

STYLISH HOMES CAPITAL IDEAS

# HOME

WINTER 2013

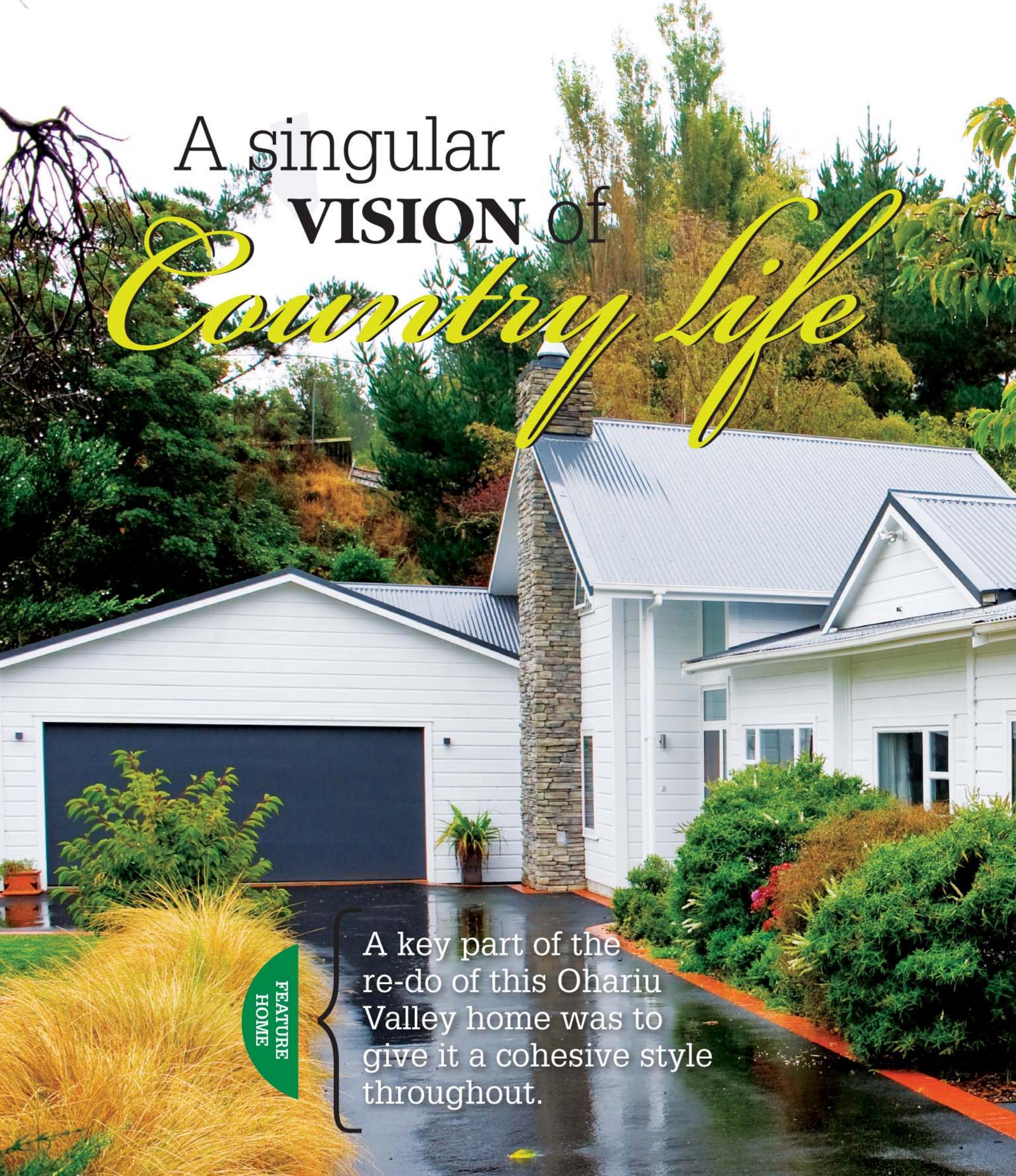
A singular vision  
in the Country



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A singular  
**VISION** of  
*Country life*

FEATURE  
HOME

A key part of the re-do of this Ohariu Valley home was to give it a cohesive style throughout.

