

lost the belfry which once crowned the peak of the western gable but it remains a picturesque building in its open setting, the graves in the churchyard sheltered by the low wall of the ancient pa.

A few years later Taumutu also acquired the runanga hall which was built on the site of the pa of Moki II and named after him. It was opened on 7 May 1891, replacing an earlier structure on the same site. Modern 'improvements' to Ngati Moki have increased its size and reflect the resurgence of the Maori in Ellesmere in the 1980s, but have sadly diminished its historical character. It is now, however, better able to serve as the main marae of the Ellesmere district.

H. K. Taiaroa died in 1905. His wife Tini Kerei, who was born in Moeraki, lived until 1934, making her home in Awhitu House. One of her sons, Riki Te Mairaki Taiaroa, became acknowledged as the paramount chief of Ngai Tahu. Widowed early in his life, he lived at Awhitu House until his own death in 1954. Riki Te Mairaki Taiaroa adopted his grandnephew, a great-grandson of Hori Kerei and Tini Kerei, Riki Te Mairaki Taiaroa Ellison, who was brought up in Awhitu House by his great-grandmother and grand-uncle. Riki Ellison lived in Awhitu House all his life, except for a period of service overseas during World War II. A warm, humble man, he enjoyed great mana throughout the South Island and New Zealand. His standing gave Awhitu House importance in country-wide Maori affairs. When he died in 1984, thousands gathered at Taumutu for the largest tangi seen in the South Island for many years. He was buried in a simple grave close to the western end of the humble church he had loved and cared for all his life and which he called his 'cathedral'.

Awhitu House has been important as the papakainga of the Taiaroa family and as the residence of successive paramount chiefs of Ngai Tahu. It has also played a significant part in the life of the wider Taumutu-Sedgemere community. Until it was closed in the 1960s, the Sedgemere school held its annual picnic on the lawn of Awhitu House. The picnics were great events for all locals, Maori and Pakeha, young and old. Maori and Pakeha alike joined too in such community customs as first footing at New Year. The doors of the hall Ngati Moki and the Hone Wetere Church have always been open to all members of the local community, regardless of race. The interaction between the Maori of Taumutu and the European settler families of the Tau-



Maori huts on the shore of Lake Ellesmere at Taumutu, sketched in 1874 by Eliot Whately.



The remaining buildings of the old pa at Taumutu at the turn of the century. The old kainga at Taumutu were already in decline when this picture was taken and the site today is open paddock.



The lakeside at Taumutu early this century, showing the craft and fishing gear of the fishermen who settled on 'The Point' in the last quarter of the nineteenth century.

mutu and Sedgemere districts would, written about in detail, tell much about the accommodation between the races in Canterbury.

The accommodation has mostly been happy, but not without friction, and the lake — the foodbasket of Rakaihautu — has been a main and continuing source of friction. Concern for Te Waihora — Uncle Riki's lake to some young people who are frequent visitors to Awhitu House — is a major preoccupation of the Maori of Taumutu and the depletion of its resources of food a cause for bitterness. The Maori people of Taumutu have placed great store on being able to sustain and entertain visitors with the traditional foods of tuna and flounder for which the lake has been renowned since Maori first settled on its shores hundreds of years ago. The choicest tuna were those taken in Muriwai, a lagoon just south of Taumutu, and Muriwai tuna were reserved for use in

special feasts for manuhiri. It is culturally important to Maori that locals be seen to cater more than adequately for guests and that people travelling to gatherings elsewhere take ample supplies of the particular food or foods which their local community enjoys in abundance. The decline in the number of tuna in Te Waihora is, therefore, of burning importance to the people of Ngati Ruahikihiki/Ngati Moki. So is the mining of sand on Kaitorete, which threatens the destruction not only of middens but also of some of the now restricted stands of pingao. But it is the depletion of the lake's resources that is felt particularly keenly. Already the memory is fading of the time when those in other South Island Maori communities would say confidently that 'Taumutu will bring eel'. The practice of people from Taumutu taking tuna, often in large quantities, to hui continued well into living memory, but is a