

Floods





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Floods

There have been several flooding incidents within the village over the years, but no records have been located about any major flooding within the village being directly caused by the Turakina River.

The major and damaging flood events in the village have been caused by uncontrolled run-off water from adjacent rural land. There are four of these events recorded and all appear to have resulted from on-farm actions combined with a period of heavy rain.

1936: A period of rain plus the breaking of a dam on an inland farming property caused water to run down the gully where Wainui street is now. It flowed into the yard of 68 Wainui and appears to have also flooded at least one other bach, at 21 Omanu. To drain the water a channel was manually dug, towards the river, through the sand ridge in Wainui street.

1970: *"... heavy rain ... turned the nearby swamp into a lake and overflow was travelling down ... into the settlement" ... "its source is thought to be a large hole left by recent excavation on the gas line."* RDC brought in a dragline and put in the drain that runs alongside the northern boundary to drain the water and provide future protection.

2010: Heavy rain and uncontrolled farm run-off water flowed down Wainui street. Properties at the village entrance were flooded.

2015: Another repeat of the 2010 farm run-off problem, this time flooding all the way down into Omanu street. Properties in Wainui and Omanu streets were flooded.

Prior to 1998 it appears to have been a common occurrence for the river mouth to close off and for water to back-up into the low area of Teone street. There are records to hand of this happening on numerous occasions, but no reports of any major damage being caused. This issue was usually resolved by a new mouth being formed and/or the tide going out.

The mouth blocked in 1987 and the river backed up and encroached into Teone street. Documents from 1990 refer to *"...flooding of basement at 22 Rapaki ..."*, but whether this refers to 1987 or another event is unknown.

In January 1997 the river backed up again and this time the event was well documented with aerial photos and news reports. A digger was brought in to create a channel and drain the *"lake"*; this was after locals had dug a channel which was *"claimed to be helpful"* but also *"reported as being futile"*. Civil Defence spokesman said *"... water had not been lifethreatening, nor had it threatened houses — it had just been annoying."*

1936: A period of heavy rain plus the breaking of a dam on an inland farming property caused water to run down the gully where Wainui street is located now,
It flowed into the yard of 68 Wainui street and appears to have also flooded at least one other bach, at 21 Omanu Street.



Above: 21 Omanu street



Below and Left: 68 Wainui street



TURAKINA BEACH HOUSES HIT BY FLOODWATERS

Floodwaters engulfed several holiday cottages at Turakina Beach yesterday.

The water surged down the main beach road after heavy and continuous rain on Wednesday turned a nearby sand dune swamp into a "useless sponge."

Cottage owners from Wanganui and Marton were contacted yesterday as the waters threatened to inundate several low-lying cottages.

Water, more than 12 inches deep in some places, isolated an entire beach side street, affecting about seven cottages.

One cottage was completely surrounded. Water flowed into its garage - bunkhouse and was only a fraction of an inch from flowing under the front door.

Other property owners who arrived on the scene before the height of the flooding, about 11 a.m., managed to dig troughs diverting the waters away from their cottages.

Two pumps, one from the Rangitikei County Council and the other from Ratana, were taken to the scene after residents living in the area noticed that the floodwaters were getting higher yesterday morning.

Pumps used

The pumps, one working at a rate of 25,000 gallons an hour, removed some of the water, expelling it further down the beach road.

It is thought that the heavy rain during the week turned a nearby swamp into a lake

and the overflow was travelling down from the swamp on to the road and into the settlement.

As one resident put it, the swamp had become a "useless sponge."

The road to the beach was blocked to all but larger vehicles and many people had to make their way into the settlement across neighbouring higher ground.

Last night beach residents had taken a bulldozer into the swamp, in an effort to block the water at its source, which is thought to be a large hole left by recent excavation on the natural gas line.

