

Going to the Chapel

If you drive along the southern stretch of State Highway One, you will see some interesting changes taking place in the farming landscape around the Kaipara Harbour. New settlers are moving in to develop small holdings, and one block, with its rows of planted trees and distinctive house, aroused my curiosity — so I arranged a visit to Barry and Verity Baines and their 'Chapel Olives' estate to find out what they were up to.

They told me that they bought eight hectares next to the Kaipara Harbour in 2000 on Merrill Road (an offshoot from Petley Road near Paparoa), and hand planted 7.5 hectares with 1,200 olive trees, and a small patch with pine nuts. Their daughter Lyn has caught the bug too, and put in another 200 olive trees on an adjacent block of land.

Barry was born Yorkshire, and still has an interesting accent that is strongly influenced by the sounds from colonial Uganda and Kenya, where his father worked as a crown agent. Verity is a fourth generation kiwi living mainly in Auckland, with a background in nursing and later statistics.

The name Chapel Oil comes from the church they moved onto the site to convert into a family home, and they have made a beautiful job of the renovations. It came originally from an Anglican parish in Auckland, and was apparently used for people training as missionaries, and later as a haven for younger people sorting out trouble in their lives.

It arrived on trucks in two sections, cut just above the portal knee, so that it could negotiate its way through Auckland streets. There were a few anxious moments, in wet conditions, when



Barry and Verity Baines



Cranes lower the church into place

the truck transporting the house sank into the limestone foundation right up to its fuel tank. Fortunately, the house movers still managed to accurately site it, and the house now looks out onto the ebb and flow of the Kaipara Harbour.

The front door also has a church origin, and I half expected to be greeted by robed monks or priests when I knocked on the door to announce my arrival. In its new location, the Baines Chapel certainly seems to add a touch



A view of the mezzanine floor in the chapel that has been beautifully converted into the Baines' family home

of serenity to the land. I wonder if it helps when they pray for ideal harvesting weather.

Before I left, I had a quick look at their block of pine nuts. It will be a few years before they fruit, but when they do, I think the Baines extended family will gobble them up. I have grown and harvested pine nuts and I can tell you they really put a zing into salads combined with local olive oil.

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