

## 2. Developing Economies



### 2.1 Barter and exchange

The pre-European Maori economy was based on horticulture and seasonal exploitation of food resources. Judging from the archaeological evidence it is clear that extensive trade networks existed from very early in Coromandel's history.

The Coromandel Peninsula is rich in stone resources and has basalt for making adzes, obsidian and chert for cutting and scraping tools, and petrified wood for fashioning into fishing lures. Stone such as greywacke and sandstone was also important for a range of tasks. Archaeological excavations throughout the upper North Island revealed stone able to be sourced to the Coromandel region, particularly Tahanga basalt adzes and obsidian. In turn, Coromandel sites have stone which has been imported from elsewhere in New Zealand: greywacke adzes from the Hauraki Gulf, obsidian from Tuhua/Mayor Island, Aotea/Great Barrier Island and Northland sources, argillite adzes from the Nelson-d'Urville Island area, rodingite hammerstones from the South Island, and pounamu/nephrite from the South Island's West Coast. People moved about frequently in their large double-hulled ocean going canoes during the foundation period after arrival in New Zealand, finding the most suitable stone resources and mapping the land. It is therefore in the sites developed in the first few hundred years that trade is most apparent. After that time, other materials which have left no trace may have been highly prized trade items or exchanged to reinforce relationships with other groups. Early historic accounts refer to superior quality flax cloaks from Hauraki, for example, being traded. Land Court records also relate that food such as preserved shearwaters (muttonbirds) and dried shark were traded with people living inland who had no access to the resources of the sea.

The 1769 expedition lead by James Cook alerted the rest of the world to the rich timber resources of the Coromandel; timber thought to be well-suited to ship building and for masts and spars. Cook and his crew spent the best part of a month in the Coromandel area, first on the eastern side where they observed the transit of Mercury at Te Whanganui o Hei (Mercury Bay). At some point Cook gave two handfuls of seed potatoes to an old chief, which were subsequently planted and cultivated. The *Endeavour* then sailed around the coastline to the

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<sup>1</sup> Charles Heaphy 'The New Zealand gold field, discovery of gold near the source of the Kapunga Stream, Coromandel, about 40 miles from Auckland' *Illustrated London News*, 1853 Alexander Turnbull Library E-372-f-034-2

Waihou where Cook and a party explored the river and visited Oruarangi. At virtually every anchorage they traded with the local Maori (and some who had travelled from further afield), exchanging European cloth and other goods for food and other supplies.<sup>2</sup>

The published accounts of Cook's voyages made New Zealand seem an attractive place, although extremely distant. The establishment in 1786 of the convict colony at Botany Bay, Sydney, in many ways shortened that distance. Some historians have even argued that access to New Zealand, and its seemingly plentiful supply of timber suitable for naval purposes, was one of the incentives in establishing the colony in Australia. Given the loss of the American colonies, timber for shipbuilding was in short supply. It was even argued that loading the returning ships with spars and flax from New Zealand could pay for the transportation of convicts to Australia.<sup>3</sup>

Between 1794 and 1801, starting with the *Fancy*, at least six vessels visited the Waihou seeking cargoes of spars, which eventually found their way to China, India, Tahiti and Port Jackson (Australia).<sup>4</sup> While these vessels were berthed on the Waihou further exchanges of goods occurred and Maori were employed to move the timber on board the vessels. The *Royal Admiral*, for example, which cut spars for the East India Company's navy up the Hikutaia Stream in 1801, traded cloth, buttons, nails and pieces of iron, for food such as fish, kumara, potatoes, and turnips. Most of these spars would have been kahikatea, as kauri did not grow in the swampy lower reaches of the Waihou. While searching for suitable stands of timber the crew of the *Admiral* came across a canoe carrying two Englishmen. One of these men was a sailor, Henry Taylor, who had jumped ship from the *Hunter* in 1798 and was living with local Maori.<sup>5</sup>

In 1820 two British naval ships visited New Zealand, the HMS *Coromandel* and the HMS *Dromedary*, in search of kauri suitable for use as spars. The HMS *Coromandel*, which also brought the Rev. Samuel Marsden to the Waihou, managed to obtain kauri spars from Waiiau on the western side of the Peninsula. The harbour and township eventually established there were later named for the ship.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Paul Monin *This is My Place, Hauraki Contested, 1769-1875* (Wellington: Bridget Williams, 2001) pp. 15-23.

<sup>3</sup> Joanna Orwin *Kauri, Witness to a Nation's History* (New Holland Publishers (NZ) Ltd., 1984) p. 58.

<sup>4</sup> *Fancy* (1794), *Hunter* (1798), *El Plumier* (1801), and the *Royal Admiral* (1801). It is possible that other vessels visited the Coromandel, but no record of them has been found so far. *Ibid.*, p. 59. See also Monin p. 25.

<sup>5</sup> Monin, p. 30.

<sup>6</sup> Orwin, pp. 73-74.

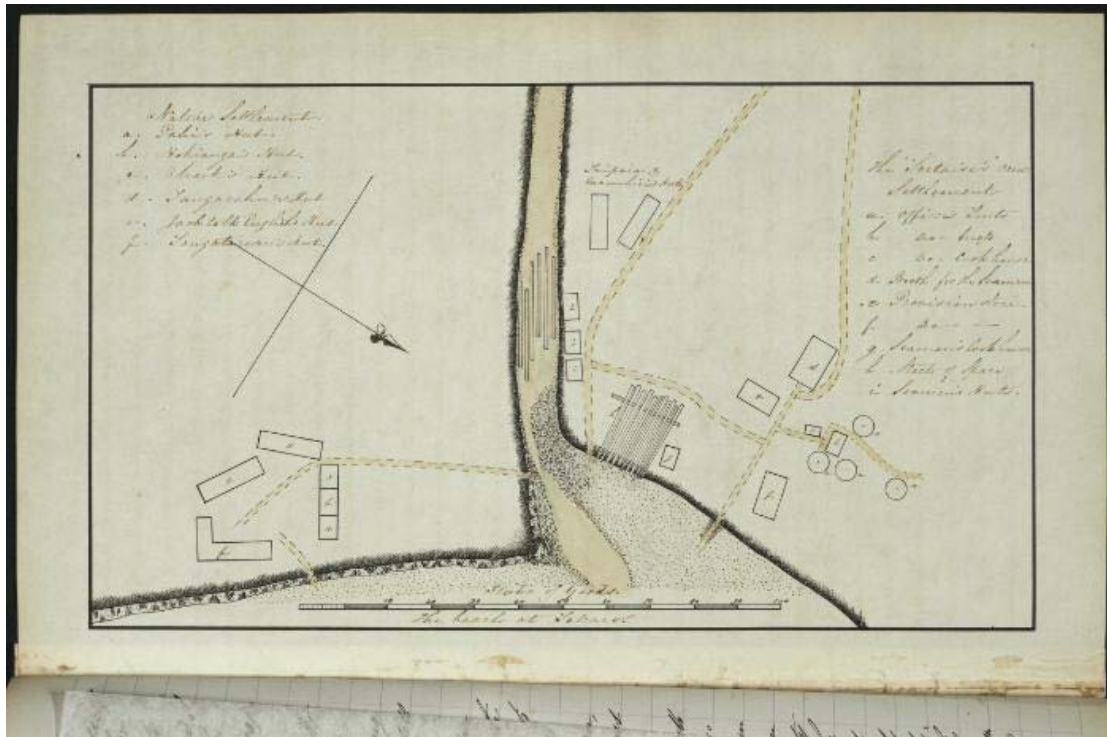


Fig: 1. T Laslett 'The beach at Tekaro [sic]' 1843, pen and ink journal entry.  
Alexander Turnbull Library MS-Papers-8349-3-059

## 2.2 Extraction and production

In the 1830s a trading station and ship building yard were established on Whanganui Island at the entrance to the Coromandel Harbour.<sup>7</sup> The station was established by William Webster, an American carpenter who had deserted from an American whaler. Webster married a local Maori woman, learned to speak *te reo* and established himself building schooners and trading in timber, flax, potatoes and pigs procured from local suppliers for the Sydney market.<sup>8</sup> By 1840 Woolshed Bay residents included pork and fish curers, coopers, blacksmiths and carpenters, as well as sawyers and boat builders.<sup>9</sup>

Another early European Peninsula trader was Ranulph Dacre, who had served in the English Royal Navy. Dacre shipped goods between Australia, New Zealand and London from 1825, eventually settling in Sydney in 1831. In 1834 he set up in partnership with William Wilks to exploit the kauri, flax, and sandalwood resources the Pacific had to offer. Shortly thereafter he acquired land in New Zealand, at Mangonui, Mercury Bay and Mahurangi, for the purpose of timber working, shipbuilding, trading and rearing of livestock.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Whanganui Island was also known as Beeson's Island and Te Poroporo.

<sup>8</sup> Eugene Grayland and Valerie Grayland *Historic Coromandel* (Wellington: Reed, 1969) pp. 26-27.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 27.

<sup>10</sup> Frank Rogers, 'Dacre, Ranulph 1797 - 1884', *Dictionary of New Zealand Biography*, <http://www.dnzb.govt.nz/> updated 22 June 2007.

