

and the Tuapeka Stream before 1861, in which year Gabriel Read, fresh from the Californian and Australian fields, arrived in the province. Read disappeared into the blue in May, 1861, to return to Dunedin a few weeks later with the electrifying news that he had discovered a rich and extensive gold-field.



*The Shotover Mine on the Thames goldfield*

Thus began New Zealand's first gold rush. Dunedin was agog with the news, and in a matter of hours men from every calling were buying provisions and mining materials and heading for the Tuapeka diggings. Shopkeepers, scarcely able to cope with the demand, charged and received practically any price they cared to name; up to £90 a ton was paid for the cartage of supplies to the diggings; the previously quiet and orderly daily routine in Dunedin was completely disrupted; and some commodities, such as firewood, were practically unprocurable.

The gold fever had hit Otago. In a few days large quantities of gold were

being brought into Dunedin, and the township of Tuapeka (now Lawrence) was growing apace in the reflected glory of "Gabriel's Gully", as the find was named. Further impetus was given the prospecting boom by the discovery by Read and others of additional "strikes" near the Waitahana and Tuapeka Rivers.

On August 16, 1862, two men named Hartley and Reilly walked into Dunedin carrying eighty-seven lbs. of gold. At first they refused to reveal where they had found it, but an offer by the Provincial Government of a reward of £2,000 to the two men—provided that the location and best means of working the site were divulged and 13,000 ounces of gold reached Dunedin within three months—had the desired effect. The field, it was found, was situated at the base of the Dunstan Mountains. The result was an even bigger rush than that at Tuapeka, and in a short time two canvas towns had sprung up along the river bank. One eventually became Alexandra and the other Clyde. By the end of 1862, Otago's white population of 12,000 had grown to 30,000, the vast majority of this total being miners, who, fanning out from Gabriel's Gully, made rich finds in the surrounding mountains (including "strikes" in the Arrow Valley and on the Shotover River) and eventually spread across the Alps by way of the Hurunui River and Harper Pass to the West Coast.

The Aorere River find in Nelson, meanwhile, had attracted a minor rush in 1857, by the end of which year over a thousand miners were at work in the Collingwood district at what became known as "Lightband's Gully". There were further discoveries in the province in the following year, but the Nelson goldfields were eclipsed by the prospecting successes reported from Otago in 1861. In 1862 efforts were made, without success, to establish the presence of gold on the Canterbury side of the Southern Alps.