

MeetingNewz - May/June 2008

by Kathy Ombler

A major point of appeal for conferencing in Nelson is the close proximity to the city of rural venues, wineries and art studios. The Mudcastle, for example, with its intimate, unusual function space and spacious grounds, is in Upper Moutere, just 30 minute's drive from Nelson.

There is no shortage of creativity at the Mudcastle. The turrets, walls and rooms have been crafted from some 22,000 mud bricks by owners Kevin and Glenys Johnston, who recently sold corporate theming company, Creative Occasions.

"Day conferences, partner lunches, evening functions and dinners - we have the skills and the venue to do any kind of thing out here, and we have a huge range of props that we have been gathering for years for corporate theming," says Glenys.

"Medieval banquets are popular and in keeping with the property, plus we can do Faulty Towers, Rocky Horror or John Travolta dance nights on our portable, illuminated dance floor. Murder mystery nights are our perennial; many companies want to do something that's not too taxing yet don't completely switch off everyone's brainpower. Because it's an exclusive venue people are more likely to be happy dressing up because no-one else is going to see them.

"We can cater for 100 for functions and accommodation suites at the Mudcastle can be used for hosting guest speakers or key organizers.

For partner lunches, the Johnstons have created a local, Moutere tour that incorporates visits to Neudorf Dairy (to watch sheep milking and cheese making), Katie Gold's clay art studio, Redwood cellars (ciders and liquers), a knife maker's studio and a guided visit to Moutere's historic Lutheran Church.