

'The Food Basket of Rakaihautu': Taumutu

**Dedicated to
Riki Ellison**

*Ko te pae tawhiti, whaia kia tata.
Ko te pae tata, whakamaua kia tata.*

Seek out the distant horizon and
cherish those you attain.

Lake Ellesmere, the large body of shallow water which laps against the southwestern flank of Banks Peninsula, is known to the Maori as Te Waihora, "water spread out". On the southern edge of the lake, near where for several hundred years it has periodically been opened to the sea at the narrowest point of Kaitorete, the spit which separates it from the sea, is the small settlement of Taumutu, a place long of importance in the history of Te Waipounamu. The name Taumutu comes from one of the names of the original pa in the area, Te Taumutu, also known as Te Pa o te Ika Mutu. Its site has been lost to coastal erosion.

Two older traditional names for Te Waihora are Te Kete Ika o Rakaihautu and Te Kete Ika o Tutekawa, "the foodbasket of Rakaihautu" and "the foodbasket of Tutekawa". Rakaihautu was the commander of the Uruao canoe which sailed down the east coast of the South Island about A.D. 900. Tutekawa was the father of Te Rangitama, one of the first Ngai Tahu chiefs to make his base at Taumutu.

These traditional names indicate Te Waihora's importance as one of the South Island's greatest mahinga kai. Traditionally, and into modern times, Taumutu has gained its standing from the access people living there have to the abundant food resources of the lake. In or on the waters of the lake

Tu Tangata features this issue, part one of 'The food basket of Rakaihautu: Taumutu'. This feature looks at Te Waihora (also known as Lake Ellesmere) and Maori settlement there at Taumutu. It traces the time up to one of its most outstanding people, Hori Kerei who was an MP from 1871 to 1905.

Part two will trace his time until the present day when Te Waihora is under threat from commercial exploitation and the food basket is now much depleted. This feature is just one chapter in a book compiled by the New Zealand Historic Places Trust called *The Past Today*. The publisher is Pacific Publishers and the price is \$49.95.



Te Waihora (Lake Ellesmere) is a prominent feature in this aerial photograph looking north along the length of the spit Kaitorete towards Banks Peninsula. Taumutu occupies the point of land bottom left between the lake and a small lagoon. The huts on Fishermens Point and the Hone Wetere Church are visible.