In 1836 Dacre's associate Gordon Davis Browne, a former Sydney merchant, established a timber yard, repair slip and shipbuilding yard at the junction of Whitianga Harbour and Mercury Bay. Here Browne erected a stone wharf with the help of Maori labour.<sup>11</sup> By 1862 the Mercury Bay Timber Company had erected a sawmill by the wharf. This mill was moved across the harbour to a larger site (present-day Whitianga) in 1881. In 1864 another mill (the Upper Mill) was erected to process logs from the Whenuakite Stream.<sup>12</sup> The Mercury Bay Timber Company was later purchased by the Kauri Timber Company (see below). According to one account the company employed two gangs of 70 men to operate the mill, working in 10-hour shifts. Each shift could cut over 30,000 feet of timber.<sup>13</sup>

By 1875 there were a total of thirteen kauri mills operating on the Coromandel Peninsula. At Whitianga trade in timber reached a peak in 1886, with ships leaving the port directly for Sydney.<sup>14</sup> The timber was extracted using bullock teams, rolling roads and chutes to transport the logs to the nearest stream. There they were collected in kauri dams, which when full were tripped driving the logs down the waterway to chain booms strung across the river just above the mill. At Whangamata, for example, several dams were constructed along the Wentworth River, including the Wires Dam in 1891.<sup>15</sup> Remains of such dams are to be found in the tributary streams of most of the Peninsula's main rivers, including the Wentworth, Wharekawa, Tairua, Whenuakite and Kauaeranga. Once at the coast lumber could then be milled and uploaded for export or floated around the coastline to Auckland for processing there.



Fig. 2: Kauri raft, Whenuakite creek, between 1859-1900, Alexander Turnbull Library PA1-q-256-17.

<sup>11</sup> Field Record Form, NZHPT, Old Stone Wharf, Ferry Landing, Whitianga, Category I Historic Place, No. 4675.

<sup>12</sup> Grayland and Grayland, p. 11.

<sup>13</sup> Jenny Bithell *Guide to the history of Whitianga* (Whitianga: A.J. Bithell, 1980) p. 41.

<sup>14</sup> Grayland and Grayland, p. 11.

<sup>15</sup> Beverley Williamson *Whangamata: 100 Years of Change* (Paeroa: Goldfields Print, 1988) p. 14.

After 1867 demand for timber increased dramatically on the western side of the Coromandel Peninsula, as the discovery of gold spurred the construction of the townships of Thames and Coromandel, and where it was also needed within the mines and to fuel the stamper batteries. To supply the new settlements of Grahamstown and Shortland, the Kauaeranga Valley was opened to logging on a large scale. In 1871 Auckland businessman C. J. Stone secured a 99-year lease to cut timber over a large area of the Kauaeranga Valley and built with his brother a mill at the mouth of the Kauaeranga River.<sup>16</sup>

Later, as the timber had to be sourced further and further up the valleys, the Stone Brothers contracted out their logging operations. Although the demand for timber at Thames declined in the mid-1870s as the gold rush subsided, the Stones found new markets in other nearby goldfields (e.g. Ohinemuri), as well as Auckland, the South Island and Australia. Between 1873 and 1876 they supplied the timber to construct the water race from Hoffman Pool to Thames, channelling water to the batteries and the Thames township until the 1940s.<sup>17</sup>

In 1888 the Stones' operation on the Kauaeranga was acquired by the Kauri Timber Company (KTC) formed by a group of Melbourne businessmen. The KTC was to become one of the largest timber merchants and manufacturers in the country. During the early 1890s the industry was hit by a downturn in demand brought on by a worldwide economic depression. Although a number of KTC mills were closed, the mill at Shortland remained open to supply the mining industry. By 1908 the amount of accessible kauri in the Kauaeranga Valley had declined to such an extent that the Shortland mill was sold, with KTC retaining the cutting rights. In 1912 the company devised a way to mill the last of the major stands located above the Kauaeranga Gorge. This involved a steam tramline in the lower reaches of the Kauaeranga Valley to avoid farmland. The construction of the tramline was suspended during the First World War, but completed by 1920. The milling operations lasted until 1927 and the tramline was pulled up in 1928.<sup>18</sup>

During the Great Depression of the 1930s the government provided employment through the planting of exotic forests on areas that had been cleared of native timber. In 1929 a nursery was established at Willett's Farm at Wharekawa near Opoutere to see which exotics would do well.<sup>19</sup> Eventually a number of tree species were planted in the Tairua and Maramarua Forests, including pines, eucalypts, redwoods and macrocarpa. In the 1960s the Peninsula's exotic forests were increased with plantings at Moehau, Waikawau, Whangapoua, Hikuai and Kauaeranga. Most of these later plantings were radiata pine.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Bruce W. Hayward *Kauaeranga Kauri, a pictorial history of the Kauri Timber industry in the Kauaeranga Valley, Thames* (Auckland: Lodestar Press, 1978) pp. 3- 5.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid, pp. 6-8.

<sup>19</sup> Williamson, pp. 51-53.

<sup>20</sup> Michael King *The Coromandel* (Auckland: Tandem Press, 1993) p. 63.

During the 1960s and 1970s logging of kauri in the Coromandel was largely restricted to the salvage of dead or dying trees that had been previously out of reach. Salvaging could be a destructive operation, as heavy machinery had to be used to remove the kauri logs from their remote locations.<sup>21</sup> Efforts by conservationists stopped the milling of native timber in the Manaia Block and the area was declared a Forest Sanctuary in 1972. Felling of kauri stopped on 26 February 1973 and in the 1970s the Forest Service planted around 40,000 trees in the Coromandel Forest Park.<sup>22</sup> It has been stated that only one percent of the Coromandel forests remained after the main era of the kauri milling.<sup>23</sup>



Fig. 3: Kauri logs piled up near Coroglen on the Waiawa River, undated. Alexander Turnbull Library 1/2-022204-G

Kauri was also associated with another important extractive industry on the Peninsula. From as early as the 1830s American and British traders began buying New Zealand kauri gum for the varnish industry and it became a lucrative trade item for Maori. Most of the gum was dug from the swamps of Northland but a small portion also came from the Coromandel Peninsula.<sup>24</sup> There are accounts of Maori collecting gum at Kauaeranga during the 1840s.<sup>25</sup> By the 1860s the export of kauri gum was a well-developed industry. By the 1890s there were approximately 20,000 people employed in the industry throughout New Zealand.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>21</sup> Orwin, p. 174.

<sup>22</sup> Kauri 2000 Trust, [http://www.kauri2000.co.nz/kauri\\_history.html](http://www.kauri2000.co.nz/kauri_history.html)

<sup>23</sup> Orwin, p. 174.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid*, pp.129-131. Williamson, p. 23.

<sup>25</sup> Francis Bennett *Tairua: A History of the Tairua-Hikuai-Pauanui District* (Pauanui: Pauanui Information Bureau, 1986), p. 83.

<sup>26</sup> Carl Walrond. 'Kauri gum and gum digging', in *Te Ara*, [www.TeAra.govt.nz/](http://www.TeAra.govt.nz/) updated 21-Sep-2007.

Coromandel kauri gum was considered of high quality. In some cases the gum was retrieved following logging operations. In these situations burning would be used to clear the land.<sup>27</sup> At Coroglen (then known as Guntown) upwards of 200 gum diggers were employed in the industry's heyday.<sup>28</sup> Gum was also dug at Whangamata, Tairua, Wharekawa and Kuaotunu.<sup>29</sup> Some Maori gum collectors later returned to their ancestral rohe after the gum had been exhausted, while others stayed on the Peninsula and established settlements, as at Paritu.

Early European explorers had also recognised the potential value of New Zealand flax for making rope, and had observed the great skill of Maori in utilising this plant. Some of the earliest trade between European and Maori was for flax. By the 1820s a regular export of flax to Sydney was underway. Trading stations for flax were established in Northland, Waikato, Taranaki, the Bay of Plenty, the East Coast, Southland, the Cook Strait, Banks Peninsula and the Coromandel.<sup>30</sup>

The production of processed flax declined for a time due to intertribal fighting, the New Zealand Wars and the consequent shortfall of labour required to process large quantities of the raw material. In the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the industry recovered, however, largely due to the introduction of new technologies that could strip flax in greater quantities than hand stripping. A number of flax mills were operated by steam or waterpower. In 1870 there were 161 flax mills across the country, more often than not using Maori labour to cut flax.<sup>31</sup> In the Coromandel, flax mills operated at Whitianga, along the Waihou and the Piako Rivers, and at Port Jackson.<sup>32</sup> Flaxmill (Maramaratotara) Bay in Mercury Bay was named for the mill that operated there until 1907.

