



These pits, which extend in a long line across a paddock behind Awhitu House, are believed to be borrow pits from which the Maori who lived at Taumutu before the arrival of the European took sand and gravel to create soils nearby suitable for growing kumara.

itself were tuna (eel), patiki (flounder), awa (mullet) and water birds. Tuna were specially abundant and more than 33 names identified different types of tuna according to the different ways they could be preserved. The tuna were taken in hinaki or, in huge numbers, by lowering the level of the lake. Stories of eeling practices of the past are preserved in old waiata, oriori and pao. Flounder were taken by digging trenches into the shingle of Kaitorete. Duck and other water birds were taken in great drives when they were moulting and unable to fly. From streams which flow into the lake were taken uaua (whitebait), kanakana or piharau (the lamprey eel) and koura (fresh-water crayfish). Many of these foods were dried and stored for winter, including uaua, inanga and tuna. The tuna were dried on whata, large wooden frames erected on the lakeside. Besides these resources of food, raupo, wiwi and harakeke grew in abundance in the swamps on the lake

margin and on the sandy spit were large areas of pingao, a native sedge used for traditional crafts. A special black mud (paruparu) was used to dye fibres.

A lake as important for its food and other resources as Te Waihora had to have a guardian. Te Waihora's was Tuterakihaunua, who lived in a cave at Whakamatakiuru (Fishermen's Point), Taumutu. Tuterakihaunua was a protective taniwha who preserved the lake as a source of food and any breach of respect by any of the tribes occupying land around the lake was fatal.

To the area's natural resources, the Maori added the important crop kumara. At Taumutu are the remains of some of the southern-most kumara gardens in New Zealand.

In traditional times there was a well organised round of food-gathering from the pa and kainga of Taumutu which kept the local communities

supplied and provided commodities for exchange with, or presentation to, other communities in Te Wai-pounamu.

Before the arrival of Europeans, the spit, Kaitorete, was a major route south from populous Banks Peninsula and points further north (Kaiapohia and Kaikoura), south towards Murihiku. This route avoided the swamps around Te Waihora, then much more extensive than they are today. The many middens to be found on Kaitorete are evidence of its importance as a route of travel. Taumutu, at Kaitorete's southern end, was a strategic point on this "southern highway" of earlier times. Because it also had access west across the Canterbury Plains and over passes of the Southern Alps to the Poutini Coast (Westland) it was a centre of greenstone working, probably second only to Kaiapohia, north of the Waimakariri River, which enjoyed more direct access to easier passes across the Southern Alps.