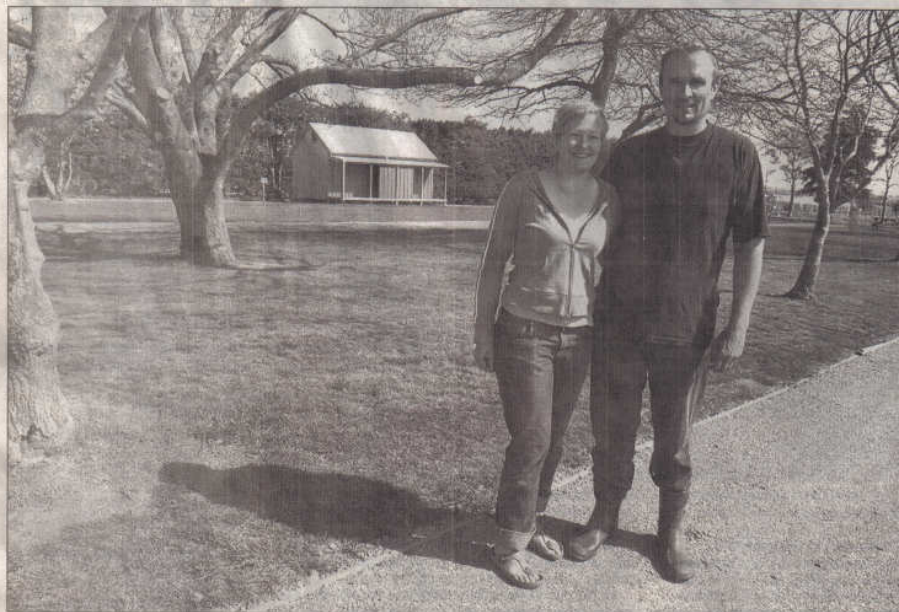




Got Martinborough news for this weekly page? Contact Ros Brown Ph (06) 370-0922, fax (06) 370-0966 or e-mail to ros.brown@age.co.nz

MARTINBOROUGH

Camping area takes on new, fresh look



FRANK AND LISA CORNELISSEN breathing new life into Martinborough's camping ground. In the background is the new bathroom amenities building.

MARTINBOROUGH'S camping ground has taken a whole new lease on life, in the capable hands of new managers Frank and Lisa Cornelissen.

The Cornelissens were granted a lease from the South Wairarapa District Council to develop and manage the camping ground which, in time for summer, will be reintroduced as Martinborough Village Camping.

Lisa and Frank are now "very settled" in Martinborough after spending seven years in London.

"We fell in love with the town while we were touring New Zealand in our camper-van and realised there was a real need for good camping facilities," Frank said.

"At the same time the council was looking for expressions of interest to take on the existing camp ground.

"It's all fallen into place and it's great news for us and for Martinborough."

They've made their plans and will be investing heavily in the site. Already the couple have made huge progress, with one of the biggest changes to the camping ground the new bathroom amenities building.

It was delivered very early one morning last month and since then they've been busy with the job of fitting it out.

Frank has finished the framing for the toilet and shower cubicles and Lisa is hard at work wood-staining the exterior.

The initial focus has been on driveways, services and landscaping, and now work on site infrastructure, services and landscaping is speeding along which has been greatly helped by a wonderfully mild and sunny Martinborough August.

The entrance to the site has been moved around the corner on to Dublin Street, to improve safety for children using the pool next door during summer.

The sewer and water connections have been finished and the site roads are now ready and waiting for their first camper-vans.

It is also time now for the plumber and electrician to shine, as their priority for the next two weeks is to connect the new power boxes and to run services to the new bathroom building.

Frank and Lisa reckon they're very fortunate to lease a campsite with a large number of established trees and the arborist has been on site for a couple of weeks tidying them up and making sure they're safe.

In addition, Frank and Lisa have planted more than 20 new trees, including olives, cabbage trees, kowhais and gums, and they're hoping they'll be well-established before the Wairarapa summer really kicks in.

As well as the existing camping ground and basic amenities block, they've leased two adjoining sections of land.

Frank said much of July was spent turning these three sections into one camping ground, a task which involved putting up 120m of new fence to complete the boundary, and also the removal of 200m of internal fence and scrub.

Frank said he and Lisa, realising their limitations, sought professional help to put in the fence posts.

But since then they've nailed on the rails themselves and 500 nails later the camping ground is now secure from

neighbouring horses and sheep.

Renovations on the facilities block are well under way, with the existing toilets and showers turned into a bathroom for the disabled and family bathroom, while the kitchen and laundry will be the new office and Internet room.

Frank said there's still a long way to go, but they've started well and are definitely on track to meet their target opening date.

That's on Friday, November 11, with 26 power and 20 tent sites ready to go, with driveways, services and landscaping reflecting the solid work put in to revamp the camp.

Since the Cornelissens took over, Martinborough will be a great camping ground to pull into.

Facilities, when finished, will include kitchen and television room, laundry facilities, dump station, Internet, bike hire and barbecue, and after a hard day of sightseeing you'll be able to sit back, relax and enjoy breathtaking views across the vines to the Tararua Ranges.

Frank and Lisa say they're "passionate about camping and want to upgrade the camping ground to meet the expectations of the increasing number of visitors to Martinborough".

Because of the extensive nature of the work involved the camping ground will have been closed to the public for at least three months.

The couple said they intend to reopen as the Martinborough Village Camping in good time for Toast Martinborough at the end of November and which is billed as the first big event of the summer.