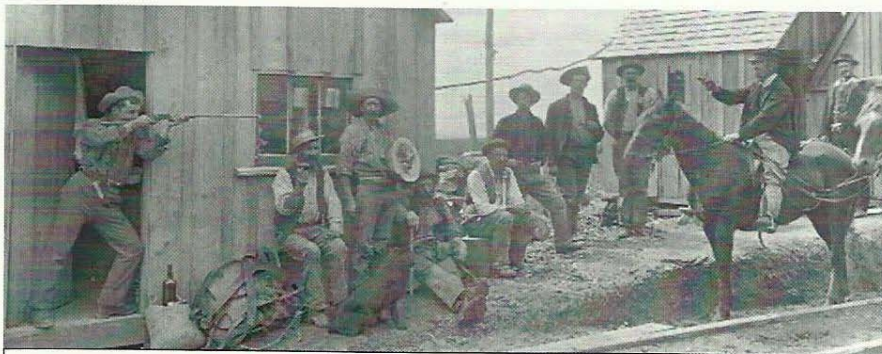
West Coast Gold. On the West Coast two towns Charleston and Hokitika with about 50 thousand inhabitants and 100 hotels sprang up in two years. A dozen or so 'barmaids' were engaged in each hotel to entertain and dance with the diggers, 'stringing them on to drink'. Each girl was paid a small retainer and weekly commissions on the 'trade' she did. Eleven million pounds value of gold was won in a few years from the West Coast goldfields. In 1862 three senior Victorian Goldfields Police were recruited to establish a West Coast (then West Canterbury) Mounted Goldfields Police. Two abortive gold escorts went from the West Coast over the Southern Alps to Christchurch, the first in March 1865 went from Greenstone near Hokitika, over the Hurunui saddle via Lake Bruner. The second escort in December 1865 went via Arthurs Pass. Transporting gold

threatened to attack Addisons Flat and annihilate a similar number of Irish Catholic diggers. A large detachment of New Zealand Armed Constabulary was sent principally from Patea in case of further trouble.

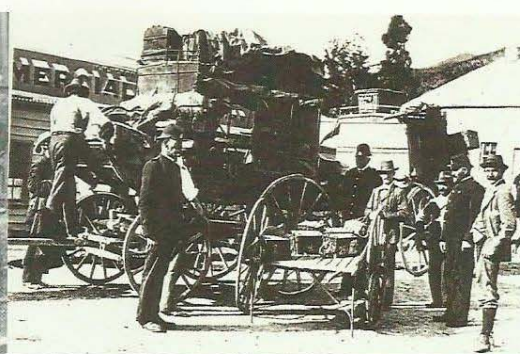
Nelson Gold and Bush Rangers. From 1865 another gold rush started at "Try Again Terrace" downstream from Nelson Creek where over 1200 miners used ground sluicing to wash out the gold. On 3 September 1865 near Notown five masked men armed with revolvers robbed a digger of 824 ounces of gold, 1000 pounds in notes and his revolver. The affair was reported to the Nelson Police at Twelve Mile Camp, but the thickly bushed country was a robber's heaven. Robberies and murders continued particularly on the Maungatapu track between Nelson and the Wakamarina Goldfield. Rewards were offered totalling 800



Gold escort – West land to Christchurch December 1865 courtesy NZ Police



Miners at the Collingwood Goldfield, Nelson c1870



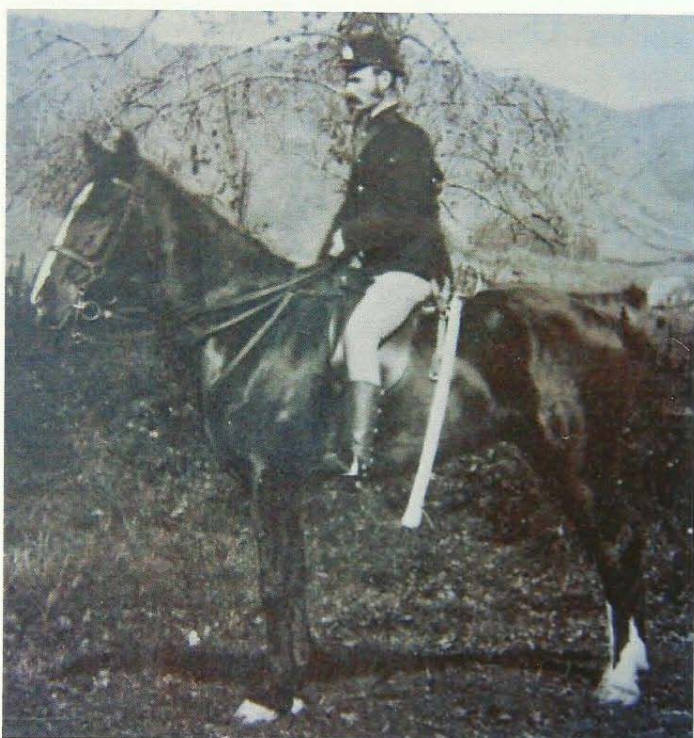
Gold Escort at Roxburgh c1880s

pounds for information leading to the recovery of the bodies and conviction of the murderers. On 12 June 1866 James Battle was murdered for the gold he carried by the 'Burgess Gang' on the Maungatapu track, south-east of Nelson. The following day four other men were killed nearby in a crime that shocked New Zealand. All four members of the Burgess Gang had come to New Zealand via the goldfields of Victoria, Australia. Three of them had been transported to Australia as convicts for crimes committed in England. In June 1866 Richard Burgess, Thomas Kelly, William Levy and John Sullivan were arrested by the Police. Sullivan turned Queen's evidence and confessed to being involved in the murder of five men on the Maungatapu track, near Franklyns Flat and of George Dobson on the West Coast near Greymouth. It was suspected that the 'Burgess - Kelly Gang' had murdered and robbed many others on the Otago and West Coast goldfields. A five shot Colt .31" calibre 5" barrel pocket revolver was taken from Burgess at the time of his arrest.