Safe level

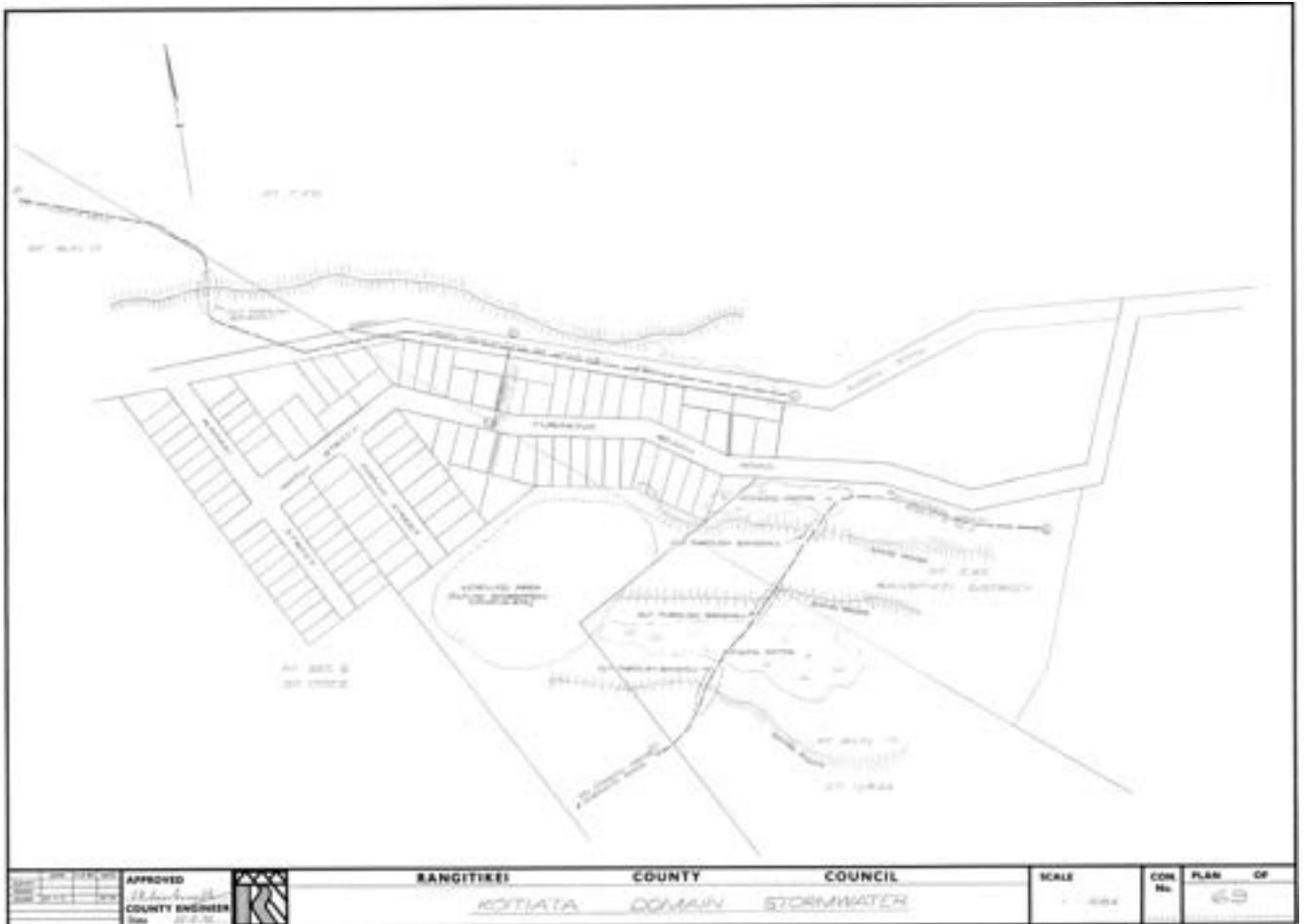
The pumps kept the water at a safe level all through the day and heavy showers did not help the pumping operations.

