

ROSEBANK: CABBAGES, HORSES AND SCIENCE

**a short film on 3 Rosebank
stories**

**Photography by Neville Exler
and Faye Norman
Produced by Paul Woodruffe**



In 1993, Neville Exler filmed on his Sony Handicam, the three Connell brothers on site at their market garden on Rosebank Road. This film was made just as these men, the last farmers on Rosebank Road were negotiating the sale of their farmland for development, and so ending the last chapter of Rosebank Road as the fruit and vegetable basket of Auckland. In 2012 this video was given to our research collective to convert to digital format.

This prompted the collective to document two other examples of the Rosebank Peninsula's remaining past that we had uncovered by using film. We decided to use the video capability of a digital SLR stills camera as the subjects were reluctant to be filmed, but were happy with a familiar small format camera. As Koha for the stories, they were given still images taken of themselves, their properties and their family members during the interview process; this was a necessary process and a successful outcome for all.

The first subject was of Vince Middeldorp, a lecturer at AUT and a successful breeder of racehorses. Vince lives in a small unit connected to his Neville Price Architects designed stables in a street just off Rosebank Road. These stables sit within fenced paddocks sufficient in size for the horses, and situated behind his main residence, which remains vacant so he can be close to his beloved horses. He has an [extensive video archive](#) of the races his horses have competed in; these are uploaded onto [YouTube](#) so they may be archived for posterity and viewed by a wide audience

.

In 2012 and 2013, Faye Norman our collective's photographer, filmed her conversations with Vince on his property and accompanied him during his daily early morning walks with his current racing horse through the surrounding streets and parks of Rosebank. Vince talks about his serendipitous fortune with his most successful horse, and reflects on his status as the last horse trainer in Avondale.

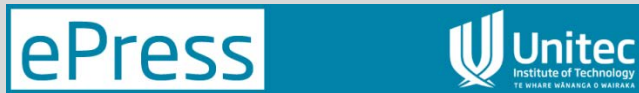
The second was Robyn Brehmer, the daughter of a Kurt Brehmer, a German refugee from the Nazis, who after wartime internment purchased the last surviving acres of Haywood-Wright's scientific garden. This property still contains Haywood-Wright's barns, workers house, large specimen trees and orchard, it also contains what is thought to be one of the first cultivars of the modern Kiwifruit variety he pioneered. The Brehmer property covers a large area of both gardens and productive land that is hidden down a long driveway and lined with old Kentia Palms, the view from the road gives no indication of the delight that awaits a visitor to the property. This is the last remaining example of what Rosebank looked like before the encroachment of industry, it is a window into the rural past in terms of landscape values and land use.

After filming Vince, harvesting hay from what is now the remains of the Connell brothers market gardens, with his horses in the stables complex and his daily walks; and then filming Robyn with her magical gardens, preserved pieces of scientific and heritage landscape and buildings, we edited down all the film to twenty minutes, weaving this together with Neville's video of the Connell brothers. We noted that these stories did in fact weave together across time and place, and so should be shown this way. It is a series of conversations and small vignettes that are witness to what once was in Avondale, and what lays hidden down long driveways and tall hedges in an area where first impressions are deceiving.

This work would not have been possible without the use of small portable devices that enabled the subjects to relax and talk freely. These shy and private people permitted us to film them in their landscape, as we were seen as curious, and lovers of stories wanting to preserve what will soon pass, and were not seen as wanting to broadcast their images and words to as wider group as possible, nor wanting to profit from them.

The film footage of Vince and Robyn contains minimal talking, moving image was used to articulate the experience of sharing their passions and how they lived. While Neville's footage of the Connell brothers is full of lively banter, these two styles sit well with each other, as the Connell brothers tell stories now firmly rooted in the past and describe the social and practical aspects of life in mid-century Rosebank farmland, Vince and Robyn's experience is contemporary, seeking to reconcile the slow pace of the rural past with the urban pressures now being felt by these two people.

Published in 2014 by Unitec ePress



ISBN - 978-1-927214-14-5



Rosebank: Cabbages, Horses and science by Paul Woodruffe is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/).