Far out-reaching the impact of flax milling on the Peninsula, the discovery of gold was to have a tremendous impact on the physical and social landscape of the district. 19<sup>th</sup> century 'gold fever' was a worldwide phenomena brought about by the need to greatly upscale exploitation of the world's natural resources in order to fuel the growing industrialised economies of Europe and the United States of America. In the mid to late 19<sup>th</sup> century gold rushes occurred in California, Victoria (Australia), New Zealand, Queensland, Western Australia, South Africa, the Yukon (Canada) and Alaska.<sup>33</sup>

Since the 1820s rumours had circulated about the existence of gold in the Coromandel. In 1852 a group of Aucklanders offered a reward of £100 (later increased to £500) to anyone

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<sup>27</sup> Williamson, p. 14.

<sup>28</sup> Grayland and Grayland, p. 34.

<sup>29</sup> Williamson, pp. 14-17.

<sup>30</sup> Nancy Swarbrick, 'Flax and flax working', *Te Ara*, [www.TeAra.govt.nz/](http://www.TeAra.govt.nz/) updated 20-Oct-2008.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>32</sup> Grayland and Grayland, p. 11.

<sup>33</sup> 'Plate 44: Gold Rushes and Goldfields, Otago, West Coast and Hauraki, 1860s to 1900s', *New Zealand, Historical Atlas, Visualising New Zealand* (Wellington: Bateman, 1997).

who found a payable gold field in the vicinity of Auckland.<sup>34</sup> In October of that same year Charles Ring found gold at Driving Creek (so named because it was the driving creek for a timber mill), near Coromandel town. Within a month the Government and local Maori had negotiated an agreement to allow mining to take place for three years within stipulated areas around Coromandel. The amount of gold that could be easily panned was relatively small. Less than £1,200 worth of gold was extracted within the first six months of the initial gold rush and the returns fell steeply after this. Gold was also found at Kapanga in 1861, and there was another discovery at Tokatea (behind Coromandel) in 1868, by which time gold had also been discovered at Thames.<sup>35</sup>



Fig. 4: Kapanga area with Driving Creek in the foreground, c. 1860s Alexander Turnbull Library 1/2-065517-F

It was the discovery of gold at Kauaeranga that was in many ways to transform the Coromandel. While it was known that gold existed in the vicinity, the government negotiators, led by the Civil Commissioner Alexander Mackay, had made little progress persuading the Maori owners of the land to allow prospecting. Thames Maori had seen the effects of mining at Coromandel and feared for their land. However, some were willing to negotiate. One such person was Wirope Hotereni Taipari, the son of Ngāti Maru rangitira Te Hauauru Taipari. Taipari promoted the search for a viable gold field, and eventually in mid-1867 one was found in the Karaka Stream. On 27 July 1867 the Crown entered into an agreement with Thames iwi to cede a portion of their land to the Governor under the Gold Fields Act 1866 in return for a

<sup>34</sup> Carl Walrond, 'Gold and gold mining', in *Te Ara*, [www.TeAra.govt.nz/](http://www.TeAra.govt.nz/) updated 4 De-2008

<sup>35</sup> Grayland and Grayland, pp. 16-20.



portion of the subsequent rentals.<sup>36</sup> On 10 August 1867 William Hunt, George Clarkson and John White discovered the first important reef, the Shotover, beneath a waterfall on the Kuranui Stream and the rush was on.<sup>37</sup>

The opening on the goldfield brought a flood of people to the newly established settlements of Shortland and Grahamstown. Many miners arrived from California, Bendigo (Australia), Otago and the West Coast of the South Island.<sup>38</sup> By 1868 over 18,000 people were living on the Thames goldfield. Large amounts of gold, and silver, were extracted. The Caledonian Mine, for example, produced 140,000 ounces (3,969 kilograms) of bullion in 1870.<sup>39</sup> In 1871 nearly £2,000,000 worth of gold was produced. However, the initial boom or bonanza was relatively short lived and in the following year Thames gold production crashed.

At Thames, like elsewhere in the Coromandel, the main source of gold was from gold bearing auriferous (quartz) reefs that ran deep underground. To recover the gold from this source required extensive tunnelling and costly machinery to crush and extract the gold from the ore. Individual miners are more able to exploit alluvial fields where the gold can be found on or near the surface or washed from gold-bearing gravels and sands. Consequently, the Thames field was soon taken over by large companies who could raise the capital necessary for large-scale hard rock mining.

The process of extracting gold from quartz ore was dramatically improved with the introduction in 1899 of the MacArthur Forrest process, better known as the cyanide process. Previous methods, using mercury, only extracted about half of the gold and an even smaller amount of silver from the ore. The cyanide process resulted in the recovery of 95% of the gold and a marginally higher amount of silver. The process also offered the possibility of working lower grade deposits as well as reworking old tailings. It was introduced to the Hauraki goldfields by New Zealand Crown Mines at Karangahake, and was soon adopted by other companies. The improved recovery of gold and silver encouraged new investment in the goldfields and reinvigorated the mining industry.

By 1896 mine shafts as deep as 200 metres below sea level began to honeycomb the land around Thames. Flooding of the mines was always a danger. As early as 1871 a pump was installed at the Imperial Mine, which served a number of mine shafts. This pump was closed in 1879, but restarted in 1880 by which time a second pump at the Queen of Beauty was also in operation. The failure of one of these pumps severely hindered the production of gold. In 1895 the Thames-Hauraki Goldfields Company acquired the Queen of Beauty Mine and, with the assistance of a government subsidy, built a new pump. At the time this was claimed to be

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<sup>36</sup> *Hauraki Report*, [www.waitangitribunal.govt.nz](http://www.waitangitribunal.govt.nz), pp. 358-361.

<sup>37</sup> 'Thames', *The Cyclopaedia of New Zealand [Auckland Provincial District]* (Christchurch, 1902), p. 859, [www.nzetc.org/](http://www.nzetc.org/) accessed 6/11/09.

<sup>38</sup> Grayland and Grayland, p. 37.

<sup>39</sup> Walrond, 'Gold and gold mining'.

the largest in the Southern Hemisphere. The Queen of Beauty pump kept the Thames mines free of water until 1913 when finally too much water entered the system and the field flooded.<sup>40</sup>



Fig. 5: CD Barraud *Bright Smile and Queen of Beauty Mines, Thames, 22 September 1874*  
Alexander Turnbull Library B-084-008

Gold was also found on the Wairoa Stream, a tributary of the Wentworth, at Whangamata in 1887. The amount of gold recovered at this time was not large but ten years later gold bearing quartz was found at Wentworth. The gold was first mined by the Hauraki Peninsula Exploration Company and later the Manany Goldmining Company. In 1900 a battery was built. The mine was then operated by the Auckland Goldmining Company. The local population created by the mine was sufficient to prompt the establishment of a settlement with a school, but the small field had closed by about 1925.<sup>41</sup> Gold was also found north of Whangamata on an upper tributary of the Wharekawa River. A number of companies attempted to mine this find but with little success and the last company went into liquidation in 1929.<sup>42</sup> In 1898 gold was discovered at Slip Creek near Gumtown (Coroglen) and in the following year at Kapowai. Mining continued here until about 1911.<sup>43</sup>

By the early 1900s most of the gold mining had shifted south to the Ohinemuri goldfields and by the 1920s gold mining at Thames and Coromandel had virtually ceased.<sup>44</sup> During the Depression, however, a special work scheme operated called the Gold Prospecting Scheme. Relief workers under supervision were assigned a prospecting claim to work. They were paid

<sup>40</sup> NZHPT Field Record Form - Queen of Beauty Mine Pump Quadrants – Category I historic place, no 4882.

<sup>41</sup> Williamson, p. 17.

<sup>42</sup> Williamson, pp. 17-18.

<sup>43</sup> Janet Riddle, *Saltspray & sawdust* (Coroglen: Gumtown Publishers, [c1996]) pp.154-155.

a nominal rate and any gold found was the property of the worker.<sup>45</sup> Nevertheless by the 1940s very little mining was occurring on the Coromandel, on any scale.



Fig. 6: William A Price, 'Waiotahi Gold Mine, Thames' Price Collection, Alexander Turnbull Library 1/2-001555-G

During the 1980s and 1990s a strong anti-mining lobby group developed on the Coromandel Peninsula, motivated by the poor environmental record of mining companies. In 1998 the Thames Coromandel District Council decided to ban mining in certain areas. This was eventually overturned by the High Court in 2005 but nevertheless today large-scale mining does not occur on the Coromandel.<sup>46</sup>

Whereas native timber and gold extraction have ceased, farming on the Peninsula has endured for more than 160 years. During the 1840s and 1850s the population of Auckland expanded considerably through European immigration. For Ngāti Maru and other Hauraki iwi the fledgling city became a profitable market for their produce. Canoes would make the journey across the Hauraki Gulf laden with potatoes, kumara, onions, maize, cabbage, fish, pigs, goats, ducks and chickens. Not all produce was sent to Auckland as many new settlers on the Coromandel Peninsula also benefited from Ngāti Maru's agricultural skills.<sup>47</sup> To supply the increased demand for produce, large areas of land were burnt for cultivation.<sup>48</sup> However,

<sup>44</sup> Phil Moore and Neville Ritchie *Coromandel Gold, a guide to the historic goldfields of Coromandel Peninsula*, (Palmerston North: Dunmore Press, 1996) p. 17.