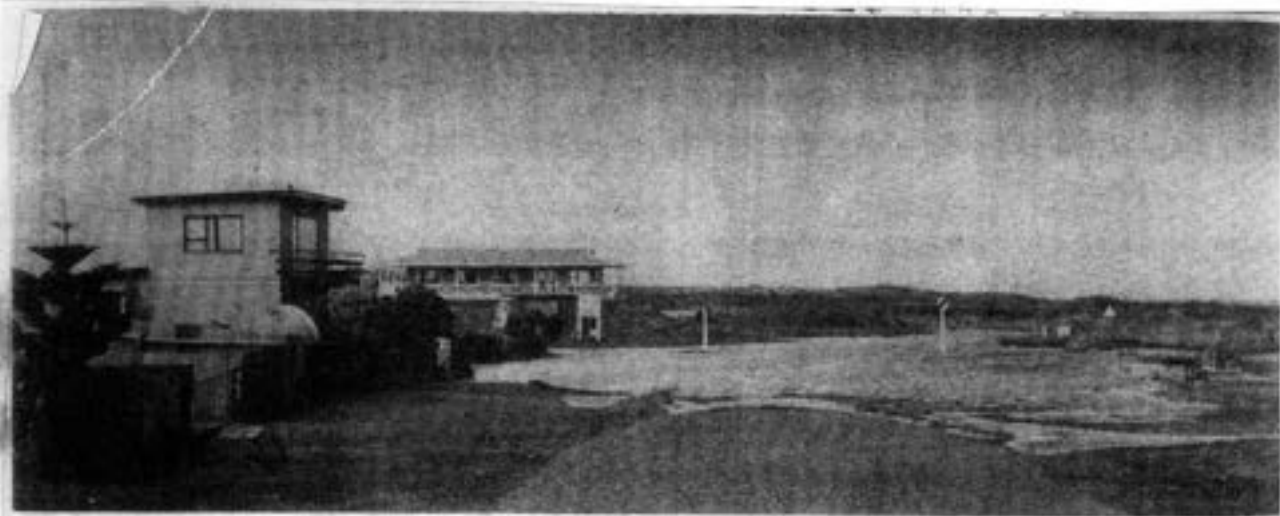
People who visit the cottages regularly and those who live in the beach area say the flood has been threatening since last Saturday night.

At that time weekend residents had to drive their cars on to higher ground as they feared the waters would rise during the night.

46 Wainui Street
October - 1970







The blockage of the mouth of the Turakina River, coupled with a high incoming tide, posed the threat of severe flooding at the Turakina Beach settlement at Koitiata last Thursday. Evacuation of houses was a possibility at one stage as the water advanced [pictured], but in the end this precaution was unnecessary.

— "Mail" photo.

Flash flood causes concern at Koitiata

by Glynnis Harding

A flash flood at Koitiata, Turakina Beach, last Thursday caused consternation to some of the residents living on the beach front.

The river mouth had blocked and there had been a storm last Wednesday, with high winds on Wednesday night.

Rangitikei County Council officers visited the beach to find out the cause of the 2-ft deep lake which had spread to the front lawns of some houses.

Those residents living closest to the sea were afraid that evacuation might have been necessary if the water had not receded before the expected high tide at 1.30pm on Thursday afternoon.

Fortunately this was not necessary.

Turakina Beach resident Mrs Mary Burberry said she had not seen anything quite like the flooding in the 5 years she had lived at the beach settlement.

The Rangitikei Mail

August 20, 1987

Ideal Living Space at Turakina Beach

A climate rumoured to be the best in the southern North Island, a community spirit second to none, and complete relaxation for the whole family are the features of the little-publicised Koitiata Settlement - otherwise known as Turakina Beach.

And the secluded settlement would not be seeking the headlines now, but for the fact it has some sections to sell to those wishing to set up on a beachfront for a very economical outlay. Prices range from just \$8500 to \$12,500 for sections which would cost many times that, much further down the coast. The sections are being developed by the Rangitikei County Council for immediate sale. There are 17 sections still available, following initial sales.

