

# New life for historic old house

By VIRGINIA WINDER

A NEW PLYMOUTH couple have given a new lease of life to an historic old house.

Peter and Kirsty Icke have leased the Burgess House at The Meeting Of The Waters with the view to using it for special functions and will also open for Sunday brunch from October 9.

"We have thought for some time that there's a need in the area for a small place to do selective functions," Mr Icke said.

The pair looked around for old houses suitable for holding weddings, but they were all too expensive. So they approached the New Plymouth District Council about leasing the house, which was gifted to the city by the Burgess family in 1936.

Mr Icke said the house and property on the outskirts of New Plymouth were ideally suited to weddings. The ceremony could be held in the beautiful gardens or inside the house with the garden as a backdrop. Instead of having to shift to another venue, the reception would also be held at Burgess House.

The couple, with the help of the council, have completely refurbished the inside of the house with new carpets, paintwork and finishing touches in keeping with the age of the property. A commercial kitchen was added in the upgrade, while the premises would also be fully licenced.

Mrs Icke, who is excited about her new life in the country-like manor, has just completed eight-years as the manager of

New Plymouth Girls' High School's Scotland's hostel.

"Part of that was organising functions and conferences," she said.

Before that, she had her own catering company in Auckland. So, with her experience, coupled with her husband's culinary background the pair hoped to provide very special weddings, where the finest detail was taken care of.

Mr Icke, a fully-trained chef, learned both his cooking and waiting skills in the Royal Navy and polished them up over a 30-year period. He has worked for the Queen Mother at Holyrood Palace in Edinburgh and also spent about seven months working in a submarine.

"It would not suit anybody who even thought about being claustrophobic — it was a tin can."

Sunday brunch would also be a fine affair. "A lot of people will travel a long way to have Sunday lunch. We hope to capitalise on the surroundings, along with good food and service," Mr Icke said.

A creative menu would be complemented by hot breads and the more traditional Sunday roast, while guests at Burgess House in the afternoon would be treated to Devonshire teas on Mrs Icke's collection of fine china.

Mr Icke has also owned two successful restaurants — Pharazyn House in Lower Hutt and the Sidewalk Cafe in New Plymouth. He has just finished as head chef on the Sedco 702 drilling platform, where he



**IDYLLIC SETTING:** Kirsty and Peter Icke have new plans for Burgess House on the outskirts of New Plymouth. Photo: MAARTEN HOLL

has worked for the past 18 months.

"I don't have a lot of other interests apart from food and wine."

He spends much of his leisure time researching the culinary delights.

"There are no bounds to cooking now.

The young cooks of today are very innovative — I envy them. It's very difficult to push the old habits aside."

Alongside the Ickes, a nucleus of six casual staff would assist in both the brunch and the functions.