<sup>45</sup> J H Lucas *Coromandel* (Coromandel: Coroprint, 1980) p. 53.

<sup>46</sup> Walrond, 'Gold and gold mining'.

<sup>47</sup> Williams and Williams, pp. 62-63.

<sup>48</sup> Monin, pp. 122-124.

by 1863 some Maori communities on the Coromandel had ceased to be entirely self-sufficient for food, and instead were to a greater or lesser extent dependent upon European trade.<sup>49</sup>

By the late 1860s settlers had begun developing small farms in the valleys of the Coromandel Peninsula, on the coastal flats and on the Hauraki Plains. In the 1870s market gardens were developed by immigrant Chinese near the Thames goldfields to supply the mining community with fresh produce.<sup>50</sup>

In the last decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century dairying became one of the main forms of agricultural production in New Zealand. By the 1880s the greatest proportion of farming income in the Coromandel region was derived from dairying with the rest derived from sheep and beef farming.<sup>51</sup> In the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century dairy companies were formed at Coromandel (Coromandel Dairy Company est. 1909, factory opened 1911), Tairua (Tairua Dairy Company, est. 1922) and Mercury Bay (Mercury Bay Dairy Company, est. 1911).<sup>52</sup> Farmers in remote areas send their cream by boat to the nearest factory. Cream was transported in this way from Cabbage Bay (Colville) to Coromandel, for example.<sup>53</sup>

The Mercury Bay Dairy Company constructed a factory near the wharf at Whitianga in 1911. In 1934 the company built a new factory that came into production in 1936. In 1949 the Tairua Dairy Company merged with the Mercury Bay Dairy Co.<sup>54</sup> As elsewhere on the Coromandel, suppliers sent their cream and milk by horse and launch to the factory. The butter was then transferred to market by coastal shipping until about 1962 when road transport became feasible. The Whitianga factory closed in 1972. Milk products were then sent to the dairy factory at Te Aroha and the 1934 factory at Whitianga subsequently became the home of the Whitianga Museum.<sup>55</sup>

Perhaps surprisingly the Coromandel is also associated with another major New Zealand export earner, the wine industry. Although the Coromandel is not known as a grape-growing region, it can lay claim to the first commercial vineyard in the Southern Hemisphere founded by a Chinese person. In 1905 Joe Ah Chan immigrated to New Zealand from Zengcheng County in China. For a number of years he worked as a hawker, selling vegetables, before eventually setting up a market garden in Thames where he became one of this country's first commercial tomato growers. He began growing table grapes in 1924 and by 1929 he could lay claim to being the only Chinese winemaker in the country. Chan expanded the vineyard in

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<sup>49</sup> Monin, p.189.

<sup>50</sup> David Arbury *Chinese at Thames* (Thames: Metallum Research, [2001]).

<sup>51</sup> King, p. 62.

<sup>52</sup> Sue Wright 'Local Government 1877 to 2001' in *In Search of the Rainbow: The Coromandel Story* ([Auckland]: Wendy Pye [2002]) p. 37. Archives New Zealand contains records for the Tairua Co-Operative Dairy Company, 1922-1968: The Tairua Co-Operative Dairy Company Limited, Agency BAYT, Series 10357, Record 237, Item 1922/58 part 1, Hamilton Company Files, Archives New Zealand, Auckland.

<sup>53</sup> Wendy Simons (ed.) *In the Shadows of Moehau: A History of the Colville Region* (Otahuhu: Wendy Pye, 1990), p. 71.

<sup>54</sup> Bennett, p.171.

1935 before selling to another Chinese migrant, unrelated but of the same name, after the Second World War. In 1950 Chan left Thames for Auckland, where he set up a market garden at Blockhouse Bay and grew tomatoes for the Auckland market. He died in 1959.<sup>56</sup> Chan's Goldleaf Vineyard was later marketed as Totara Wines and became known for its Riesling, Sylvaner and Chenin Blanc wines.



Fig. 7: Totara Winery, Ngati Maru Highway, Thames

During the 20<sup>th</sup> century the Coromandel was to experience a huge expansion in the fishing industry centred on the ports of Thames, Coromandel, Whitianga and Whangamata.<sup>57</sup> From the 1960s Thames was an important base for commercial fishing in the Firth of Thames and other areas of the Hauraki Gulf. To support this industry, businesses such as fish packing and curing were established.<sup>58</sup> By the 1980s fishing was a \$25 million dollar a year industry.<sup>59</sup> By the 1990s aquaculture was also a well-established industry in the district. By 2004, the Coromandel area, together with the Marlborough Sounds, accounted for over 70% of the country's total aquaculture production.<sup>60</sup> Recreational fishers benefit from the presence the mussel farms off the west coast while the oysters of Coromandel have been regarded as a delicacy since the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Whitianga's annual Scallop Festival also draws attention to the Peninsula's seafood resource and its contribution to the district's identity.

The Coromandel has also yielded other natural resources over the years. Of particular note was the mining of Coromandel granite, used during the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries for facing large buildings and monuments throughout New Zealand. The granite was mined at Paritu, on the northwest coast of the Peninsula, from the early 1900s until 1984. The mining operations involved the construction of two wharves, a tram track that delivered the granite slabs to the wharves and accommodation buildings. The latter included a small granite building known as 'Ye Olde Stone Jug' (1920s) that is still extant today.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Bithell, p.18. The former factory is a Category II historic place, HPT Reg. No. 4623.

<sup>56</sup> Wesley Ah Chan 'Ah Chan, Joe 1882 - 1959' in *Dictionary of New Zealand Biography* <http://www.dnzb.govt.nz/> updated 22 June 2007; Bronwyn Dalley 'Wine' in *Te Ara*, [www.TeAra.govt.nz/](http://www.TeAra.govt.nz/) updated 20-Nov-2008.

<sup>57</sup> King, p. 63.

<sup>58</sup> 'Thames' in *The Cyclopedia of New Zealand [Auckland Provincial District]* (Christchurch, 1902), [www.nzetc.org/](http://www.nzetc.org/) accessed 6/11/09.

<sup>59</sup> King, p. 63.

<sup>60</sup> Maggy Wassilieff 'Aquaculture' in *Te Ara*, [www.TeAra.govt.nz/](http://www.TeAra.govt.nz/) updated 21-Sep-2007.

<sup>61</sup> Simons p. 43.



Fig. 8: Coromandel granite wharf [first], south of Fantail Bay, Coromandel

Coromandel granite features in the memorial to Premier Richard Seddon in the Bolton Street Cemetery and the Massey Memorial at Point Halswell, both in Wellington. It was also used as the base course of Parliament Buildings and in the Hall of Memories, at the National War Memorial, Wellington.<sup>62</sup>

Coromandel shingle has also been quarried in the past. The most noted use of this material was in the construction of the Grafton Bridge, Auckland in 1907-1910.<sup>63</sup> At the time it was built the bridge had the largest concrete arch in the world.<sup>64</sup> The Coromandel also produces fine clays that were mined by the New Zealand pottery company Crown Lynn (established 1948) and used in their products from the late 1960s through to the early 1970s.<sup>65</sup>

### 2.3 Trade and commerce

As has already been discussed there were trading posts throughout the Coromandel prior to the 1840s. A number of these posts were associated with people involved with the timber and flax trade. Some, like the 'store' visited by Ensign Best in 1841 near the Herewaka Mission on the Kauaeranga River, were located near pa to foster trade with local Maori who provided potatoes and flax for visiting ships.

Mining brought with it the rapid development of towns. As the *Daily Southern Cross* reported in March 1863, at Driving Creek

[t]here extends now for nearly two miles a succession of buildings, stores, private

<sup>62</sup> Simon Nathan and Bruce Hayward 'Building stone' in *Te Ara* [www.TeAra.govt.nz/](http://www.TeAra.govt.nz/) updated 4-Dec-2008.

<sup>63</sup> See New Zealand Historic Places Trust Registration No. 16 Grafton Bridge.

<sup>64</sup> Simons, pp. 46-47.

<sup>65</sup> Carl Walrond 'Rock, limestone and clay' in *Te Ara* [www.TeAra.govt.nz/](http://www.TeAra.govt.nz/) updated 4-Dec-2008.

dwellings, hotels, workshops, &c. — the gaps in this line becoming with every new month fewer and shorter. A steamer, the greatest boon of all, links us closely to our emporium [i.e. Auckland].<sup>66</sup>

As some people marked out their claims for gold, others set up shop. At Thames in August 1867 there was just one store, owned by a Mr Nicholls. This was soon joined by a schooner from Auckland that was run ashore on the high tide. The boat was then enclosed with a fence and opened as an emporium. The government surveyors quickly surveyed the newly named town of Shortland. Those sections intended for businesses were charge a licence of £2 to £5 by the Maori owners. Desirable corner sections were leased at a higher rate.<sup>67</sup>



*Presented by Mr. S. Alexander.*

SCENE IN POLLEN STREET, SHORTLAND: AUGUST, 1867.

