



In Dunedin's Northern Cemetery, under a large macrocarpa tree, marked by a simple headstone, lies the body of Antiss Dottin SILK (Plot 4, block 57A).

She was born on 14 January 1839 in Totness, Devon, England, to Nicholas Mill a baker, and Ann, nee Fry. Along with her parents and two brothers she traveled to Victoria, Australia, in October 1857, on the ship *Blackwall*.

In spite of her parents' misgivings, in 1859, at the age of 19, Antiss married a sailor-turned gold-miner George Silk. Silk was a native of Portsmouth and was then aged 32. Silk left for the Tuapeka goldfields in 1870 and a few months later Antiss joined him and, as the gold became difficult to find, she set up a bakery business in Lawrence.

After her husband died in 1887 Antiss sold the bakery and moved to Dunedin where in 1889 she took over the licence of the Leviathan Hotel "which prospered wonderfully under her excellent business direction".

She also began investing in mining ventures, among other things. In 1891 she purchased for 80 pounds the Surprise Claim on the almost-abandoned Nenthorne Goldfield, and in 1892 secured two business sites in Nenthorne itself. She enjoyed some success with the

surprise claim, but in July 1896 sold the property for 50 pounds. At one stage she had on display at the Leviathan a 2.5kg cake of gold recovered from the Surprise Mine.

Antiss was also interested in gold dredging. In 1896 the Hyde Dredging Co assigned its special claim to her as consideration for constructing a dredge and working the claim. This plan appears to have been abandoned, but she was also recorded as the holder of a special claim on the Nevis for the Nevis Steam Dredging Co, and purchased a claim at skippers.

Antiss ruled the 150 room Leviathan with an iron hand. All staff had daily inspections and woe betide anyone who was caught misbehaving. No sooner were the young women trained than they would go off and get married – frequently to hotel guests!

On her death in Dunedin on 10 June 1899, she held 10 shares in the highly successful Hartley and Riley Beach Gold Dredging Co, 35 shares in the Cromwell Gold Dredging Co, 100 shares in the Nevis Steam Dredging Co, the Skippers mining claim and plant, 175 shares in the Kaikorai Tram Co, plus the Leviathan Hotel lease and goodwill.

In spite of her business enterprises and investments Antiss Silk's estate could not pay all its creditors. She left a family of five daughters and one son.