**W**ELLINGTON communications consultant Mike Bodnar was looking for “the big picture” when he and his wife, Liz, spectacularly doubled the floor area of their Ohariu Valley home.

Originally a small 1930s cottage that was extended in different directions in the 1970s and '80s, it now measures 310 square metres – complete with an alfresco dining deck overlooking a creek and bush.

“Older houses ‘morph’ over time with various owners, so they don’t always end up a cohesive or practical design,” Mike says.

“Sometimes you need to stand back and look at the big picture. It’s been really rewarding to have a house that finally looks and ‘feels’ right.”

The former broadcaster knew the 5500sqm lifestyle property felt right as soon as he saw it for sale in 1995.

“Ohariu Valley had always appealed,” he says. “In my work as a video producer I’d used it as a rural location for shooting some corporate videos and I liked the ‘horsey’ atmosphere.

“But I never thought I’d be able to afford a place out there – all the landholdings seemed to be quite large farms, and I’m no farmer! It was a rare opportunity.”

Yet it was one he didn’t rush to exploit. Mike lived in the house for 12 years before Liz joined him four years ago.

“It was Liz who saw the potential more than me,” Mike says, “I’d adapted to the house over time whereas she saw the opportunity to adapt the property to us.”

They commissioned Michelle van Dinther, of realtyRETURNS, who had renovated Liz’s Khandallah home, to plan and project manage the improvements, including selecting the architects and contractors. ▶



**SEAMLESS:** Michelle van Dinther, of realtyRETURNS, says it was key to ensure the transition between the old and the new was invisible. Photos: JOHN NICHOLSON/FAIRFAX NZ





**BEFORE AND AFTER:** This is the new master bedroom, says Michelle van Dinther, managing director of realtyRETURNS. The windows above the bed were removed and the new French doors are on the right - effectively behind the wardrobe. Photo: REALTY RETURNS

*"...you can soak in the water while soaking in the views across the horse paddock to the south."*

What was her brief? "Essentially to make better use of some of the existing layout while creating a new lounge, kitchen and upstairs study/office," Mike says.

"We wanted the extension to be fully in sympathy with the existing building, which is clad in quite wide weatherboards.

"The idea was to make the building a uniform whole rather than the extension being a glaring add-on.

"We also wanted to incorporate at least a double garage with internal access. And we wanted it to have real 'kerb appeal' - even though there are no kerbs in the valley."

But he admits the striking, step-up bath in the family bathroom was "blatantly copied" from elsewhere in the valley.

"It means you can soak in the water while soaking in the views across the horse paddock to the south."

Liz planned the kitchen with a designer friend.

"The plans were based more on frustrations with previous kitchen layouts than any particular inspirational designs," Mike says.

"But Liz's crowning glory was to include a scullery. After dinner you can just close the door on all the dirty dishes and worry about them later."

The old kitchen is now the utility/laundry room. Photo: REALTY RETURNS





*"It results in a uniform and designed look, rather than a tacked-on afterthought."*

Anyone contemplating a year-long renovation like the Bodnars' shouldn't underestimate the impact of tradespeople being in their lives daily.

"You don't realise just how much that can impinge on your privacy," Mike says.

"But at least we had just the one point of contact for everything: Michelle. It was her job to deal with both the tradespeople and the council bureaucracy – and to make sure the budget didn't blow out."

Among her other improvements were re-roofing throughout; reconfiguring/ extending bedrooms, bathrooms and living rooms to make existing spaces more useable or to create new ones; changing the entry from the back of the dwelling

to the side; and installing a woodburner in the lounge with a two storey-high schist chimney that complements the house's rustic character.

"We designed the extension to look like it was always part of the original house," Michelle says.

"We paid particular attention to how the interior would flow to ensure the transition between the old and the new was invisible."

Concurs Mike: "If you're going to do an extension, make it sympathetic with the existing building, or take the opportunity to re-clad everything with the same material.

"It results in a uniform and designed look, rather than a tacked-on afterthought. Nobody wants to buy the house that Jack built."