Fig. 9: 'Scene in Pollen Street, Shortland: August, 1867', in 'Thames', *The Cyclopedia of New Zealand [Auckland Provincial District]* (Christchurch, 1902), p. 877, [www.nzetc.org/](http://www.nzetc.org/) accessed 10/09/09.

To the north of Shortland another settlement quickly grew at Tookey's Flat. Robert Graham acquired a lease for a large area between Shortland and Tookey's Flat and established Grahamstown. All three were to be united as Thames in 1874. By the end of 1867 the area had an impressive list of traders including 14 hotels, 21 booksellers and seven boot makers.<sup>68</sup> Four stamper batteries had also been built to process ore for a fee. Commercial activity was further boosted by the construction of several wharves expediting the import of goods from Auckland and further afield.

At Whitianga the Northern Steamship Company vessel would call into the harbour twice a week. Salesmen would bring their wares to Carini's Hotel where local shopkeepers would

<sup>66</sup> *Daily Southern Cross*, 27 March 1863, p. 3.

<sup>67</sup> David Arbury *Building Thames 1867-1868* (Thames: Metallum Research, [2004])

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*

place their orders. The now well-known Auckland store Smith and Caughey's would also send samples by horse and saddlebag from Auckland.<sup>69</sup>



Fig. 10: Commemorative plaque, Awarua Point, Whangamata (2007)

Elsewhere in the Coromandel stores were set up by mill companies to supply local workers and their families. Others were set up to supply bushman and act as trading posts for gum diggers who brought their gum to be assessed and purchased. Jackson's Landing operated for the gum trade at Tairua from the 1860s. Whangamata's first store was erected at Awarua Point in 1873 and served as a gum and general store until 1920. Around these 'trading posts' small settlements would commonly become established.<sup>70</sup>

The records of George Morrison's store at Hikuai from the years 1892 to 1898 provide an insight into the role of the store in remote areas. The store sold groceries, fruit and vegetables, meat, fish, and dairy produce. It also supplied hardware, building materials, crockery, and clothing. More often than not the purchases were made on credit, with the trading of kauri gum being used to pay off debt.<sup>71</sup>

In the twentieth century towns like Thames and Coromandel became service centres for the growing farming community. Other commercial areas grew as settlements became increasingly popular as holiday destinations. At Whangamata in 1943, for example, Welton Hunt established a store and later a cabaret. The latter building proved useful to the community in other ways, being used for church services and as a cinema. These buildings formed the centre of the present commercial area of Whangamata.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> Bithell, p. 11.

<sup>70</sup> Bennett, p. 29.

<sup>71</sup> Bennett, p. 92.

<sup>72</sup> Williamson, p. 59.



Hotels, like general stores, were an important feature in the early townscapes of the Coromandel. Between 1867 and the 1870s the number of hotels at Thames fluctuated between 111 and 120.<sup>73</sup> Hotels not only provided accommodation, supplied food, liquor and entertainment, but also served as makeshift doctor's surgeries following accidents, and provided venues for public meetings on matters ranging from public works to coronial inquests.<sup>74</sup>



Fig.11: Brian Boru Hotel, Thames, 1910. Alexander Turnbull Library 1/2-008581-F.

Perhaps one of the best known of the Thames' hotels was and remains the Brian Boru. Jack Sainsbury established the hotel in 1867. At that time it was known as the Reefers' Arms. In the following year an Irishman, Edmond Twohill, acquired the hotel and renamed it the Brian Boru after an Irish King. When Twohill died in 1896 his wife Kate took over the licence. She built the existing hotel in 1904, which then had to be partially reconstructed after a fire destroyed part of the top floor in June 1905. The Twohill family continued to manage the hotel until 1974.<sup>75</sup> Other well-known drinking establishments in Thames were the Cornwall Arms, the Governor Bowen and the Lady Bowen.

On the eastern side of the Peninsula the original clientele for the local hotels were mainly timber workers.<sup>76</sup> At Whitianga there were three hotels during the later half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Carini's Hotel, built in 1867 on the site of the present-day Whitianga Hotel, provided a stables and livery service for travellers. The Mercury Bay Hotel (or Upper House) was opened in 1872 and the Empire Hotel in 1883.<sup>77</sup> In recent years the Coroglen Tavern, located in the village's former post office since 1946, has established a following as a venue for New Zealand music,

<sup>73</sup> Williams and Williams, p. 129

<sup>74</sup> NZHPT Field Record Form, Brian Boru No. 129

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

<sup>76</sup> Zelma Williams and John Williams *Thames and the Coromandel Peninsula: 2000 years* (Thames: Williams Publishers, 1994) p. 136.

<sup>77</sup> Bithell, pp. 13-15.

especially over the summer months when visitors flock to the Coromandel.

With the opening of the goldfields, the main banks were quick to establish in Thames and Coromandel township. The Bank of New South Wales opened a branch in Shortland in July 1868 and another in Grahamstown in March 1869. The Shortland branch was closed in 1870 and all business then moved to Grahamstown. The Bank of New Zealand (BNZ) was also established at Shortland in 1868 and at Coromandel in 1870.<sup>78</sup> The National Bank established at Coromandel in 1874. It was not until November 1956, however, that a BNZ branch was established at Whitianga. A new BNZ building opened there on the same site in Albert Street in 1979.

Banks located on goldfields were not just a place to deposit money. They assayed and purchased gold and then used their own furnaces to melt the bullion and make it into more useable units. It is claimed that from the Hauraki Mine alone over two tons of gold had been through the furnaces of the Coromandel branch of the Bank of New Zealand by 1902.<sup>79</sup> The former National Bank in Coromandel is today popularly known as the Assay House thanks to this aspect of its original purpose.



Fig. 12: Bank of New Zealand, corner of Brown and Albert Streets, Thames, circa 1900, seen here on the right across the road from the Wharf Hotel. Price Collection, Alexander Turnbull Library 1/2-001554-G

In Thames the southern side of Albert Street, from Davy Street to Brown Street, was known as Scrip Corner, the location of what could be described as the Thames stock exchange.

<sup>78</sup> 'Thames' in *The Cyclopaedia of New Zealand [Auckland Provincial District]* (Christchurch, 1902) pp. 877, 900, [www.nzetc.org/](http://www.nzetc.org/) accessed 6/11/09.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 900.

From the early 1870s various share brokers set up offices under a long verandah that extended into both Brown and Albert Streets. Large quantities of shares in the nearby mines could be bought and sold here, with the share prices for the day published in the local newspaper.<sup>80</sup> In modern times Pollen Street developed as the commercial heart of Thames and its Grahamstown shopfronts are one of the defining heritage features of the town.

## 2.4 Technology and engineering

The history of technology in Thames-Coromandel is largely the history of its use in the exploitation of natural resources. The earliest employed by Europeans in the district was that of the timber industry, initially in the form of steel axes, saws and other man-powered tools used to fell and prepare kahikatea and kauri for export as spars. The milling of kauri from the 1830s brought with it technology which extended beyond that of axes and saws to include water and steam driven mills, dams, steam engines and other mechanical means of shifting the timber over short and long distances.

A mill established at Mill Creek, Whitianga in 1835 reputedly utilised the first water-powered circular saw in either Australia or New Zealand. It was destroyed by a burst dam in 1840. By the mid-1860s milling, and its attendant technology, had already worked a dramatic effect on the bush-clad hills of the peninsula (see Figure 13). In Reid's drawing of an unidentified Coromandel mill settlement the mill was set up on the banks of a river to make use of the water as a source of power and transport.



Fig. 13: Thomas Reid *Sawmill and settlement, Coromandel, Auckland, New Zealand 1866*  
Alexander Turnbull Library B-038-011

<sup>80</sup> David Arbury *Scrip Corner: Thames Stock Exchange* (Thames: Metallum Research, [1997]).

As well as timber for the building industry, the Peninsula was a source of manuka and other firewood for the Auckland market, to which it was shipped across the Hauraki Gulf as part of the coastal shipping trade.

To extract the timber from deep within the peninsula's ranges, dams, slipways, bullock tracks and tramways were constructed. The Kauri Timber Company's Billy Goat Incline was one of the most spectacular engineering feats seen on the peninsula. Operated between 1921 and 1926 at Kauaeranga near Thames, it was powered by a steam winch and had a fall of 290 metres over 1160 metres of tramway track (with a maximum gradient of 1:2.7). Once at the bottom the logs were winched across the Kauaeranga River from where they were transported along a further 21 kilometres of tramway to Thames.<sup>81</sup>



Fig. 14: 'View of Billygoat Landing, with empty bogeys being winched up the incline. Billygoat Falls are near the centre and smoke from the steam winch boiler can be seen towards the top right.' [www.thetreasury.org.nz/](http://www.thetreasury.org.nz/)

While the initial finds of gold on the Coromandel involved little more than prospectors picking up alluvial gold found on the surface or panning for it in stream beds, the large scale mining of alluvial and underground deposits was made possible only by the application of industrial tools and methods. Once won from the earth, gold ore required processing, smelting and assaying before miners could receive a return, all processes which require specialist technologies.

