

Crown Battery Site Ruins, Karangahake Gorge



Location: Crown Hill Road, Karangahake

Heritage Status

Historic Places Trust Registration Number: 4673

Historic Places Trust Category: Category 1 - Registered Historic Place
HDC Heritage Category: A - Heritage Feature. National or Outstanding Regional Significance

Other: Recorded archaeological site (T13/284)

Physical Description: Retaining walls, foundations and walls of the former battery and gold extraction tanks.

Other known names:

Notable features:

Style:

Materials: Concrete and stone

Date of Construction: 1891

History: The Crown Gold Mining Company which first worked this site was registered in 1883. By 1891 it was owned by the New Zealand Crown Mines Company. The mining was not fully developed until after 1889; when the first field trials in the world were carried out at this mine to prove the cyanide method of extracting gold from low quality quartz ores. In 1897 the New Zealand

District Plan Schedule

Number: HAU021

Heritage Category: A

Heritage Type:

- Wahi Tapu
- Cultural Landscape
- Building
- Group of Buildings
- Structure
- Monument
- Historic Place
- Archaeological Site
- Other

Date Period:

1881-1910

Significance:

- Archaeological
- Architectural
- Cultural
- Historic
- Scientific
- Technological

Thematic Context

- Maori
- Early Settlement
- Industry
- Extraction
- Forestry
- Agriculture
- Transport
- Communication
- Commerce
- Residential
- Social/Cultural
- Civic
- Health
- Educational
- Church/yard
- Other

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District Plan Schedule

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Government acquired the patent rights for the process. The small royalty charged for the use of the process meant that the Government outlay was fully recovered by 1905. The process was soon employed widely on this and other goldfields throughout New Zealand and overseas. It achieved an extraction rate of up to 90% of the gold contained in the rock, so making economic the processing of low content ores. The Crown Company also processed ore from other nearby mines, and the site became the focus of a network of tramways and water-races. By 1896 the plant had expanded to 60 stampers but by 1908 difficulties, particularly surplus water, were encountered in the mining operation and by 1916 most of the workers had been laid off. In 1920 the battery was dismantled and in 1928 the company was finally wound up.

The stone retaining walls, concrete foundations and walls of the former battery site provide a graphic reminder of the size of the installations and plant of a major quartz gold mining enterprise. From these ruins it is possible to gain an appreciation of processes involved in extracting the gold from its ores, and to understand the well-designed layout of such plant.

The Crown mine and battery are of great significance because of their role in the field testing and full scale development of the cyanide process for the extraction of gold from low-grade quartz ores. This process made possible the economic exploitation of the Coromandel – Thames – Ohinemuri goldfields, some of the mines of which were among the highest producing mines in the world.

Architect:

Designer:

Builder:

Engineer: Alfred & George Price

History of changes:

Condition: All the machinery and superstructure have been removed.

Integrity: Substantially intact

Current Uses: Historic Reserve

Former Uses: Battery/Crusher, Gold processing plant

Registered owner: Department of Conservation

Legal Description: Pt Sec 112 Blk 1 Aroha SD (Pt Karang. Scenic Res.)

Reference Source: NZHPT Building Record Form; Ritchie, N. (1990) *A Survey of Historic Mining Sites in the Thames and Ohinemuri Areas of the Hauraki Goldfield*. Department of Conservation.

Historic Heritage Inventory

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Associated Pictures:

