

Eskdale Park

Standing at the tree where I spread Mum's ashes, the tears flow.

Eskdale Park and its surrounds conjure up many happy family memories. It's a relic of the past, lost to the new generation, our children, who only have scant memories of those days.

Sentiment was involved in the naming of my only son, who has my pop's name as his middle name. Pops served as Home Guard, looking out for Japs in the Second World War, and received a Gold Star for 25 years' service in the Fire Brigade. He was a wharfie all his life to boot.

However, our kids, namely teens and young adults, these days seem to prefer the 'fast life': cell phones, takeaway food, fast cars, play stations and little regard for anything else, really.

Hawke's Bay boasts a beautiful climate, sandy beaches, surfing, fishing, bike riding tracks, walking tracks, wineries, concerts, excellent accommodation, and campervan sites among many other pursuits. Eskdale, however, escapes the attention of the masses, purely I believe because of its out of the way drive, and, the hushed word-of-mouth silence surrounding its beauty, Eskdale is a little paradise for local families to escape day to day life pressures.

I recall, even without the photographs stashed high in the cupboard, the regular Sunday family get togethers, for anything, like one of the twenty-odd extended family members' birthdays...that equalled a lot of trips out to Eskdale a year !

We would all load the car with chilly bins (drinks, food & ice) thermos flasks, beers, chairs, blankets, togs & towels... Yep, let us go!

The drive was a happy one, left towards Taupo at the Bay View turn-off and past the picturesque, quaint little Eskdale Church, which conjured up excitement, not only in its beauty, but because the park was only a stone's throw away, around the next right-hand turn.

We'd enter the gates, bump over the cattle stop and speed hump, which demanded respect from young hoons in fast cars, then slow down, take a deep breath and appreciate the beauty of the place, before eyeing up a spot to picnic, play or swim.

The huge willow and other trees, offered shade in the summer, or at the very least, home to birds, whose happy chirping, along with the sound of kids playing and adults laughing is a memory etched from childhood, I will take to my grave.

Now each year, family gather at Eskdale to remember Mum in the place they chose to spread her ashes. This is always a relief to me, as her funeral at the RSA was more a family and close friend get together, a celebration of her life with laughter and videos , highlighting her bubbly personality, kindness and values.

My wife and I visit that lovely big tree where we spread her ashes, and share heartfelt memories of picnics , warm feelings of our wedding with the church in the background and a horse standing in the paddock with whom we had our photo.

Eskdale means Mum, family, and love. Tears relate to loss and death, and here I find they flow easily.