

Home & Away

Story and Photography Marilyn Collins

The owners wanted a living space which flowed from the living room, through to the kitchen and then outside - ideal for parties, entertaining and practical modern living.



This well-designed home in the Hunter Valley is proof that if you move out of the city you don't have to forgo style.

The property's location is at The Vintage Residential Estate at Pokolbin, which has been cleverly designed to ensure that each of the home sites have generous views of the Greg Norman championship golf course, parklands and the surrounding countryside.

It was only by chance that Frank Armstrong of Belrose, on the northern side of Sydney, ventured into the Vintage Estate nine years ago, as if it was destined to be. "At the time, I was a Rotarian with Terrey Hills Rotary Club and was on a day trip with an exchange student visiting the Pokolbin vineyards," recalled Frank.

"My son-in-law, being a keen golfer, told me about the Vintage, having read about it in a golf magazine. He suggested I take a look whilst up there and when I drove in I was completely impressed.

"Driving around the estate, I discovered a corner block for sale, and went to the sales office, only to find out it was the last available block in the release at that time.

"I made an instant decision and virtually signed on the dotted line to purchase the block."

Frank, a retired RAF Fighter Pilot and Qantas Captain, and his wife Sherrie, engaged Singleton-based builders Stibbard Homes to create a home design to let the indoors flow with the outdoors and to create a modern way of living.





When you enter the home you are drawn to its simple features and modern elegance.

The kitchen is large and spacious. Looking from the kitchen through bi-fold doors in the lounge and dining room, the focus is directed to the central courtyard, which creates a space perfect for free-flowing entertaining.

A feature of the front entry, near the dining room, is a free-standing display unit which creates a dramatic effect at night when lit with down lights.

The oversized and open-plan kitchen sits between the lounge and dining areas, with views of the rear and the front garden.

Finishes are top of the range Antique White cupboards with Corian benchtops, appliance cupboard and a long and wide island bench, perfect for casual meals such as breakfast. This room has been complimented for its size and quality finishes – a truly streamlined kitchen.

The home's exterior of Polymer rendered walls and the front façade, which is contemporary in design, is offset with modern colours, chosen to reflect the bushland surroundings and including Dulux "Delta Waters" on the walls and timberwork, and Monier "Midnight" roof tiles.

The owners opted for a muted internal colour scheme, choosing from Dulux's Direction White range "Stowe White", and the effect created is relaxing and peaceful.



After all, this is the couple's escape retreat, as they still reside in their Belrose home. At least once a week, for a few days, the couple say they feel a sense of great relief as they head north on the freeway from Wahroonga.

"We just love the peace and atmosphere, and the friendly people who live in the Hunter – it's a complete way of life, so different to the life we lead in Sydney," says Sherrie.

"Living on the estate has a real community feel, as the mix of people is so diverse. We regularly meet up at the Vintage clubhouse for functions and dine at the restaurant on site."

Frank has developed a real interest in the Hunter's pure-bred horses and often the couple and visiting friends head off on a stud tour around the Hunter Valley. They are planning to regularly attend country race meets.

"Because this is our holiday home, we wanted to keep the design and floor plan simple yet workable when the family and grandchildren come to visit," explained Sherrie.

The home has three bedrooms, two downstairs serviced by the main bathroom. The bathrooms floor-to-ceiling tiled Caroma toilet suites and Antique White cabinets add character and class to the home.

A touch of luxury is under-floor heating flowing through the entire tiled floor areas in the master en suite, main bathroom and living room floors. In summer, the tiled floor surfaces are cool and easy to maintain at all times. >





The master suite is located upstairs and is completely private when entertaining. A concealed door is accessed from the living room, leading into a small foyer and up the carpeted staircase to a spacious room, which opens onto a covered balcony.

The spacious walk-in robe has full-length glass doors as well as a concealed internal door designed to safety lock away valuables. The palatial-sized bathroom has “his and hers” hand basins separated by a deep Caroma pressed-metal bath set in the hob.

Throughout the living spaces are the windows fitted with white timber shutters, which are in keeping with the natural environment and create a relaxed feeling.

Across the front exterior of the home is a timber pergola, heavily draped in grapevines and surrounded by a rambling garden designed by Jamie Drurie, mostly of Australian natives.

The courtyard affords complete privacy from the streetscape and the owners can still enjoy the views across the 16th hole.

Finishes to the property’s exterior include limestone feature stonework pillars across the terraces and a feature wall at the entrance of the home between the roller-door double garage and the smaller garage for golf buggy or storage.

Careful planning of the home’s design has allowed for this two-level home to offer an easily maintained, resort-style ambience to its owners and their extended family, as well as being a haven for their friends who love to escape to the Hunter Region.

“For the time being this will be our home-away-from-home, as I need my constant ‘grandfather fix’ seeing my grandchildren and I can’t bear to be away from them too long,” explained Frank. 