

Divine inspiration

A new style of secure community on Matakana Estate offers land buyers a view over their very own vines, without the hard work of maintaining them. By **Estelle Sarney**.

PAUL Vegar remembers an evening sitting with his mother Pat overlooking the family vineyard. They were on the balcony of the home he, his brother and sister had built for Pat and her husband, Kevin Fitzgerald, at the top of Matakana Estate.

"Pat and Kevin said it would be nice to have some neighbours to share a wine or a coffee with," recalls Paul. "It can be lonely living in the country, and they thought it would be nice to walk through some common areas and say hello to people without losing their privacy."

Now the Vegar siblings are turning Pat and Kevin's idea into reality, creating an exclusive community within their vineyard that is one of the first of its kind in New Zealand.

They have opened up seven lots for sale, which in total make up about half the vineyard. The owner of each freehold lot will gain an idyllic house site set among a section of the estate's vines. Lot owners will own the vines on their land, but will not have to tend them. Paul's team will continue to care for the vines by hand, and cover the vineyard's operating costs. Lot owners will benefit from the fruit of their vines through a complimentary wine allocation and preferential buying rights.

"We let the vines mature before deciding to share the land," says Paul, "and we didn't want to clutter the estate. It will remain a working vineyard — any vines we have to remove to make way for the homes we will plant elsewhere."

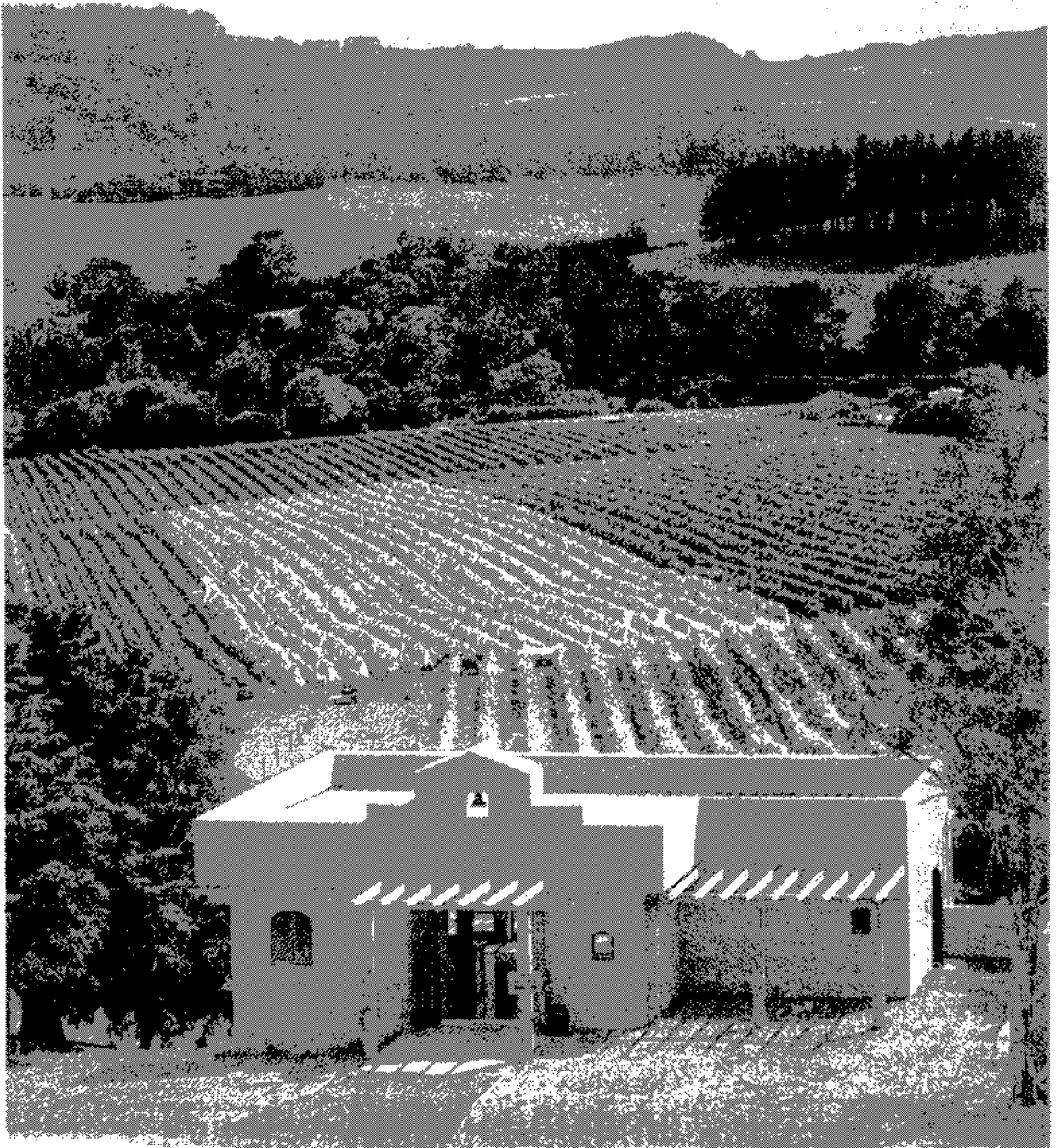
The look of the homes that owners may wish to build on their lots is important to the family. Paul is planning to build his own home on the vineyard within the next year, and his sister Marie and their brother Peter and his wife Jean also work there every day. They have drawn up what some might regard as strict covenants outlining how the homes should look, but the guidelines will ensure the development blends in with Pat and Kevin's house, the wine tasting facility and the surrounding environment.