Hawkes Bay Gold and Te Kooti. In May 1867 the Provincial Government of Hawkes Bay offered 1,000 pounds reward for the discovery of a payable gold field. Traces of gold had been found in the upper reaches of Hawkes Bay Rivers causing a minor gold rush. In July 1867 the Sweeney Brothers, professional prospectors from Nelson found what they considered to be a payable goldfield around Te Pohue on the Napier Taupo Road, but moved out when threatened by hostile Maoris. In 1868 Maori war chief Te Kooti's warriors terrorised the inland areas of Hawkes Bay, murdering and plundering as they went. Seasoned gold diggers moved out in fear of their lives. Donald McLean a Cabinet Minister from Hawkes Bay called upon the friendly Maori chiefs of Hawkes Bay to join forces with the NZ Armed Constabulary and finish off Te Kooti so that the district could be opened for gold prospecting. After the wars ended in February 1872, gold prospectors returned to Hawkes Bay. In June 1880 Sergeant John O'Brian of the NZ Armed Constabulary found gold-bearing quartz at Stony Creek near Tarawera and traces of gold, platinum and silver in the Mohaka River. These were all substantiated by Doctor Skey, the Bank of New Zealand analyst in Napier. Gold prospecting continued in Hawkes Bay till May 1885 but most finds were 'duffer.'

Coromandel Gold. In June 1862 Coromandel was proclaimed a Goldfield under the 1858 Act. Prospecting was hindered by some Maori resistance and the wars of 1860-1872. A few diggers found rich rewards. A farm labourer found 100,000 pounds of gold on his Coromandel claim but lost all his money foolishly in a few years. In July 1867 Shortland (Thames) was proclaimed a Goldfield. In August 1868 the population was 18,000, and by 1870, 112 Hotels catered for the needs of the 15,000 diggers.

During 1870 the New Zealand Armed Constabulary Force took over the Auckland Provincial Constabulary who could not cope and thus the policing of the



1900 Nelson Police District Mounted Constable with Pattern 1853 Sabre



From 1872 the NZ special order Tisdall .577" caliber breech loading 20" barrel Snider Enfield Carbine (top) for both foot and mounted Police was issued to some members of the Auckland provincial Goldfields Police. The 6 chamber .450" breech loading revolvers (left) M1872 Adams, (centre) M1880 Webley RIC and (right) M1878 Tranter replaced the percussion revolvers. From 1874 the Snider Enfield one band cavalry / constabulary became the standard carbine until the 1920s

Coromandel goldfields. In 1872 they were armed with .577" calibre Snider breech loading, 2 band 20" barrel single shot 1 in 48" twist rifling carbines, a special order made by Tisdalls of Birmingham and .450" calibre six shot Adams centrefire breech loading revolvers and Pattern 1853 cavalry sabres. In 1874-75 the Ohinemuri-Waihi-Paeroa goldfields opened up. On 6 October 1876 the first gold shipment from Waitekauri of 1354 ounces was escorted by the NZ Armed Constabulary Force troopers. In November 1880 the Te Aroha gold field opened up. By 1894 eleven cyanide gold quartz separating vats were operating. In 1908 the Martha mine at Waihi, one of the world's largest, employed over 1,000 men. By 1924 over two and a half million ounces of gold had been won. Gold has also been found in other parts of Auckland province, in particular at Cape Maria Van Dieman and near the Herekino-Broadwood road in the Far North.

Gold recovery, once the immediate alluvial gold was won with pick and shovel, diggers needed to crush the gold bearing quartz rock in a stamper battery driven by a waterwheel. The gold was caught by riffles in water washed trays, simple but inefficient. Alternatively the quartz rock was ground to powder in a large steel bowl (berdan). The powder passed over a mercury amalgam where the heavier gold sank into the mercury whilst the rock floated over the top. In the 1890s more efficient treatment to extract the gold

was developed using cyanide retorts. Good profits were obtained from reworking the tailings. Some diggers diverted rivers so that they could work their beds, some developed spoon dredges to drag in the river beds to the shore. Eventually the anchored floating gold dredge (current wheeler) evolved, incorporating an endless chain of buckets driven by a water wheel turned by the passing current. There is still much gold to be won in New Zealand, but its recovery is becoming a costly challenge

Acknowledgments and Special thanks to:

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A Readers Letter

The latest Gazette for December is a credit to the Association as well as to the Editor. Professional in its appearance and reflecting a true spirit of historical enquiry, it can only convey a good image of an organisation whose objectives are the study of both history and the part of arms in that history. Other folk outside our club undoubtedly get to read it. It can only convey the impression of a responsible group of people with a genuine academic interest. Well done.

Gordon Hill