From the first operation at Kapanga (Driving Creek), long tom and cradle sluices were used, built of timber cut locally and designed to wash large amounts of the gold bearing alluvial deposits. As the ore became more difficult to extract, stamper batteries were built to crush the ore into smaller fragments, which could then be treated with cyanide to release the fine grains

<sup>81</sup> Paul Mahoney 'Bush trams and other log transport' in Te Ara, <http://www.TeAra.govt.nz/> accessed 1/8/09.

of gold from the quartz. The New Zealand rights to the cyanide process were bought by the Government, an investment that had been recouped by 1905.

The Crown Battery built at Karangahake in 1889 was the first to use the cyanide process. The batteries were usually water or steam powered and worked by lifting and dropping heavy stampers onto the quartz to crush it. Batteries were soon established throughout the Thames and Coromandel fields and the noise of the stampers dominated the lives of the inhabitants.

The discovery of gold at Tapu on the Thames Coast in 1867 brought miners to an area previously known only for its timber and flax. Some 500 miners were resident in the area by the end of the year living in a canvas town which included 'seven hotels of calico over wooden frames'.<sup>82</sup> The population had increased to 2000 by the following year and the former Maori kainga was given the new name of Hastings.

Streams were diverted into sluice boxes to wash the gold ore and over 70 mines were sunk. A dam was constructed to supply three water driven batteries, one of which had 15 stamper heads. By 1869, at the peak of the Tapu rush, the valley was described as 'a thriving district with its pretty little town of Hastings lying alongside the edge of the Hauraki Gulf . . . there are some 10 public houses, with a very liberal allowance of stores in proportion to the population'.<sup>83</sup> Within a couple of years of the field having opened, however, the best of the ore had been mined and Tapu quickly returned to its former isolation, accessible only by sea or rough overland track. By 1870 the area was once again mainly inhabited by local Maori, settlers, and a few remaining miners who now turned their hand to gum digging.



Fig. 15: Mae Hodsell, Staff of A & G Price Ltd with 100th New Zealand Railways locomotive produced by the company, circa 1923. Alexander Turnbull Library PAColl-6508.

<sup>82</sup> Deborah Jowitt *These Hills are Tapu* (Thames: Thames Coast Protection Society, 1991) p. 20.

<sup>83</sup> Edward Wayte *Auckland Almanac, And Gold Fields' Annual* (Auckland, 1869) quoted in Jowitt, p. 21.

The machinery required for the timber industry and on the goldfields encouraged the establishment of a number of engineering works and foundries. The two most substantial works, and the longest lasting, were A & G Price and Judd's Engineering.

Brothers Alfred and George Price founded A & G Price in 1868 at Onehunga where they made flax milling machines. In October 1871 the company set up at Grahamstown. When gold production fell dramatically in the following year, Prices' gained the contract to build a substantial part of C. J. Stone's sawmill and shipping yard at Shortland. A & G Price also built a number of steam ships. The company prospered by constructing machinery designed to meet local requirements and conditions. In the mid-1870s, for example, the foundry produced a 'Big Pump' to remove water from the mines, replacing an Australian made pump that was no longer big enough. For the milling industry the company designed and built a timber jack much sturdier than those that already existed. In 1884 Prices' obtained the manufacturing rights to an improved Pelton water-wheel used for electrical generation.

In 1903 the company won a government contract to produce ten steam locomotives. Over 200 locomotives were eventually built at the Thames plant. Other equipment built by A & G Price included road graders, rock crushers, boilers and marine engines.<sup>84</sup> The company continued until 1951 when it merged with William Cable and Company to form CablePrice Ltd. In 1954 another New Zealand engineering firm Downer and Company became a subsidiary of William Cable Holdings. By 1964 the company was listed as Cable Price Downer.<sup>85</sup> In 1988 the company was bought by Brierley Investments Limited and split. Today the factory in Thames still operates under the name A & G Price.

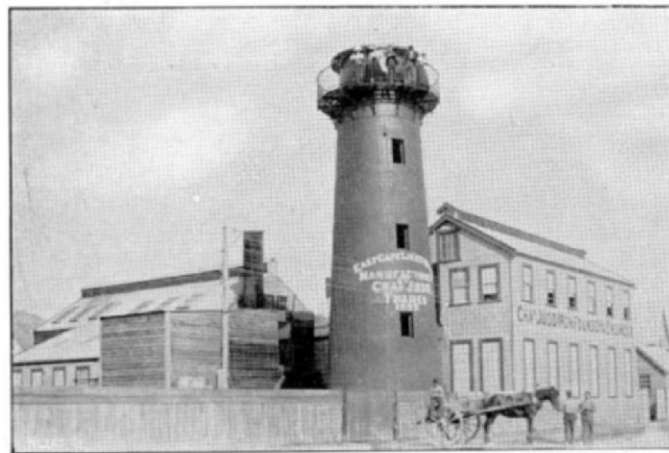


Fig. 16: 'Thames, overlooking the area around Price Bros foundry and wharf, 1909'.  
Godber Collection, Alexander Turnbull Library APG-0553-1/2-G

<sup>84</sup> See IPENZ entry on A & G Price, <http://www.ipenz.org.nz/Heritage/>.

<sup>85</sup> Alistair M. Isdale 'Price, Alfred 1838 - 1907' *Dictionary of New Zealand Biography* <http://www.dnzb.govt.nz/> updated 22 June 2007; Peter Lowe 'Downer, Arnold Fielder 1895 - 1984' *Dictionary of New Zealand Biography*, <http://www.dnzb.govt.nz/> updated 22 June 2007.

The Thames Iron Works was established by Charles Judd in 1869. Judd's sawmilling machinery was used throughout New Zealand and exported to Australia and the Pacific. In 1900 the business was contracted by the Public Works Department to make cast iron lighthouses. Over the next nine years it built four lighthouses: East Cape (1900), Kahurangi Point (1903), Cape Campbell (1908), and Cape Brett (1909). The company was renamed Charles Judd Engineering Works when Judd brought his five sons into the business in 1908. During the twentieth century the firm diversified into smaller items such as lawnmowers and tubular steel office chairs.<sup>86</sup> The firm continued to operate until the retirement of Bruce Judd, a great-grandson of the founder Charles Judd, in 1998.<sup>87</sup>



THAMES IRON WORKS.

Fig. 17: Thames Iron Works showing the East Cape Lighthouse  
*Cyclopedia of New Zealand* (Auckland Provincial District) 1902 available at [www.nzetc.org](http://www.nzetc.org)

Boat building on the Coromandel Peninsula dates from at least the 1840s, fostered by the availability of suitable timber and the dependence on coastal shipping for travel around the Coromandel and the wider Hauraki Gulf. A schooner, the *Dolphin*, was built at Coromandel as early as 1839. In 1858 Coromandel Post Master JS Anderson informed Governor Gore Browne that there were eight vessels being built in the town, ranging from 10 to 50 tons, as well as a number of vessels under repair.<sup>88</sup> This tradition continued into the twentieth century, led by boat-builders such as Samuel Strongman.<sup>89</sup>

At Whitianga boat building and repair also dates back to the beginning of European settlement. The shipwright James Purcell plied his trade there during the late 1830s. In 1870 William White arrived in Mercury Bay and began building boats at Ferry Landing.<sup>90</sup> There was also a boat building industry at Cabbage Bay (later Colville).<sup>91</sup>

<sup>86</sup> A.M. Isdale (ed.) *Thames goldfields centennial 1867-1967* (Manurewa : Motel Magazine Co., 1967).

<sup>87</sup> 'Notes: Judd Engineering', *Ohinemuri Regional History Journal* 43 (September 1999), <http://www.ohinemuri.org.nz/journal/43/notes.htm>.

<sup>88</sup> Arn Piesse 'Ship Building' in *In Search of the Rainbow*, pp.18-21.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 21-22.

<sup>90</sup> Riddle, pp.117-118.

<sup>91</sup> Simons, p. 43.

Machinery requires power and thus electricity supply was critical to the development of industry on the Peninsula. The first electric power on the Coromandel was supplied by individual generators (powered by water) used in timber mills and in mining operations in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century.

In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century Thames was supplied with electricity from a generator driven by a Pelton wheel on the Thames water race. The race had been constructed between 1872 and 1875 to supply water for domestic and mining use from the Kauaeranga River, over a distance of almost 16 kilometres. With the downturn in mining, the surplus water was used to produce electricity from 1915 until the town was connected to the national grid in the 1920s.<sup>92</sup>

Electricity for lighting was in use at a Whitianga timber mill as early as 1890, but did not become more widely available until the installation of a diesel generator at a motor garage in Monk Street in 1937. After a fire in 1944, this was replaced the following year by what was reputed to be the largest plant then operating in New Zealand. Six diesel generators supplied 42 businesses and households for five hours each evening through 45 kilometres of cable until the town was connected to the national grid in 1960.

