

What brought YOU to Wootton?

Monique, Grant and Jhet Finlay



One foggy morning as the sun cracked the sky like a giant sunny side up egg, we turned off the Lakes Way onto a dusty side road. As we wound our way up hill and down dale this bumpy road seemed to go on forever. Km's more and we finally made Wootton. Little did we know that 3 ½ years later, that same dusty, bumpy road would be a commute we would make several times a day, taking our son Jhet to the school bus on the Lakes Way.

It was in 2007, after we had both spent years working and travelling internationally in the Theatre and Entertainment Industry and having recently started a family and a new home based business that we made the life altering decision to flee "the big smoke" (Sydney). Becoming parents and starting 'blossom eco skin care' changed our priorities and we sought a tree change, somewhere from which we could run our Organic Skin Care manufacturing business, have horses, animals, a garden and importantly a house that had grass all around, where you don't hear the neighbours flush their loo. These things I was most accustomed to growing up in NZ and Grant too, having spent his teenage years in the country. Our brief for property was somewhere a commutable distance from Sydney, secluded but not isolated, undulating, lush, green, plenty of water, and close to the coast. After visiting friends who had recently moved to the Mid Nth Coast and viewing a handful of properties, nothing just right, Grant remembered somewhere he thought of as picturesque all those years ago when commuting from his family's horse stud/cattle property at Taylors Arm. That's right, a little town called Wootton! So on returning to Sydney and hopping on the internet, finding a property to view, then 3 weeks later returning to our friends' house on the coast and it is here that we go right back to the beginning and that dusty bumpy Wattley Hill Road. We loved the property; we viewed its location and could see potential in the house. 5 weeks later we took possession and left Sydney at 3pm in an 8 Tonne truck only to hit a major accident on the F3 which put us back hours. We had arranged to meet the Real Estate agent at the Mobil in Bulahdelah to get the keys, which ended up happening at 1am. He was a good sport! Finally we navigated Wootton Way in pitch black and rain to boot. We were told the next day it had rained nonstop for the preceding week. This of course meant that at

2am when we pulled up outside 176 Newmans Road it was apparent we could not get the truck into the driveway for it was too muddy. Thoughtfully we had packed the mattress in the truck last so it was easy to locate. Unfortunately not so the light switch after we entered the house. It took us about 10mins to get the lights on, all the while hearing loud drip, drip, splosh noises. Upon the light switch being located we realized that our house was not water tight, that is to say the roof leaked like a sieve! Grant exclaimed that our tent we lived in while working on the American "Survivor" series was imminently more weather proof than the apparent sieve we had just purchased. Back to the truck to find a box marked 'kitchen' and pots and bowls to place around. Not bad for a house previously owned by a roofing plumber!

Anyway the last 4 years at 'blossom valley farm' have been a joy by comparison to our initial arrival in Wootton at 2am on that dark wet night. We have spent this time building our blossom eco skin care business, converting the 'sleep out' into a slick manufacturing space, attending many local and not so local markets, exhibiting at Expos, running our online store, wholesaling our products and most recently and finally, beginning restoration work on our house. We have recently purchased a couple of brood mares from which we are breeding Warmblood horses, using the fabulous stallion BB Flemmington from Bonnie Brae Stud, by the way, also on Newmans Road. All going well early next year we will have our first foal on the ground. Jhet of course is loving being in the country, having animals around, space to run and especially as he puts it 'the getting muddy bit'!!

Written by Monique Finlay

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