

KAITUNA RIVER

The original name of the Kaituna River, which ran from Ōkere to the sea, was *Te Awa Tī a Maru*.

Its present name literally means ‘an abundance of eels’. Ngāti Pīkiao say their traditional name for the river was *Ōkere*.

Te Awa o Ngātoroirangi at the entrance of the Kaituna was named when it was sighted while *Te Arawa waka* was still at sea, but is now known as the Maketū Estuary. An altar, *Te Tūāhu o Ngātoroirangi* was built at Maketū when the waka landed.

The Kaituna and *Waiari* Rivers marked traditional boundaries between the lands of Tapuika and Waitaha. Other key rivers, *Te Raparapa-a-Hoe* and *Ōhineangaanga* flowed through the Atuaroa swamp into the Kaituna then out to the coast.

Waitaha had many settlements on the banks of the Kaituna.

Te Karaka and *Pāroa* pā were occupied by Hinepiri, a grand-daughter of Takakōpiri and elder sister of Te Iwikoroke and Kūmaramaoa.

Te Kopua pā was located on the Tapuika-Waitaha boundary. The Kopuaroa Stream linked the pā to the plains below the Pāpāmoa Hills. Waitaha navigated this stream to settlements in the area and like the Kaituna, it was also a rich food source for Waitaha. Sledge from the Poplar Lane quarry has destroyed the quality of the stream.

Te Makomako was a pā on the eastern side of the Kaituna. It was heavily contested in wars between Waitaha and Tapuika, and was also sought after by other Te Arawa hapū. It was part of Te Arawa conquest claims and subsequently included in the boundary set by Donald McLean.

Te Ngaeo pā stood on an island at the confluence of the Kaituna and the Waiari Rivers and settled by Te Rangitupukiwaho. (The site was destroyed by the Kaituna flood protection scheme during 1970s.)

Kaituna River was a pātaka kai or food source for Waitaha and other iwi. It was a breeding ground for eels prior to their migration out to sea, for mullet and other salt water fish species. Fish and eels were so abundant that they could be seen covering the pipi beds. The Kaituna was also well known for its whitebait.

Edible plants, flax and rongoā plants were also gathered from the river. In more modern times, Waitaha raised livestock alongside large cultivations. By the early 1800s flax became a commodity for trade. Land was drained and large-scale planting and harvesting supplied at least two flax mills near the Kaituna River and Wairakei Stream.

However, these lands were alienated by the Native Land Court and Waitaha lost any economic advantage. Today most of the wetland areas around rivers in this catchment have been drained for farm land and urban development.