For example, each lot has a defined house site area of a maximum 3000sq m; horizontal rather than vertical architecture is encouraged, and preferred building materials are solid block plaster with timber joinery. House colour should be inspired by the local Matakana clay. Even a minimum building cost of \$550,000 is required to ensure quality.



Paul Vegar: "It can be lonely living in the country, and [the family] thought it would be nice to walk through some common areas and say hello to people without losing their privacy."

The look of the new homes is important to Paul and his family, who want the development to blend with the wine-tasting facility and the surrounding environment.



Family favourite

Solid and handsome, this grand residence has been a loved family home full of special memories. By **Charlotte Cossar**.

IF you have lived in Auckland for any length of time and driven around Epsom, you would have stumbled upon Mt St John Ave. An avenue that backs onto the mountain — as its name suggests — it is also well known in the area as one of the most sought-after addresses.

The reason why? Substantial homesteads on large sections line one side of the avenue while prestigious well-kept grounds of private schools forge the other.

Set back from the road, behind beautiful mature trees, this grand home built in 1924 by John McKenzie Wilson has been painstakingly maintained and improved and is now a capacious solid home comprising three levels of immaculate living.

Realising their dream, the owners of the home knew as soon as they saw it that they had to make it their own. Owning number 23 for the past 13 years, the family has enhanced previous alterations completed by architects and augmented the home by totally refurbishing and further extending the home's boundaries.

Setting the scene, mature trees and formal gardens typify what is on offer behind the front door. Stunning character features have been cherished and restored and melded with modern conveniences to make this house a home.

A formal sitting room to one side is warmed by an open fire, while nearby an imposing wood panelled dining room is a stunning environment for entertaining. On opposite sides of the entrance, which is generous and grand, these two formal areas are connected by a cosy and demure study with its own open fireplace.

Towards the rear of the home, the owners have reconfigured the existing floor plan and added a family room, large laundry and generous kitchen. Conscious of retaining the home's character, these areas seamlessly flow from the original dwelling.

The kitchen has heart rimu cabinetry — plenty of it, as the owners had four children (mainly boys) and were mindful of catering for their growing needs, and the family room opens to a deck and pretty garden. The laundry also has traditional touches with the original drying rack still in use.

The stunning, wide staircase winds to a landing where over the new kitchen a large bedroom, family bathroom and separate toilet sit. Melding with the home's strong wood theme, the renovated bathroom has new rimu cabinetry by Latrobe Hall (the same company that designed and built the kitchen), which is complemented by polyurethaned cork tiles and an oversized glass shower. A master bedroom with an en suite and sun deck, a front sunroom or bedroom and another bedroom with its own separate study area complete the upper level.

On the lower level, a large rumpus room (complete with pool table) is an ideal area for children. With its own entrance from a carport, this level could easily be self contained. Comprising a double bedroom, modern bathroom plus cellar and storage, all that is needed is a kitchenette to make it fully self sufficient.

