Camping

It was a nice summer's day, my family and I were set to go to the camp grounds of Whatatutu to camp by the river of Mangatu, Kaukamau (3). The space was nice and well looked after by other family members that lived as neighbors until the summer was over. We saved our spot in a corner just under a tree of two streams that had collided to become one and was now a warm pool (3), suited for children and parents who didn't want to do much, but bathe. The boys helped out with the hard work on the tents, while the girls took care of the food and watched out for the babies. At the end of day, we would get together around a campfire, singing a few songs and cook some lambs tails and later on, we would roast Marshmallows on sticks.

For most nights, it would take an awfully long time for the children to get out of the water, unless something nice was cooking on the fire, they just wouldn't get out then after tea, much to the disgust of my aunties, they would be back in the water again. Most nights, the eels would creep out of their dark holes and slither across the rocks, like a slippery worm (3), and that would be the time for all the kids to get out of the water and get changed in the open and warmed up and ready to go off eeling.

Before the floods struck, those summer days were warm and long, and like most summer nights, they were cool, peaceful and soundlessly quiet (3). Two weeks after the flood, the nice sound of the birds that sang in the night were nowhere to be seen, there was no sound, just emptiness. The warm pool that all the children played in year, after year, after year, had disappeared, in its place was a swift stream and the river had become too rough for anyone to cross over (3).

The camp grounds were now left with the marks of the tent floors, and black puddles stood where there use to be the campfires. The place felt cold and empty, there were no sounds of birds singing and the aunties laughter and card playing antics were just a vivid memory. After the flood, there were more trees in the streams, the river had gone much deeper and the grass had grown over everything (3), the place was a mess, it no longer looked neat and clean. Despite the changes that had occurred due to the flood, one thing was for sure, no matter how much the river had changed, it would always be our summer getaway.