

This claim was one of twenty-six investigated by that Commission.

In reference to the claim of Mr. H. Keesing, jun., the Commissioners reported,—

“That Mr. Henry Keesing claims the reward on the grounds that, on the 9th August, 1867, he discovered a specimen in the Kurunui Creek. That at this time the diggers considered the Thames Gold Fields a ‘duffer,’ and were actually leaving it, but, in consequence of his discovery, were induced to remain. He also says that Mr. William Hunt, of ‘Hunt’s Claim,’ had followed him to the Kurunui, and saw the specimen found by him, and that on the next day, August 10th, Mr. Hunt returned and pegged off, in the same spot, the claim since known as the Shotover Company. With reference to this claim, we are of opinion that as the Kurunui was at this time open to the public, and was within the boundaries of the district which had been, on July 30th of the same year, proclaimed a gold field, the claimant simply discovered a specimen on what was already a gold field, and did not discover a gold field, or in any way conduce to one being opened.”

The Committee are of opinion that the Commission could have come to no other decision, and that, therefore, the petitioner has no claim to further consideration.

21st September, 1877.

C. A. DE LAUTOUR,
Chairman.

FINAL REPORT on the MINES BILL.

THE Gold Fields Committee have the honor to report that they have gone through the remainder of the Mines Bill, and recommend that this portion of the Bill be passed, with the alterations, elisions, and amendments as shown in the copy of the Schedules and Appendices attached to this report.

24th September, 1877.

C. A. DE LAUTOUR,
Chairman.

REPORT on PETITION of Messrs. RING.

I AM instructed to report that the Committee have carefully considered the claim of the petitioners, and, in so doing, have examined members of the House of Representatives who have been exceptionally conversant with the early circumstances attending the first discoveries of gold in the province of Auckland.

In April, 1867, the Superintendent of Auckland, by Proclamation, offered £5,000 to any person or persons who could satisfactorily prove that they had discovered a payable gold field in the province. No conditions or restrictions were attached to the Proclamation, as was contemplated by the resolution of the Provincial Council upon which it was based.

In April, 1870, twenty-six claims to the reward were examined by a special Commission, including in their number a claim by the petitioners, Messrs. Ring. The Commissioners reported as follows:—

“Claim of the Messrs. Ring.”

“We have held over till the last the case of the Messrs. Ring, who claim the reward on account of their discoveries of gold at Coromandel in 1852. The interpretation which we put on the Superintendent’s notification of the 12th April, 1867, offering the reward, clearly excludes them from any right to participate in it; but it is the opinion of the Commissioners that, although the discovery of 1852, and the subsequent discoveries of 1861 did not lead to the discovery of a payable gold field, still all the subsequent discoveries of gold in the Coromandel Peninsula are we think traceable, to some extent, to the discovery made by the Messrs. Ring in 1852.

“For this reason the Commissioners desire to assign to the Messrs. Ring, as being the first discoverers of gold in New Zealand, a portion of the £5,000. We recommend that, in recognition of their services, a sum of £200 should be granted to the Messrs. Ring as a matter of grace, not of right. It is clear from the evidence that the discoveries made by the Messrs. Ring in 1852 were not considered of sufficient importance to merit the reward of £500, which was the prize offered at that time; but as it is our opinion that the discovery of 1852 has a direct bearing on all subsequent discoveries in the Coromandel Peninsula, we submit that the case should be treated as an exceptional one, and that Messrs. Ring should, to the extent we have specified, be permitted to participate in the present reward, even though their discoveries were well known to the Government and the public long before the offer of the reward of £5,000.”

Notwithstanding the fact that Coromandel was not proved a payable gold field up to 1870, the Commissioners felt justified in recommending a grant of £200 as a matter of grace, though not of right, at the same time insisting that the offer of reward did not apply to discoveries made before 1867.

At the present time no offer of reward for original discoveries or for new discoveries appears to be alive.

The Committee are therefore in any case precluded from making a definite recommendation that a reward should be given to the Messrs. Ring.

It is, however, evident that, since the report of the Auckland Commission, Coromandel has proved to be a payable and permanent gold field; that it was originally discovered by the petitioners; and that the discovery so made is the first known instance of gold having been struck in the colony.

I have, therefore, to report that, as there is no fund available for the payment of rewards upon gold fields, and as the Committee consider it very inadvisable to reopen the cases most fully inquired into by the Auckland Commission, they have no recommendation to make.

26th September, 1877.

C. A. DE LAUTOUR,
Chairman.