The entire house has recently been painted inside and out, and the exceptional formal gardens meticulously maintained.

An outstanding example of a lovely family home, its position is unsurpassed, within walking distance of all the top private and public schools, minutes from Newmarket and Remuera and with easy access to the motorways.

Vitalstatistics

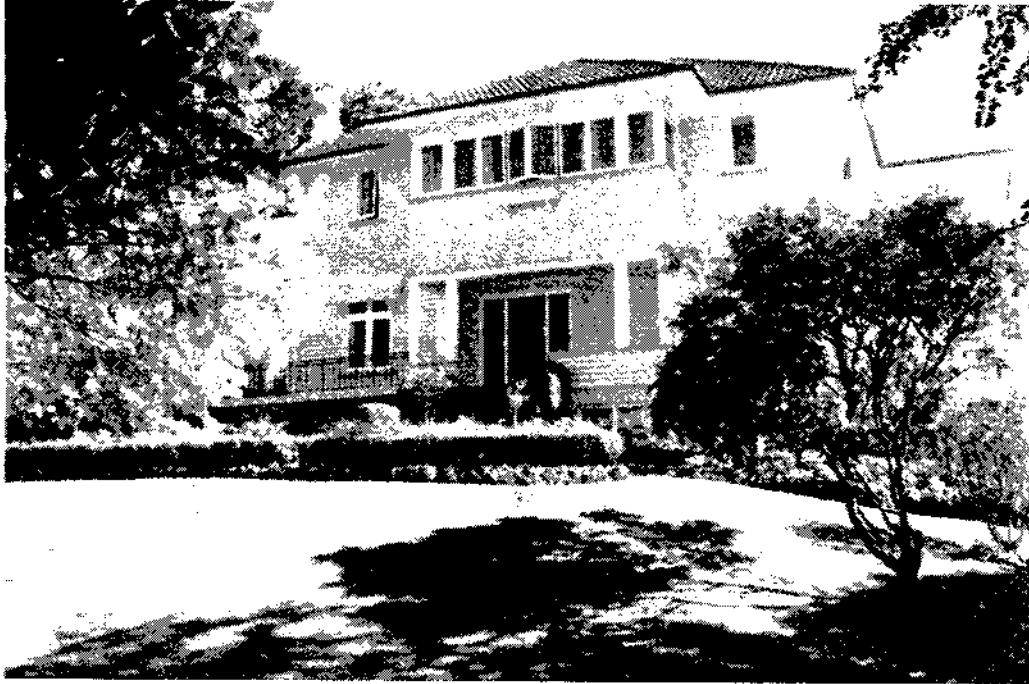
ADDRESS: 23 Mt St John Ave, Epsom.

FEATURES: Restored 1924 Epsom classic five-bedroom home; three and a half bathrooms; formal living area with sunroom and large bay window; study; formal dining area with wood paneling; kitchen and family area opening to pretty garden; large rumpus room complete with pool table; cellar or potential darkroom; open fires; security alarm; smoke detectors; garden lighting; wine; potting shed; storage areas; tool shed; garden shed; two carports plus off-street parking.

SIZE: Land area 979sq m.

AUCTION: At 2pm, March 2, at Bayleys Maritime Sq auction rooms. 2002 CV was \$1.23 million.

AGENT: Dinah Macky, Bayleys. Ph 309 6020 bus; 021 935 466 mob.



'Stunning character features have been cherished and restored and melded with modern conveniences to make this house a home.'

TOP: Mature trees and formal grounds set the scene for what's on offer behind the front door of this Epsom classic.

BOTTOM: The dining room, with its impressive wood panelling, creates a grand environment for entertaining.

• Coastal • Country • Farms

"We hope the covenants will enable everyone to work toward the same vision," says Paul. "We want to protect the integrity of the vineyard environment, and stay sympathetic to the landscape."

Water tanks and TV aerials will not detract from the view --- water will be provided by a common bore, and TV beamed in using equipment at the top of the vineyard.

The entire development will be surrounded by a wall, but unlike the gated communities in the United States and South Africa, there will be no physical gates. Instead, 24-hour surveillance cameras will provide security.

"Because this is a family-owned-and-run vineyard, the people who buy these lots know that we're here for the long term," says Paul.