Koitiata Community Council chairman Mr Noel Abbott is very enthusiastic about the beach resort, and counts prospective new residents or holiday-makers very fortunate indeed. They have had all the hard work done for them, he says. Sewage is laid on, roads are tarsealed, and street lights are in place and operate all year round.

Mr Abbott says with conviction that these amenities are only a start. As well, concrete footpaths are a feature, there is underground power and telephones,

and mail is delivered every day. Milk is cheaper than in Marton, and can be delivered with groceries, if required.

All that, and a climate claimed to be as good as Wanganui, which has long been known to have a very special micro-climate, capable of some very exotic temperatures.

Permanent Homes

Mr Abbott says that Turakina Beach has some 104 homes, of which 42 are permanently inhabited by some 100 people. About 60 per cent of the permanent residents are retired. But the village comes alive with a full range of people over the weekends as fishing and floundering enthusiasts arrive. Others just come to their beach houses to completely relax - or at this time of the year, to catch whitebait.

For the record, Turakina Beach is just 15 miles from Marton, 17 miles from Wanganui, and not very far from Palmerston North or Taranaki.

For the retired, recreation evenings are held every Thursday, including indoor bowls and other activities. For the more active, there is a volunteer fire brigade and a full range of self-motivated outdoor activity, says Mr Abbott.

Footnote: Interest in developing Turakina Beach as a resort

first began almost 70 years ago. A news item in the Rangitikei Advocate, Marton's daily paper, on January 14, 1918, commented:

"On Thursday morning Messrs B P Lethbridge, chairman, H H Richardson and A Thoms, County Clerk and overseer of the Rangitikei County Council, visited the Koitiata Reserve, on the banks of the Turakina River, and selected sites for the proposed township. The land will be surveyed and then opened up for selections on lease as sea-side allotments. At the present time there are 50 people camped on the river bank", said the Advocate.



Water trapped by a large sandbar has caused minor headaches for Turakina Beach residents over the past few days. Relief was at hand after engineers cut a channel through the sandbar using a digger yesterday, allowing water to drain back to the sea.



A massive sandbar stretching several kilometres down the Wanganui coast has trapped an estimated 3km area of water near the Turakina Beach settlement. The trapped water can be seen at the top centre of the picture, with the arrow indicating the spot where a digger was used to cut a channel yesterday. The small channel at the bottom centre was formed naturally, allowing some water to escape.



1997: Teone street area



1997: Camp ground evacuated

Wanganui Chronicle

TUESDAY JANUARY 14 1997

Trench cut to release Turakina floodwater

Engineers have cut a trench to release water trapped by a large sandbar at the mouth of the Turakina River, but the success of the work will depend largely on Mother Nature.

Sea water washing over the sandbar and river water unable to escape resulted in an estimated 3km area being flooded, affecting houses, playgrounds and a camping ground at the beach settlement at the weekend.

People in the area spent seven fruitless hours on Sunday attempting to dig a channel through the bar, but quickly realised the effort had been futile.

The Rangitikei District Council called in roading engineer Alan Geerkens yesterday in an attempt to release the trapped water.

Mr Geerkens said a digger was brought in to cut a channel through the sandbar opposite the settlement and that, combined with a channel nature had opened up a few kilometres south, would hopefully ease the situation.

"Water has been released through a channel further down the beach and that, combined with the channel cut by the digger, will help drain the water," Mr Geerkens said.

"However, we'll be at the mercy of Mother Nature. The weather is meant to be settling down, so hopefully we won't have the onshore winds of the past few weeks - that should help ease the pressure."

Civil Defence spokesman for the area Bruce Attwell said the ponded water had not been life-threatening, nor had it threatened houses - it had just been annoying.

No-one talked to yesterday could explain why the sandbar had formed, although Mr Geerkens speculated that the strong on-shore winds experienced in recent weeks may have been a factor.

