

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 29, 2011

your weekend

A TALE OF TWO BACHES

A Hamilton couple's move to the Mount

 **Waikato Times**

Denise Irvine meets a couple who dared to flout the plaster monster norm when designing their Mount home.

FREE SPIRIT



Mark Winter and Heather Coyne wanted to do something that was sympathetic to the site and to the black bach.



A stylish wood fire imported from France heats the house.

The first weekend that Hamilton couple Heather Coyne and Mark Winter owned the black bach on Mt Maunganui's Marine Pde, their friends offered helpful advice about what should be done to it.

Some wanted to immediately knock out the fireplace that obscured prime sea views, the idea being – as Mark describes it – that they should “stick in a ranchslider and put on a deck” to take further advantage of the waterfront position.

It was almost assumed that Heather and Mark would bowl the bach and build something grander, as has happened all along the Mount's golden slice of real estate where modest cottages have been replaced by million-dollar plaster and glass palaces.

Heather and Mark already owned an apartment in the Mount's “Twin Towers” and friends also said: “Heather won't stay there” when they viewed the more rudimentary bach.

This was 2½ years ago, Heather stayed there and loved it, and against all predictions the 1920s black creosoted timber dwelling remains in its original spot, with fireplace intact and no whiff of a ranchslider or deck. The magnificent pohutukawa growing beside the bach is still there, too, despite suggestions that it would impede further development.

Heather and Mark waited for a bit, getting a feel for their new property before deciding what to do next. “We



didn't want to pull it down,” Heather says. “We wanted to do something sympathetic to the bach and the site.”

In fact, it provided inspiration for the new place. When they built, they simply stepped back and put a single-storey bach towards the rear of the section, maintaining a close relationship with the old cottage. Heather jokes that the family have named the two dwellings “the uber-bach” and “the shack”.

She and Mark like their new beach place so much they moved from Hamilton to live there permanently.

So this is a tale of two baches, old and modern, and a “what happened next” to a story I wrote six years ago about the

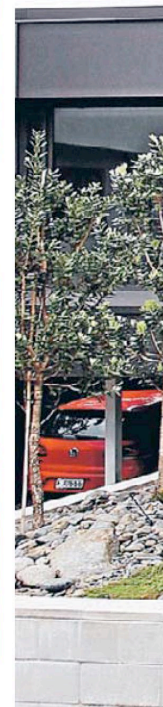
The living room of the old bach is like a cabin on a sailing ship: it faces the ocean. Mark and Heather use it as their office.

Photos: BRUCE MERCER

landmark black bach at No 73 Marine Pde, then owned by the Gascoigne family, originally from Roto-o-rangi, near Cambridge.

Margaret and Alwyn Gascoigne bought the property in the early '60s. They had been renting places at the Mount for holidays and one year Margaret spotted the black bach for sale. She fell in love with it; it was purchased from the estate of a Mrs Murray for £4000 and the Gascoigne family enjoyed it for more than four decades.

The cottage sits on a grassy knoll with fine views to the Pacific Ocean and Rabbit Island. The cosy living room is the star of the show, nicely proportioned,





The rectangular "uber-bach" opens to a generous deck with cantilevered awning.



almost reminiscent of the cabin of a sailing ship. Low-slung windows frame the sea views, the walls are lined with dark-stained native timber and the battened decorative fibrous plaster ceiling follows the pitch of the roof to create a feeling of space. Two small bedrooms open off this room. One has an adjoining bathroom but the toilet is out the back, off the washhouse.

It is the quintessential "black and white Kiwi bach", a highly endangered species, particularly at the Mount where high-rise buildings and many half-cocked makeovers have replaced the earlier baches.

That's not to romanticise the old

The old bach, front, with the new bach nestled at the back of the section.

places because they could be cold, draughty and hugely lacking in mod-cons. But holidays were always about roughing it a bit, and the baches slipped into the landscape in an understatement that said "this is New Zealand" rather than "this is Sante Fe, Tuscany or the Gold Coast".

The Gascoigne family treasured their cottage and it became the keeper of happy memories of halcyon summer days. It accommodated the peak season crowds, with the overflow sleeping in tents on the back lawn. Untold meals were cooked for untold numbers in the tiny oven, and Margaret's home baking was legendary.

After Alwyn and Margaret died, their children owned it for many years, and it was eventually sold to Heather and Mark.

On a sunny Mt Maunganui Wednesday, the "uber-bach" is wide open to the elements, an 8.2m tract of sliding glass doors allowing the living room to flow seamlessly with a large wooden deck protected by a cantilevered awning.

Hamilton architect Evan Mayo, who designed the house, describes the effect of this opening to being like camping "where you lift the side of the tent up, the big flap, and everything is out there".

There are views through the pohutukawa to the sea, and despite the ravages from the grounded container ship Rena, the coast looks pristine.

Heather and Mark wake to the sight of the pohutukawa and the ocean, and they couldn't be happier. Their master bedroom opens off the living room in the style of the baches of old, where no extra space was allocated to corridors or grand entrances; their bathroom and wardrobe are tucked into the rear of the room.

