

'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.

Hori Kerei Taiaroa

He underwent a Pakeha education and advocated the use of European medicines and the adoption of European agricultural methods. But his goal was always to maintain the 'mana Maori' of Ngai Tahu and a major part of his life's work was to seek resolution of 'Te Kerema' ('the claim'), the Ngai Tahu insistence that the Government should fulfil the promises made to them at the time of the Kemp Purchase and subsequently disregarded. ('Te Kerema', partly settled at the time of the first Labour Government, is still being pursued by Ngai Tahu.)

H. K. Taiaroa had large land holdings at Otakou (near to the head which bears his family name) and he and his father are both buried in the urupa above the church at Otakou, but he also had ancestral ties to Taumutu, one of his lines going back to Te Ruahikihiki, one of the Ngai Tahu heroes of Taumutu. One reason for his decision to settle at Taumutu, where some of his ancestors of high rank were buried in the spring Te Waiwhakaheketupapaku, was to be closer to Wellington, where he was obliged to spend much of his time. The Taiaroa family home at Taumutu, Awhitu House, designed by the Christchurch architect T. S. Lambert, was built in 1879-80. By 1884, Taiaroa had completed the transfer of his family to their new home. Though he spent much time in Wellington and also had a town house in Christchurch, Awhitu House has, since Hori Kerei's time, been the papakainga of the Taiaroa family. It is younger and less grand than many old Canterbury farmhouses, but unique in having remained since it was built in the hands of a family whose ties to the

Tu Tangata features this issue, part two of 'The food basket of Rakaihautu: Taumutu'. It looks at Te Waihora (also known as Lake Ellesmere) and Maori settlement there at Taumutu.

Hori Kerei was the MP from 1871 to 1905.

This feature traces 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.

land on which it stands long predate the acquisitions of any parts of Canterbury by even its longest established European families.

Two other buildings at Taumutu, the Hone Wetere (John Wesley) Church and the runanga hall Ngati Moki, date from the years immediately after H. K. Taiaroa's move to the district. Christianity had come to Taumutu in advance of the first European missionaries. When Bishop Selwyn passed through Taumutu in January 1844 he found some of the Maori living there conversant with the scriptures and catechism, brought to them by Maori converts. In 1865 Taumutu became part of the wide circuit of the Maori Methodist clergyman, Te Koti Te Rato, who was based at Rapaki on Lyttelton Harbour. In the early 1880s, having

completed Awhitu House for his family, H. K. Taiaroa, moved by a 'great love of the church', began to raise funds to erect a church building at Taumutu. Money flowed in from Maori and Pakeha in the Ellesmere district and from Maori of other Canterbury kainga. The site chosen for the church was that of the pa of Te Ruahikihiki, called Orariki, a site of spiritual significance which stands in a special relationship to the hills of Banks Peninsula, the mountains of the Southern Alps and the waters of Te Waihora. The church, also designed by T. S. Lambert, was opened on Easter Tuesday, 7 April 1885.

Over the years many denominations have used the church, which has served the Pakeha as well as Maori families of the Taumutu district. Iron has replaced shingles on the roof and the church has



This crowd gathered at the Hone Wetere Church, Taumutu, for the tangi, at the end of last century, of one of the sons of Hori Kerei and Tini Kerei Taiaroa who had died on the Chatham Islands.