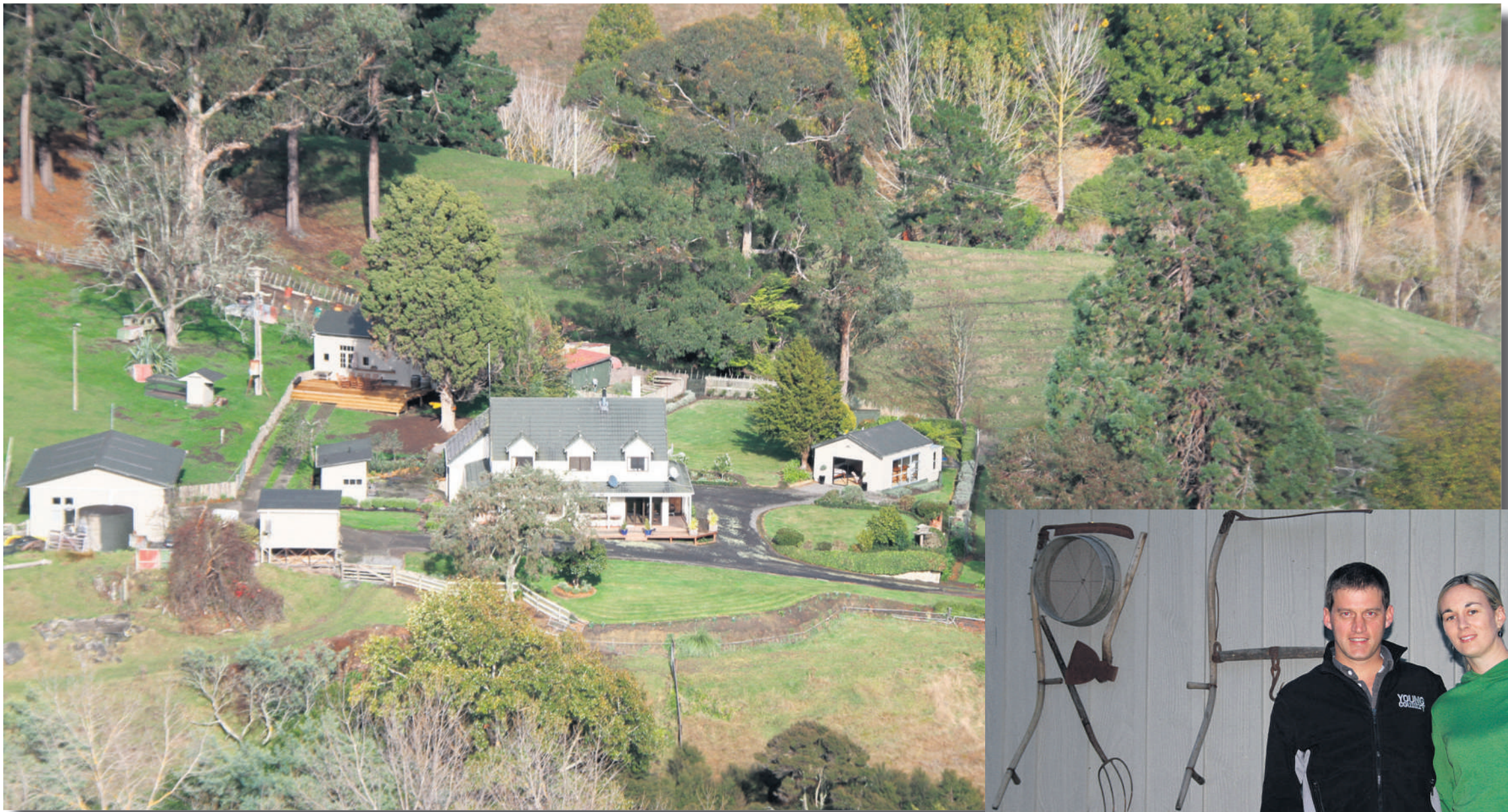


on the land



Country Playground



The Stewart family farm "Tyrone" has been transformed and opened to the world.

Photos: Supplied

Andrew and Kylie Stewart thought outside the square and Rangitikei farmstay was born.

By IAIN HYNDMAN
iain.hyndman@gmail.com

A fourth generation Rangitikei farming couple have opened a childhood playground to the world.

"Tyrone" has been in Andrew Stewart's family since 1901 when his great grandparents Hugh and Caroline Stewart bought 400 acres. His grandparents Harry and Betty Stewart farmed the block between 1938 and 1964 when his parents Hugh and Diana took over. Today Tyrone is a 1680-acre block of mainly hill country just beyond the Marton reservoir.

Andrew took the reins in 2003 and had a rocky run beginning with a drought that first year, followed by a 100-year flood in 2004.

However, after marrying wife Kylie in 2006 the couple began thinking outside the square.

Andrew and Kylie decided to diversify and leased out the main farm to another farming entity and launched Rangitikei Farmstay in 2008 after much market research.

The project began in December 2008 and the first guests arrived in February 2009.

They turned farm sheds into chalets and the

hayshed in a bunkhouse and farm museum. Today the bunkhouse sleeps nine people in two rooms and has a large party area that includes a pool table, projector and bar. An extensive deck outside simply adds to the party-style atmosphere. The car shed, which had earlier been lined

guests during summer.

"When the family farmed Tyrone it carried up to 7000 sheep and cattle stock units, but Kylie and I decided to lease it out for three years," Andrew recalls.

"A chance comment a few years back got us

"We have quite a few Samba deer roaming Tyrone giving the international hunters the chance to bag a big animal."

and turned into a home gymnasium, was also converted into a chalet, although that is still a work in progress.

An in-ground swimming pool has also been added and provides an ideal retreat for family and

thinking about establishing a farmstay. Someone had mentioned how few people today had ever been on a farm let alone patted a sheep. Since opening Rangitikei Farmstay we have been quite busy with numerous groups visiting. We cater

for a lot of hunting parties, including North Americans who generally arrive with professional guides who have access to quite a number of hunting blocks in the North Island.

"We have quite a few Samba deer roaming Tyrone giving the international hunters the chance to bag a big animal."

Both Andrew and Kylie work full time jobs while running Rangitikei Farmstay.

"Kylie teaches at Wanganui Girls College and I am the editor of Young Country, a farming magazine. We have had visits from students from Kylie's school and they loved it. We've hosted fundraising events for the local tennis club and the Wanganui Girls College Year 12 sport and recreation tennis camp," Andrew said.

While these events had been hosted during the warmer summer months, Andrew reckons winter hasn't been too unkind.

"You would think we'd taper off during winter but we actually been reasonably busy – mainly with the hunting parties. We just hope it continues. It's great to see the faces of people who never been on a farm when they get the chance to pat the animals," Andrew said.

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