



## Vine romance

This Bannockburn home plays a supporting role to its idyllic vinous setting. Designed as a bachelor pad, it's well-loved by its tenants and absent owner

**ABOVE** Guest Gemma Turvey relaxes in the living pavilion.

Hanging on the back wall are works by Ralph Hotere, Richard Thompson and Grahame Sydney.

**RIGHT** Sealed concrete floors and a floating roofline extend out from the internal framework by 1200mm, with sliding glass panels that enable the home to be opened to the environment.

Resene 'Wellywood' on the north wall provides a fresh backdrop for work by Dunedin artist Marilyn Webb.

Falling in love with the people and geography of Central Otago has been an overwhelming experience for Northlander Sharon Flavell, and she puts much of it down to the Paul Clarke-designed home she has been fortunate enough to live in for the past year and a bit.

Having left behind a successful career in recruitment in late 2003, she toyed with the idea of moving south while holidaying with old friends Margaret Turvey and Mark Mason, ex-Sacred Hill wines, at their Pinot Noir vineyard north of Cromwell.

As fate would have it, their fellow wine buddy and general manager for Mt Difficulty wines, Matt Douglas, was heading to London and wanted someone to house-sit his two-year-old Bannockburn home.

A deal was struck and Sharon now relishes living in this unique rural space, having added a touch of femininity to the rather rudimentary bachelor pad she affectionately refers to as her Zinalume shoebox.



TEXT by Margo Berryman PHOTOGRAPHY by Paul McCredie



FAR LEFT Friends and family gather to celebrate Sharon's birthday; entertaining is fun and effortless in the living pavilion, with everything close at hand and the ability for the party to flow outdoors. LEFT Grahame Sydney and Sharon Flavell in the kitchen adding the finishing touches to a birthday menu of Salmon En Crout – whole fillets of salmon with prawns, spinach and ricotta encased in pastry. FAR LEFT BELOW The hoola-hoop girls, Sharon Flavell and Margaret Turvey, get into party mode on the lawn. Sharon says living in a rural setting has renewed her passion for life. BELOW The internal kitchen wall and stainless-steel bench extrude through the glass sliders to the outside. A gas barbecue is contained within the exterior cabinet to allow for straightforward summer cooking.



“Living here has been a remarkable journey of discovery. The house is very pure in its form and, although built for one, is generous in size, almost oversized to reflect the rural landscape that surrounds it.”

Austere and minimal in design, the house was first conceived as a cluster of wine crates on the landscape.

The intention of Auckland architect Paul Clarke, of Crosson Clarke Carnachan, was to reflect his client and friend's deep passion for wine and heartfelt connection to the region's viticultural industry.

“Matt and I have known each other for years and he kept sending me an assortment of ideas; eventually I told him to stick to the wine and I would look after the house design,” says Paul.

“We were out one night and I drew up a little plan on a napkin which, unbeknown to me, Matt took home and stuck on his fridge – and that became the initial brief.”

The result is a series of interlocking building blocks that sit back into the elevated site. This deliberate decision minimised earthworks and placed the house within the vineyard, presenting a more subtle view, rather than perching it on top of the hill.

Unable to be seen from the valley floor, the contemporary structure stands up to its mountainous surroundings and is softened on approach by a young olive grove planted along the driveway.

Cedar weatherboard cladding on the garage contrasts against the grey Zincolume wrapped around the main house box. This was a playful idea, Paul says, to present the house in a beautifully gift-wrapped finish similar to delivering a box of Moët or Veuve Cliquot to a wine aficionado.

Access is gained from the back of the house through a massive swinging glass door that opens into an axis between the main living area and the double garage.





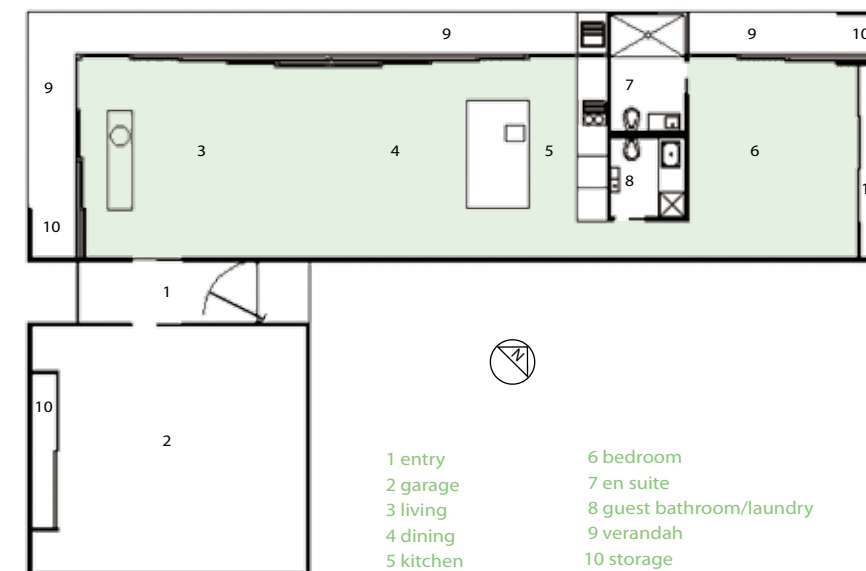
LEFT Dark-stained meranti ply provides contrast on the bedroom's internal wall. The loose canvas is by Sylvia Marsters. BELOW and BOTTOM The main bedroom is linked to the living space

by a walkway. The en suite looks out to the landscape through glass panels. Flax art by Sharon's mother Marie Flavell, who works from her Kahurangi studio, hangs on the wall alongside a piu piu and taiaha.