From June 1951 the Strongman Electrical Supply Company Ltd. supplied electric power for Coromandel township.<sup>93</sup> Eight years later the New Zealand Electricity Department began the reticulation of the whole of the Coromandel Peninsula. A 50kV line was erected up the Kauaeranga Valley to Kaimarama where a substation transformed the supply to 11kV. Lines were then built to Coromandel, Whitianga, Coroglen and Whenuakite. It was not until August 1961 that mains power was supplied to Tairua, and the following year to Hikuai.<sup>94</sup>

At the top of the peninsula power was switched on at Colville in June 1961. However at this stage the lines only went as far as Big Bay. It was to be a further eighteen months before Otautu and Port Charles were connected and not until the 1980s when the circuit was complete from Port Charles to Stony Bay, Fletcher Bay, and Port Jackson.<sup>95</sup> Mains gas supply had long been available in Thames after the Thames Gas Company Limited was formed in Auckland in December 1872.<sup>96</sup>

Meanwhile Thames' reputation for engineering prowess was given a boost in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century with the foundation of car assembly in the township. In 1963 Campbell Tube Products (later Campbell Industries) acquired land from the Thames Borough Council to construct a plant to assemble Rambler Cars made by the American Motors Company. The first vehicle

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<sup>92</sup> David Wilton 'Thames Water Race (1876 - 1947)' *Treasury Journal* 2009, [www.thetreasury.org.nz/](http://www.thetreasury.org.nz/) accessed 17/11/09.

<sup>93</sup> Wright, p. 41.

<sup>94</sup> Bennett, p. 176.

<sup>95</sup> Simons, p. 87.

<sup>96</sup> *Daily Southern Cross*, 16 November 1872, p. 1.



rolled off the assembly line in September 1964, providing a significant boost to the local economy.<sup>97</sup> By 1966 the plant was assembling Ramblers, Peugeots and the Japanese-manufactured Contessa 1300.<sup>98</sup> During the early 1970s the car factory expanded considerably. The newly assembled cars were loaded onto wagons at Shortland station and transported by train around the country.



Fig. 18: 1966 Rambler Rebel manufactured by American Motors Corporation. (North American, right hand drive model).

In 1975 Challenge Corporation became the major shareholding in the company. Challenge had been formed in 1972 through the merger of two of New Zealand's oldest companies Wright Stephenson & Co Ltd. (est. 1861), and National Mortgage & Agency Co of NZ (est. 1864). In 1977 Challenge Corporation sold its shares to Consolidated Motor Distributors, which later, in 1979, reformed to become Toyota New Zealand Ltd.<sup>99</sup> Today the Jellicoe Street site is Toyota's Vehicle Operations Centre. The plant refurbishes used vehicles (both imported as well as New Zealand-new vehicles) that are sold under the Signature Class brand. It also forms the port of entry for new Toyota vehicles coming into New Zealand.

## 2.5 Labour

Maori outnumbered European settlers in the district until the discovery of gold at Coromandel and Thames, and so were the main source of labour for the timber industry and at trading posts until the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. After August 1867, the month in which James Mackay brought 40 miners and officials to Thames from Auckland, Maori increasingly found themselves in the minority and correspondingly of less importance as a source of labour.<sup>100</sup>

<sup>97</sup> Williams and Williams, p. 208.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid, p. 212.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid, p. 226.

<sup>100</sup> 'Thames' in A. H. McLintock (ed.) *An Encyclopaedia of New Zealand*, (1966), in *Te Ara*, [www.TeAra.govt.nz/](http://www.TeAra.govt.nz/) updated 18-Sep-2007.

With the rapid shift on the Thames and Coromandel fields from individual prospecting to industrial mining, miners were forced to move from self-employment to wages. Miners' resistance to the 'shaving' of their wages by the mine owners led to the formation of a Miners' Union in 1890, providing workplace accident and death insurance and other support for its members. The Thames Miners' Union Office was built in Queen Street in 1897.<sup>101</sup> By 1900 the Union had 1700 members with branches at Waihi, Karangahake, Golden Cross, Waitekauri and Coromandel.<sup>102</sup> Union activism in the mining industry was subsequently to play a significant role in the establishment of the New Zealand Labour Party in the 1916.



Fig. 19: The Northern Steam Ship Company's steamer *Terranora* at Thames Wharf, c. 1896. Price Collection, Alexander Turnbull Library ½-001543-G

## 2.6 Communications and transportation

Water was the main mode of transport around the Coromandel Peninsula until well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century. During the colonial period Northern Steamship Company steamers provided a regular service to the Peninsula's small coastal towns. A one-way deck fare for the three or four-hour paddle steamer voyage cost around five shillings in the 1870s.<sup>103</sup> Northern Steamship boats would call in twice a week to ports such as Whitianga with supplies and newspapers.

<sup>101</sup> See NZHPT Field Record # 4653 for the Thames Aluminium Co. building – former Old Miner's Union Office, Queen Street, Thames.

<sup>102</sup> 'Thames', in *The Cyclopaedia of New Zealand*, p. 473, [www.nzetc.org/](http://www.nzetc.org/) accessed 6/11/09.

<sup>103</sup> Arbury, *Prostitution*.

Unloading and loading goods was not always easy. At Whangamata the Northern Steamship boats needed to arrive at a little after high tide, then wait until half tide and run aground. A horse drawn punt would then be taken out to the boats to load and unload goods. When the tide came in the boats would float off.<sup>104</sup> At Whitianga a floating pontoon was used to offload goods and bring them ashore.<sup>105</sup>



Fig. 20: 'King' pulling Watt's Punt on 'Boat Day', Whangamata, undated (early 20<sup>th</sup> century?).  
*Ohinemuri Regional History Journal* No. 7, May 1967 available at <http://www.ohinemuri.org.nz>

Scows also plied the coast collecting rafts of logs for delivery to the timber mills of Auckland. Their shallow draft meant they were able to enter smaller harbours to collect and off-load material. In good weather it might take three days towing logs to travel between Whangamata and Auckland.

All the main settlements eventually needed to construct wharves to facilitate the loading and unloading of supplies and people. The stone wharf at Whitianga dates from the mid-1830s, but most early wharves were constructed of timber and have long since rotted away or been replaced by modern structures.

From the first years of the settlement, Grahamstown had several wharves along the waterfront. These included Curtis's Wharf (or the Town Wharf), the Burke Street Wharf (or

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<sup>104</sup> Williamson, pp. 22-23.

<sup>105</sup> Bithell, p. 29.

Goods Wharf) and the Tararu Wharf. These wharves were built up to 140 metres out into the mudflats in order to find sufficient depth for ships to berth.<sup>106</sup>



Fig. 20: Ferry and passengers, Whitianga Wharf, Mercury Bay, Coromandel Peninsula, 1911. Alexander Turnbull Library 1/2-001038-G.

A river steamer operated along the lower reaches of the Waihou and after 1875 connected the Ohinemuri Goldfields with Thames.<sup>107</sup> By the early 1880s shipping services on the Waihou reached Te Aroha.<sup>108</sup> River transport continued to be popular well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and many farmers would bring their launches up to the Shortland Wharf to buy their supplies from Thames.<sup>109</sup> This wharf was replaced by the now derelict Burke Street wharf in 1926. By 1947 shipping on the Waihou had ceased, most likely due to the improvements in the road network.<sup>110</sup>

Whitianga had a ferry service between the Ferry Landing and the township as early as 1884. The ferry was also used to transport the village's deceased for burial at Cemetery Point. While the ferry vessels were privately owned by the ferryman, the council controlled the hours of operation and charges.<sup>111</sup>

<sup>106</sup> Alistair Isdale, Shortland Wharf, north end of Thames, June 1993, attached to NZHPT Field Record Form Shortland Wharf, Registration No. 4672, New Zealand Historic Places Trust, Wellington.

<sup>107</sup> Alistair Isdale, 'Shortland Wharf, north end of Thames, June 1993', attached to NZHPT Field Record Form Shortland Wharf, Registration No. 4672, New Zealand Historic Places Trust, Wellington.

<sup>108</sup> 'Thames', in A. H. McLintock (ed.) *An Encyclopaedia of New Zealand*, (1966), in *Te Ara*, [www.TeAra.govt.nz/](http://www.TeAra.govt.nz/) updated 18-Sep-2007.

<sup>109</sup> Isdale, 'Shortland Wharf'.

<sup>110</sup> 'Thames', in *An Encyclopaedia of New Zealand*, (1966), in *Te Ara*, [www.TeAra.govt.nz/](http://www.TeAra.govt.nz/) updated 18-Sep-2007.

<sup>111</sup> Bithell, pp. 9-10.

In addition to travel by sea and river routes, the Coromandel was criss-crossed by well-used Maori trails in pre-European times. As camps were established by prospectors, gum diggers and bushmen, pack tracks developed to carry supplies in and kauri gum and other resources out to the nearest coastal settlement. Some of these pack tracks were abandoned while others became key routes, used by teams of horses or bullocks and later carts and wagons.<sup>112</sup>

At Thames the main thoroughfare was formed in 1867 linking the two townships of Shortland and Grahamstown. For many years this remained little more than an unsealed road, difficult to travel on in the winter months. By 1868 a stagecoach provided a service between Shortland and Tookey's Flat.<sup>113</sup> Almost ten years later, in 1877, a bridge was built over the Kauaeranga River improving communication between Thames and the settlements south to Puriri. The construction of a road further south to Paeroa was delayed by objections from local Maori at Komata, but was eventually pushed through in the presence of the Waikato Calvary in 1880.<sup>114</sup> From 1882 coaches provided a service between Thames and Paeroa, although travel remained difficult in the winter.<sup>115</sup>



Fig. 21: 'Coastline between Tapu and Thames, Coromandel Peninsula, ca 1895'.  
Alexander Turnbull Library 1/4-034287-G.