"Not being a coastal engineer I'm at a loss to fully explain why this has happened, but I'd suggest the on-shore wind may have had an impact," he said.

Wanganui Aero Work helicopter pilot Charlie Anderson, who took Chronicle photographer Brendon O'Hagan aloft yesterday to take pictures, said he had watched the sandbar grow significantly over the past six weeks.

"I measured its length about six weeks ago using GPS equipment and from memory it was about 2.4km. When we measured it today it had grown by several hundred metres," Mr Anderson said.



1997: First attempt to drain the water.



1997: Second attempt to drain the water.



1997: second attempt was successful.

January 2004: At high tide on Monday afternoon the water backed up into Teone street area. When the tide went out the water receded and as quoted in report below ... *the worst flooding in living memory has been of small consequence to Koitiata ...*"



18. February Storm and Flooding.

The high winds experienced did minor damage at Koitiata. Some trees were toppled and some minor damage to roofs occurred. The support structure to a Rapaki St. home was torn asunder. This was due to a poor construction method. The Fire Brigade tied down the roof to secure the structure of the roof.

The flooding of the Turakina river however was of more concern. This soon became apparent to local residents. The rising river soon topped its banks and spread out over the flood plain. The main problems or as a consequent of this was the depth of water over the main access road and subsequent siltation. The main flooding affecting the residents of Koitiata was road access from the main highway at Turakina.

Apart from the flooding of part of Teone St. the village was not affected. The geographical location and elevation of the village saved everyone from getting flooding problems.

Other inconveniences were the loss of telephone lines and cell phone capabilities. The loss of electrical power supply caused some inconveniences due to the duration of the main period of approx 3 days of non supply. Further small periods were shrugged off as of no major problem. This necessitated the usage of two available electrical generators which were kindly lent for some help for continuation of supply to some deep freezers in Rapaki St.

Some residents took advantage of the opening up of the forest exit route to Santoft for going to work and access to supplies. However the requirement of speed restrictions and lights on vehicles at all times was not adhered to by some people. This may have been because of no knowledge of this requirement. Many thanks to Mr. McCarthy of Rangitikei Forests for making the roading access available.

One good thing that the flood accomplished which others have tried to no avail, was the opening of the tidal outlet to the old river course. The situation now has made this part tidal at high tides. This in turn has been beneficial in making the ford water depth lower and more practical for general usage.

In summation the worst flooding in living memory has been of small consequence to Koitiata as compared with local farmers and occupiers of houses along the access road to Turakina and elsewhere who have suffered huge financial losses. Thanks have been received from the residents of Scotts Ferry and the Red Cross for the emergency clothing and household items donated by representatives of our community.

Memories of the great flood of 2004

Joyce Smith

Monday Feb 16th 2004

Well we are having a bit of an adventure. It started yesterday when we had a lot of rain and high wind. I had to go to Tangimoana for a Coastal Care meeting and was dubious about going but people were depending on me. On my return I only just made it into Turakina before a tree fell across State Highway 5 just at the top of the hill north of the school. On my return it had become so cold that Peter had lit the fire! During the night the storm got worse. It was so loud at times that I thought the house was blowing apart.

We got up this morning to find there was no power. The storm was still so loud we could hardly hear the battery radio telling us that there was widespread flooding throughout Whanganui, Rangitikei and Manawatu. There were Civil Defence emergencies in Marton, Bulls and Feilding. And so many main roads were closed that the central north island was virtually impassable. In Marton and Feilding there had been substantial evacuation in the middle of the night. Many shops and houses were flooded.

There was also news of school closures and while I listened to see if Wanganui Girls College was on the list, Peter drove to see if we could get out of the village. On his first attempt, he was stopped by a tree across the road. But he met another villager coming back who said that the stream at Tunnel Hill was well up over the road so we could not get through.