This glass-walled entry link is designed to hold you for a moment, allowing exploration of the formative relationship between the house and the land

## Wine country



ABOVE A small vintage is expected of the vineyard that was planted around the home in October 2004. Owner Matt Douglas has trademarked a brand name and is working on a label, looking forward to the day when there is enough wine to market.



Paul says this glass-walled entry link is designed to hold you for a moment, allowing exploration of the formative relationship between the house and the land. The area will eventually form the link to an additional two bedrooms and bathroom wing.

On entering the main living pavilion, the landscape is delivered in dramatic detail through a series of floor-to-ceiling sliding glass panels that run the length of the house.

There are 10 panels in total with three on the southwest elevation and three fronting the far-end bedroom. On sunny days the panels can slide back, exposing the whole house to the silty brown slopes of Mt Difficulty and the snow-capped Pisa Range, stretching out to the northeast.

The multi-functional living space includes both a dining and kitchen area in a streamlined open-plan layout with bathroom-cum-laundry, bedroom and en suite at the eastern end.

Says Paul: "The kitchen, laundry, guest toilet and en suite unit make up a service zone/crate that extrudes right through and out of the main building form, but is read as part of a whole."

Food preparation and cooking is done around an expansive 2480mm x 1500mm stainless-steel topped island which Sharon says is the hub of the room.

"It has everything from the dishwasher to power points hidden in the benchtop, so I can have my laptop operating here and there's still plenty of room for everything else. This is where everyone gravitates to when a party is in full swing."

Meranti ply with a Sikkens finish has been used for the kitchen cabinetry and is repeated in the bedroom on the floor-to-ceiling wardrobe and in the storage area.

Sealed concrete floors poured *in situ* are a robust and practical foundation throughout, with underfloor heating providing a year-round temperate climate, affordably run on diesel. A freestanding concrete fireplace is used to boost warmth in colder months.

Sharon's prolific abundance of New Zealand art, rugs and Polynesian family heirlooms inject colour and softness into the interior's neutral tones.

There are several works by Central Otago artist and friend Grahame Sydney, including the *Spaniards at the Cookhouse* lithograph, completed in 2000.

Ralph Hotere's *Winter Solstice* hangs next to this in the living room, while a loose canvas by Sylvia Marsters adds a Pacific feel to the bedroom.

"It's been fun embellishing the house with brighter colours and my assortment of rugs and paintings. A bunch of fresh flowers makes such an impact in a space such as this."

Furnishings have been kept spare and include a mishmash of the owner's old wooden pieces and some recent purchases of Sharon's. Two leather sofas, over two metres in length and from Stacks Furniture, Auckland, provide extra sleeping space for visitors.

"Most of my family are based at Mangawhai Heads, north of Auckland, and it's wonderful to have them visit and enjoy the space; I welcome sharing the house with them," says Sharon.

Placing intrinsic value on the emotive relationship between the landscape and the house has proved a successful recipe for owner Matt Douglas and architect Paul Clarke.

As Matt Douglas e-mails from his London-based home: "I still vividly remember every time I drove out of the gate to go overseas to sell wine and missing the place before I even got to the airport. I tell people over here that it is about 200 miles to the nearest set of traffic lights... but they don't quite believe me." >

## PS... Wine country



BANNOCKBURN IS SITUATED BESIDE THE FRUIT-GROWING AREA SURROUNDING CROMWELL WHERE STONEFRUIT SUCH AS APRICOTS, PEACHES AND CHERRIES GROW IN SUMMER



### BANNOCKBURN BEAUTIES

Central Otago is New Zealand's premier wine region for Pinot Noir. It's not the biggest, but is producing many of the country's best examples of this prestigious wine. If Central Otago wears the crown for Pinot Noir, then the jewel in that crown is Bannockburn. Just nine kilometres out of Cromwell, the area is flanked by the eastern arm of the Kawarau River. Vineyards stretch from Felton Road on the western arm of the Bannockburn Ridge through to Cairnmuir Road below the slopes of Mt Difficulty.

*NZ Home & Entertaining* wine editor Bob Campbell MW recently tasted 42 examples of Central Otago Pinot Noir from the 2003 vintage. Seven out of the top eight wines were made from grapes grown in Bannockburn. If you're in the area and want to taste some premium Pinot Noir, visit Akarua, Carrick, Felton Road, Mt Difficulty and Olssens. But don't overlook other wine styles, particularly Riesling. Felton Road makes three Rieslings, from dry to moderately sweet, and all are outstanding. Mt Difficulty Target Gully Riesling is another of Bob's favourites.

#### Akarua

Cairnmuir Road, Bannockburn  
Phone 03-445 0897; visit [www.akarua.com](http://www.akarua.com)  
Try: Akarua Pinot Noir 2002; The Gullies Pinot Noir 2002 and the new 2003 Pinot Noir

#### Mt Difficulty Wines

Felton Road, Bannockburn  
Phone 03-445 3445; visit [www.mtdifficulty.co.nz](http://www.mtdifficulty.co.nz)  
Try: Mt Difficulty Pipeclay Terrace Pinot Noir 2002; Mt Difficulty Roaring Meg Pinot Noir 2003

#### Felton Road Wines

Bannockburn Road, Bannockburn  
Phone 03-445 0885; visit [www.feltonroad.co.nz](http://www.feltonroad.co.nz)  
Try: Felton Road Riesling 2002; Felton Road Block 3 Pinot Noir 2002; Felton Road Block 5 Pinot Noir 2002; Felton Road Barrel-Fermented Chardonnay 2003

#### Carrick Wines

Bannockburn Road, Bannockburn  
Phone 03-445 3480; visit [www.carrick.co.nz](http://www.carrick.co.nz)  
Try: Carrick 2002 Pinot Noir; Carrick Chardonnay 2003; Carrick Sauvignon Blanc 2003; Carrick Pinot Gris 2004