"We'll be working around them every day, and living on the same estate, so we want to do everything we can to ensure a happy environment."

"It will remain a working vineyard --- any vines we have to remove to make way for the homes we will plant elsewhere"
Paul Vegar, Matakana Estate



Vital statistics

LOCATION: Matakana Estate vineyard, nr Warkworth, 50 minutes north of Auckland.

WHAT'S FOR SALE: Seven freehold 3-3.5ha lots, including ownership of the vines on the respective lot, complimentary wine allocation and preferential wine buying rights.

BEAR IN MIND: House construction must follow strict covenants and cost a minimum of \$650,000.

PRICE OF LOTS: \$700,000 to \$1.3 million.

NEARBY ATTRACTIONS: Beaches, golf courses, Tauwharangi Regional Park, Goat Island Marine Reserve, art and craft venues, cafes.

CONTACT: Linda Fry, Milford International, 09 489 5133, 021 971 244.

SOLD

MATAKANA COAST

Blue Lagoon

"Aloha" is the greeting of choice for guests who arrive from land, sea or air. Host a cocktail party, have quality family time or just "chill out" in absolute privacy. A sheltered tropical delight awaits all those lucky enough to enter this private sanctuary near the waters edge. Generously proportioned American Ranch style home designed by

renowned architect William C Chick complements this premium position on 1 ha of level manicured grounds.
FINAL NOTICE.

VIEW: Call for Viewing Times
www.barfoot.co.nz/305043

TENDER: Closing 10 February 2005 at 4pm
(unless sold prior)

ALLAN MYERS

m. 021 489 336 p. 09 425 8742

Waterway in front of property
Not taken from property

Waterway in front of property
Not taken from property

273 Point Wells Road

A cornucopia of goodness

John Baker and Pip Gardner's Organiland stall has been a regular at the Otago Farmers Market since it opened a couple of years ago. CHARMIAN SMITH finds out how they grow their organic veal, lamb and vegetables.

THERE MAY be thistles in the fields and weeds in the gardens, but John Baker and Pip Gardner pay great attention to the beef, lamb and vegetables that come off their Organicland farm on the Taieri.

Wanting a smaller business, they and their four children moved from a conventional farm near Clydevale to the historic 200ha farm at Owhiro between East Taieri and Allanton about six years ago.

"At Clydevale, we were drenching and dipping, and vets advocated more drenching and antibiotics, and sooner or later the wheels were going to fall off," he says.

Organic farming is more holistic and sustainable and he believes more farmers will move towards it.

Pip says when they had young children, it opened their eyes to what was in the food they were serving them. Most nights now, they sit down to their own meat and vegetables.

Despite his belief in what he is doing, John refuses to argue or try to convince other people about organics. Organicland is certified under Agriguilty, and he just gets on quietly with raising cattle and sheep, and producing organic veal, beef, lamb and hogget.

Their veal is not the white, anaemic meat Europeans are used to (that raises questions about animal welfare). In New Zealand, veal is meat from a calf aged between six months and a year, killed at a similar age to lamb. The raw meat is pink but cooks paler and is mildly flavoured so it will take a sauce, he says.

He leaves his calves and lambs feeding on their mother's milk for longer than is usual. It helps their immune systems and the fight against internal parasites that conventional farmers treat with drenches and dips, he says.

With lightly stocked paddocks fertilised with organically approved fertilisers and a 6:4 ratio between cattle and sheep, he has fewer problems with internal parasites than he used to. If necessary, he uses a cider vinegar and garlic drench or he moves affected sheep to the shed where they gorge on hay which flushes out the worms and their eggs.

Besides the farm on the Taieri, he has a finishing paddock next door to the Clover Leaf works, Gore, where the stock is killed under a special organic protocol. It means the animals walk to the works and are relaxed when killed, which enhances the quality and tenderness of the meat. He also hangs and ages it, which also improves the quality, he

Meat is packed at Clover Leaf or at a butchery in Milton where sausages are made. These contain some non-organic ingredients so are not sold as organic. Veal pot roasts and schnitzel are their biggest sellers at the market, he says.

Top end cuts of veal go to restaurants, some beef goes to a local supermarket and some meat is sold at the market, but most is exported. The couple belong to a group of South Island organic farmers who join forces to export their produce. Their beef goes to the US and their lamb to Marks and Spencers in the UK, Pip says.