Peter just managed to phone Girls College to say he couldn't get into work before the phone went dead. He and the rest of the fire party went round the village securing roofs and flying things. The wind had abated slightly but was still quite strong. There was a couple in the camp site who needed to get to Wellington so some of the fire party took the fire engine to see if there was a path through the forest to Bulls, but there were many trees across the forest roads.

And so we were marooned – there was no leaving the village, no phone, no internet, no power, no mail, no rubbish collection, and only battery radios for information from the outside, and that information indicated that the authorities would be fully occupied with the larger centres and we would have to manage by ourselves for a few days.

With the tree removed from the road, we drove up to Tunnel Hill to see the extent of the flooding. The two streams under the one way bridges which are 4 kms apart, and the Turakina River which you usually can't see from the road, had all burst their banks and merged into one huge lake as far as the eye could see.

Richard Redmayne said according to his family farm records there hadn't been a flood like this since 1913 – the 100 year flood! We could see a few steers stranded on a little island, trying desperately to stay on land. I took some good video shots while I could, aware that I may not be able to recharge the batteries.

As the day progressed the water rose. The great inland flood lake linked up with the existing lagoon on the sea side and the flood water reached the children's playground and entered one low lying garage. By tea time the water about us was so high we were wishing we had a second storey to put things in. Jack and Rea Lawrie next door who are a whole house depth lower than us were all packed and ready to evacuate.

Then, to everyone's relief – just before dark - the lagoon burst through at the old river mouth and the water started going down. The phones came back on so we could reassure people that we were OK.

Tuesday Feb 17th

Last night was as still and quiet as Sunday night had been cacophonous so I caught up on some much needed sleep. We awoke to a still morning. And although the water level had dropped to a point that was no longer alarming, the great lake across the middle of Beach Road was still there.

Both of us phoned work to update them on our situation. News went round the village that there was free milk at the Hall. The tankers were unable to drive down to the dairy farm so Alex, the local dairy farmer, brought some in churns to the hall which was very kind in view of everything else he had to deal with. I got some video footage before my battery gave up.

Wednesday Feb 18th

This morning we were told that the forest road was cleared by soldiers who had come through in a Unimog bringing bread and milk. In return they asked us if we had any emergency clothing for the people of Scotts Ferry who had been evacuated in their night clothes. The people of Bulls had already had an emergency collection for the people of Tangimoana. There were a lot of refugees in Bulls! We gathered what we had to hand.

The forestry workers must have worked day and night to clear all that debris and it was much appreciated. But as there were still a lot of main road closures, there wasn't any where to go from Bulls. Still it meant we could get food and pharmaceuticals.

Not only were most of us locked in the village, some were locked out. Alison Jermy, who was the only one who got out to work on Monday morning, couldn't get back from Whanganui until Wed.

It became evident that we were not going to get power on for some time. The linesmen were fully stretched and obviously had to start where they could bring most power back to most homes.

Tom Dooney kindly let us all have bursts of his generator to have showers and top up our fridges and freezers - any time but 7.30 pm - nothing was going to come between Trish and Coro Street!

We had a 5-7 pm slot during which we cooked a fry up and watched the 6 o'clock news. What devastation – right through the Manawatu and Rangitikei – dead stock everywhere.

Thursday Feb 19th

The day started bright and sunny but windy – just what we needed to dry things out. Peter set off for work through the forest. After hanging out washing, villagers got together to compare notes and share information. It was strange knowing you *were* the news but weren't able to watch it. We were also amazed how long food stayed frozen if you don't open the freezer door. But we knew we were running out of time and we started to plan a pot luck freezer barbie.

Went down to the beach for the first time. It was covered in onions, pumpkins and turnips and more driftwood than I had ever seen in one go. And I had no video or still camera working!

Friday Feb 20th

State highway 3 was opened, with traffic going over the Whangaehu bridge one lane at a time. Peter got a ride in early so that I could have the car to go in later. I drove through the forest awestruck at the number and size of the trees the forest workers had moved to clear the road for us.