To the north of Thames, one of the first priorities of the Coromandel County Council was the construction of a road between Coromandel and Thames. By 1879 a road was extended to

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<sup>112</sup> Bennett, p. 188.

<sup>113</sup> Arbury, *Building Thames*.

<sup>114</sup> Alistair Isdale, Livery Stables, Cochrane Street, June 1993, attached to NZHPT Field Record Form Livery Stables (Former), No. 4624, New Zealand Historic Places Trust, Wellington.

<sup>115</sup> Isdale, 'Shortland Wharf'.

the Waiau River and a government grant helped construct a bridge over it. The road reached the county's southern boundary at Waikawau in 1888.<sup>116</sup> But it was not until 1904 that a vehicle road between Thames and Coromandel was completed.<sup>117</sup> A road connecting Coromandel to Colville was completed in 1926, but not sealed until May 1990.<sup>118</sup> The road out of Thames north was known as the 'Coast Road' and became a popular tourist route renowned for its scenery and views.

Coromandel and Whitianga were connected by road in 1917.<sup>119</sup> Whitianga had been connected with Tairua by a bridle track since 1874 and the first survey for a road between the two settlements was completed in 1875.<sup>120</sup>

During the early 20<sup>th</sup> century the Peninsula's remaining pack tracks were widened to take motor traffic. In 1913 the track between Coromandel and Mercury Bay via the Mahakirau Valley was developed (309 Road). In May 1921 20 workers were given the task of widening the Tapu to Coroglen track.<sup>121</sup> Tapu Hill was finally opened to vehicles in 1927, but it remained difficult to use in winter. The Tapu-Coroglen Road was the principal route connecting the east side of the peninsula with the west until 1967 when the Kopu-Hikuai Road was opened, providing direct access from Thames to Tairua and Pauanui and beyond.<sup>122</sup> The section from Hikuai to Whangamata remained loose metal until the mid-1980s.<sup>123</sup>

The construction of bridges also marked important milestones in the development of the Coromandel roading network. One of the most important, and certainly the most well known, was the Kopu Bridge. Up until its completion in 1928 the nearest bridge across the Waihou was at Paeroa, although there were a number of local ferry services running closer to Thames. The Kopu Bridge was built by the Hauraki Plains County, Thames County, and Thames Borough Councils and the Government. Given the shipping traffic on the river, a 50-foot wide swing span was required to allow vessels to pass through. This river traffic eventually declined to the point that the bridge keeper was not replaced after he retired in 1964.<sup>124</sup> Today the Kopu Bridge is New Zealand's only surviving swing-span type bridge and it will be retained when a new two-lane Kopu Bridge is opened in 2012.

The earliest rail transport on the Coromandel Peninsula took the form of horse drawn or gravity-driven tramways built to bring quartz ore down from the hills behind Thames to the town's gold batteries. They began to be built soon after the opening of the goldfield. The Tararu (1869), Tinker's Gully (1869), Moanataiari (1869), Waiotahi (1869), Karaka (1869) and

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<sup>116</sup> Wright, p. 35.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid*, p. 36.

<sup>118</sup> Simons, p. 35, 50.

<sup>119</sup> Wright, p. 37.

<sup>120</sup> Bennett, p. 49.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid*, p.142.

<sup>122</sup> Riddle, p.123.

<sup>123</sup> Williamson, p. 64; Williams and Williams, p. 212.

<sup>124</sup> Kopu Bridge, Field Record Form 4681, NZ Historic Places Trust

Hape (1870) tramways were constructed by the Auckland Provincial Government and later leased to individuals or companies. From 1871 to 1873 a tramway ran along the coastline from Grahamstown to Tararu.<sup>125</sup>

Light rail was also used for industrial purposes in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century at Waiaro Creek just north of Colville Bay (1907), at Kennedy's Bay by the Smyth Brothers (c. 1905) and at Whangapoua Harbour (Kauri Freehold Gold Estates c.1900-c.1910, and the Owera Mine c.1907).<sup>126</sup>



Fig. 22: Auckland to Thames Express crossing the Waihou River at Te Aroha, c. 1916  
Godber Collection, Alexander Turnbull Library APG-1197-1/2-G

Rail transport connecting the Coromandel to the rest of the country was to take far longer to realise. In January 1878 a deputation from Thames met with Premier Sir George Grey to put the case forward for a rail connection between Thames and Auckland.<sup>127</sup> For a time things seemed to progress and the following December, amid much pomp and ceremony, Grey turned the first sod of the Thames Valley Railway. The location of the ceremony was half way between Shortland and Grahamstown, below the high water mark, on a platform built of "sods *ad libitum*".<sup>128</sup> However, apart from the reclamation for the two station sites at Grahamstown and Shortland, the railway did not proceed any further for over a decade.

<sup>125</sup> 'Map 4 South Auckland – Insert: Approximate Alignment of Gold Mine Tramways', *New Zealand Railway and Tramway Atlas* (Exeter : Quail Map Company, 1993).

<sup>126</sup> 'Map 4a, South Auckland', *New Zealand Railway and Tramway Atlas*.

<sup>127</sup> *Grey River Argus*, 30 January 1878.

<sup>128</sup> *Wanganui Herald*, 23 December 1878.

In 1880 a Railways Commission criticised the rapid expansion of the railway in the previous decade at a rate that the commissioners thought was unsustainable.<sup>129</sup> Construction on a number of lines was halted, including the Grahamstown to Te Aroha line. The latter was not considered to be a priority, as the commissioners believed there was adequate communication between the two settlements via the river. Over the next decade the railway line slowly extended into the Hauraki Plains. By 1884 the line had reached Kopu and by 1886 there was a rail connection between Hamilton and Te Aroha. In the late 1880s and early 1890s the goldmining industry lobbied successfully for the government to provide adequate rail transport to Thames and by 1895 a line extended from Te Aroha to Paeroa.<sup>130</sup>



Fig. 22: Railway Timetable for Thames Line *The Observer* 31 December 1898  
Available at <http://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/>

The line connecting Thames with Paeroa (and thus the North Island Main Trunk Line) was finally opened on 19 December 1898 with the first passenger train from Thames arriving in Auckland the following day.<sup>131</sup> A weekly goods train between Thames and Auckland began running on 26 November 1898.<sup>132</sup> At the time of the line's opening Thames had two stations: one at Grahamstown, known as Thames (later Thames North), and one at Shortland (known as Thames South from 1915).

<sup>129</sup> Neil Atkinson, *Trainland: How New Zealand Railways made New Zealand*, (Auckland: Random House, 2007), p. 40.

<sup>130</sup> W. R. Davidson, 'West of the Main Trunk, - Fifty years of Progress', *The New Zealand Railway's Magazine*, September 1932, pp. 43-44.

<sup>131</sup> *Bay Of Plenty Times*, 19 December 1898, 21 December 1898.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid*, 21 November 1898.



The line to Thames was initially known as the Frankton-Thames line. However, it was given the status of a branch line when the Frankton to Paeroa section was named the East Coast Main Trunk. This line was closed to passengers on 28 March 1951. With the opening of the Kaimai Railway Tunnel in 1978, connecting the eastern Waikato district with the Bay of Plenty, the line between Paeroa and Katikati was closed and the Thames line was extended to Morrinsville.<sup>133</sup>

During the late 20<sup>th</sup> century the Thames line was used to transport cars from the Toyota factory at Thames. However, falling freight revenue resulted in the suspension of train services in June 1991.<sup>134</sup>



Fig. 23: Matarangi Aerodrome © Anne Challinor 2009

The Auckland and Mercury Bay Aero Clubs formed the Coromandel Air Service in 1976. The purpose of the service was to ensure that the people of the Coromandel (and surrounding districts) had access to air transport. The Coromandel airfield was opened in December 1977 and soon after this the Coromandel Aero Club was formed.<sup>135</sup> The Mercury Bay Aero Club had been established in 1948, taking advantage of the post-war development in aircraft use for topdressing and other rural services.<sup>136</sup> Airstrips were also integral to the design of the beach communities developed at Pauanui and Matarangi in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century. Nevertheless automobiles, rather than planes, trains or boats, are the primary mode of transport to, from and around the Peninsula today.

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<sup>133</sup> Euan McQueen, *Rails in the Hinterland, New Zealand's Vanishing Railway Landscape*, (Wellington: Grantham House, 2005), p. 63.

<sup>134</sup> 'Maps 4a and 4b South Auckland', *New Zealand Railway and Tramway Atlas*.

<sup>135</sup> Derek Barnsley, 'Aero Club' *In Search of the Rainbow*, pp. 227-228

<sup>136</sup> *Mercury Bay Aero Club 40th Anniversary* (Whitianga: The Club, 1988).