In front of the house, close to the main road, are 0.2ha of vegetable gardens tended by their sister-in-law, Shirley Lee, and visiting "Wwoofers" (members of the international organisation Willing Workers On Organic Farms who trade their labour and skills for accommodation and food).

It looks more like a home vegetable garden, with plants at all stages of growth from seedlings to going to seed. They save their own seed, an important part of the organic process as vegetables raised from non-organic seed cannot be sold as organic. Here and there are companion plants such as marigolds, and there's a small nursery of native shrubs and trees that will be planted out round the farm eventually.

Kale, a specialty of Organicland, has self-seeded among the neat rows of beetroot seedlings. Shirley says she will transplant them when they get a bit bigger.

"Organics is about living with weeds," John says, and points out the topper attached to the tractor in the shed. Thistles in the paddocks are regularly topped rather than sprayed.

All the vegetables they produce — including cos lettuce, Chinese greens, peas, beans, kale, herbs, beetroot, carrots, potatoes, yams, garlic, rhubarb, globe artichokes, Florence fennel, New Zealand spinach, puha, Maori potatoes — are harvested on Fridays and sold the following day at the farmers market.

The first few years, while getting their certification,

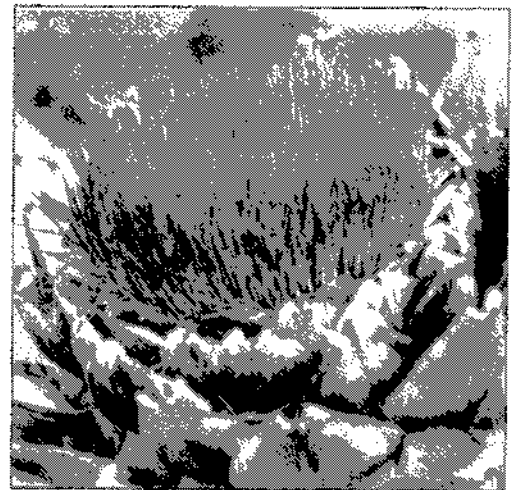
were difficult financially but they expect to make a comfortable living as things pick up. Their lambs fetch about \$100, John says, about 30%-40% more than a conventionally-raised lamb.

"There's more work in organic farming, and we're not going to make a fortune, but in the long term it's a better future for the ground and it's sustainable. I'd rather do this and earn less money than pump out



Marigolds are used as "companion" plants in an organic garden, where they repel a range of insects.





Clockwise from above:
At Organicland, a
scarecrow helps keep
away the pests;
artichokes and peas
are among the produce
sold at market;
John Baker and Pip
Gardner . . . most nights
they sit down to their
own meat and
vegetables.

Westies seeking common ground

A trans-tasman alliance is sought between Waitakere and Sydney's Parramatta

SYDNEY — Sydney's Westies think Auckland's Westies can teach them a thing or two.

Parramatta Council, in Sydney's west, voted on Monday night to send five elected members to Auckland to see how Waitakere City Council goes about its business.

Parramatta Council general manager John Neish said the two cities both shared a "Westie" status.

"Waitakere has many similarities to Parramatta in that it is situated to the west of Auckland and has a strong identity associated with being a 'Westie'," his report to the council said.

"Waitakere has a similar organisational structure to Parramatta City and is undergoing similar reforms."

Parramatta mayor Julia Finn defended the two-day trip and said the A\$5200 (\$5560) cost was a maximum figure, the *Daily Telegraph* newspaper reported.

Waitakere had a major project under

way to develop a new town centre, like Parramatta's A\$1 billion Civic Place, which will have new office and apartment towers.

Some Parramatta councillors were interested in establishing a sister-city relationship and wanted to ask Waitakere officials how their Chinese sister-city relationship was faring, Ms Finn said.

A Waitakere council delegation has previously visited Parramatta.

But not all around the council table were happy.

Councillor Chiang Lim said it was wrong for councillors to be jumping on a plane just a month after voting for a 6 per cent rate rise and new parking meters which could raise an extra \$A10 million.

"If the councillors wanted to see a western suburban city they could just go to Blacktown or Penrith," he said.

"I am struggling to understand how much Parramatta will benefit from Waitakere."

— NZPA