The flood damage had brought almost everything to a halt at the DOC office. One of our staff had lost her home completely and another had lost most of her possessions. The board room was covered in her soggy photographs and clothes. One staff member was dealing with consents for irrigation schemes – suddenly farmers had more than they wanted! I tried to do a quick phone round of my ‘coastal neighbours’ groups. Scotts Ferry and Tangimoana had been completely evacuated and there were no phones or no one answering at Waiinu and Mowhanau, Himintangi and Foxton Beach. I had a six month contract as a Coastal Conservation Ranger, but it was likely that for the duration of my contract my district was going to be more concerned with preservation than conservation.

News came through that they were going to close SH3 at the Whangaehu Bridge at 11 am and those of us living south of it were told to go home. I had just taken an hour and a half to drive 63 kms to work (normally 30kms) and now I had to turn straight round and do it all again. I had taken my video camera and phone to recharge, and a change of clothes for a shower – no chance! I had to gather up my things and leave.

Whangaehu looked like a disaster area - a huge mudscape strewn with dead cars and dead animals. I was glad I couldn't video it. It would have felt wrong – and anyway the police were keeping the traffic moving. I saw Tariana Turia. She may be the Associate Minister of Maori Affairs but this is her home and she was out there in her gumboots delivering kai to volunteers.

The sight at the Turakina bridge was less dramatic but great banks of mud marked how high the river had risen. And so to Turakina and a catch up with Noeline and Adrian at the service station. They didn't get flooded but they had been closed for 3 days because they had no power and no customers due to the road closures.

I filled up with petrol and bought a few essentials as we had another storm warning. At this point I am 8 kms from home but I've got to drive nearly 40 kms via Bulls and the forest road to get there. The return journey did not seem as straightforward as the outward one and I got lost twice. Once I was helped by a kind forest worker, but the second time I encountered some very officious volunteers who suspected me of trying to get to Scotts Ferry to loot or rubberneck!

I got home to find that the Beach Road had just re-opened!

And the power was back on – it was quite novel being able to run the taps and flush the toilet again.

I went down to the beach to video all the vegetables but they had gone. Later I heard they were travelling down the coast – last seen at Foxton.

And so, dried out and recharged we battened down the hatches for another storm. It came after dark. Now we had the TV back but we couldn't hear it for the torrential rain. Hey ho – off to bed wondering what the morning would bring.

Sat Feb 21st

It was a short storm. We woke to a calm day, and reassurance from the radio that no one's situation seemed to have worsened. It was chilly so we lit the fire. Peter went with the fire party to clean out the house of our local councillor Bob Major. It had been badly flooded and is now full of silt and mud.

And so the emergency was over – except for the mud.

There had been great concern about the old people. It's interesting to note that in many ways us oldies coped better than the young ones. We remember the days before we had electric appliances and remember camping with no facilities. We had sensible things in the cupboard for emergencies – tins of fish, fruit and vegetables, (and non-electric tin openers) powdered milk, batteries, candles and camp stoves. We know how to do our washing by hand and have a strip wash. And we were all prepared to flush the toilet with buckets of water from the garden tank.

And we weren't the ones whinging 'where is Civil defence?' In an isolated community you *are* civil defence. I wonder if this experience will see more younger volunteers.

Peter came back from cleaning Bob Major's. I could hardly see his face and you wouldn't know what colour the car is. Tomorrow they are going up to the Marae to do it all again.

At last – a normal evening – we had showers and an oven cooked casserole. And then our first complete evening of catching up with TV – what's this? An extended news item about the floods – *oh please!*

2010 September: Heavy rain and uncontrolled farm run-off water flowed down Wainui street. Properties at the village entrance were flooded.



June 2015: Another repeat of the 2010 farm run-off problem, this time flooding all the way down into Omanu street. Properties in both Wainui and Omanu streets were flooded.



When the Turakina River floods the most negative effect on Koitiata is the closing of Beach Road which isolates the village.



October 2013



October 2013



June 2015