Heather takes a tour of the main part of the uber-bach almost with a wave of the hand. It is a case of "what you see is what you get", an airy, compact rectangular space encompassing kitchen, dining and living area, then the off-shoot bedroom. ▷

There is a relaxed feel to this main area. The floor is American oak, the kitchen cabinetry, ceiling and acoustic panels are in honey-coloured hoop pine ply, the furnishings are crisp and simple, and a sleek wood fire heats the entire space in winter. The place is well insulated, the windows have double glazing and it is beautifully warm.

The 135sqm house is a long rectangle, and some reshaping of the section allowed it to sit where it would gain more natural light and enhanced views of the sea. It is a board and batten construction, painted black like "the shack", there is no front entrance, and all activities are connected to the outdoors.

Says Heather: "We didn't want plaster and glass. As much as possible we wanted it to be like a one-bedroomed bach, like the baches of old. We didn't need a big place either."

But with three adult children and three grandchildren, Heather and Mark certainly wanted extra accommodation. And this is where the really clever thing comes in. A mirror rectangular space behind the living room and master-bedroom has three extra sleeping areas, snug little bach-style bedrooms with wooden crates as bedside tables, and built-in spaces to hang clothes and park a suitcase.

These rooms are like a well kept secret because there is no sense of them when you step into the front part of the rectangle. There is a sense of it being a bit like the bach bunkrooms and overflow arrangements of old, albeit in a highly contemporary context.

Two of the rooms have Japanese-style shutters opening to an airy corridor with a stylish elongated skylight. Hoop pine ply and American oak flooring have been used throughout. Utilities such as a bathroom and laundry have been placed so they don't intrude on the flow of this area.

Heather worked closely on the design with Evan Mayo, of Architecture Bureau Ltd. Evan had designed the refurbishment of Heather and Mark's Hamilton home, and they had collaborated well on that.

Mark jokes that Heather and Evan are both strong-minded people. "It was interesting to watch from the sidelines." He reckons he was allowed to choose the shower.

Evan is modestly proud of the project, which has clearly met Heather and Mark's brief for a relaxed, holiday-like design reminiscent of the laid-back spirit and character of the old cottage.

The project caught the eye of judges for the New Zealand Institute of Architects Waikato-Bay of Plenty Architecture Awards, taking an award this week for Residential Architecture (Houses).

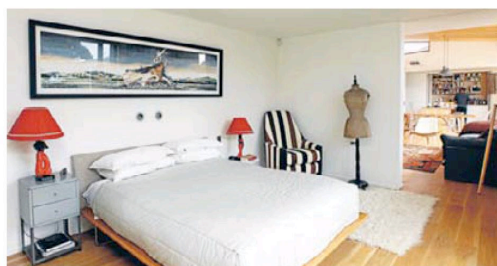
The judges said: "It is wonderful to see an iconic bach sitting uncrowded by the roadside complete with pohutukawa and a modest new building sited respectfully at the rear.



Mark and Heather's friends suggested they knock out the fireplace that keeps the bach cosy in winter.



One of the compact bedrooms at the rear of the house.



"No monster straining at the planning corset, this holiday home successfully combines recessive exterior colouring with a warm, timbered interior and light neutral walls. The central living pavilion opens to a generous deck, with a well-proportioned, cantilevered awning and an ocean prospect through the pohutukawa."

Heather and Mark spent their first Christmas at the uber-bach last year. It won their hearts.

"We loved it so much we decided to move here," Heather says.

They both work in commercial property syndication, and modern technology means they can run things just as well from the Mount as the Waikato. They decided to downsize from their Hamilton Pde home, and move permanently to the coast.

So "the shack" has become "the

office" and on the day of our visit Mark is working at the computer, casually clad in jeans, jandals and light sweatshirt.

There are million-dollar views and comfy couches to relax in the sunshine if he needs to. Mark says he sometimes gets dressed up in a decent pair of trousers, but mostly he's in beach mode. Heather adds that she donated her business clothes to Waikato Hospice's Va Va Voom Boutique in River Rd before she left the city.

As well as being the office, the little bach takes an overflow of guests, and it is used as a retreat from the comings and goings of the main house. There is an extra television here as well.

Because it is well known as a Mount landmark, Heather and Mark mention there was a lot of interest from passers-by when they began building at the rear of the site. One New Year's Eve, a man turned up on the doorstep of the black bach with a story about how he'd stayed there in the past, and ended up in an emergency.

Mark says their visitor described how he'd been asleep in a bedroom when the ceiling caved in on him. Apparently sand had blown in under the roof (there were no flashings) and had built up in the ceiling . . . which could no longer hold the weight. In the bedroom in question, the ceiling panels have obviously been replaced, pointing to the veracity of the story.

The elements have taken their toll on the black bach in more ways than one, and Mark is replacing rotting weatherboards. It will eventually need greater maintenance and refurbishment and when that time comes Heather and Mark will think carefully about what to do next.

Right now, they enjoy the best of both worlds, their two places linked by skilful landscaping, the new bach looking at the old. "The relationship between the two is great," Heather says.

Ask what she likes best about her new home, she stands on the deck, makes a wide gesture and replies: "Just this."



The kitchen is crisp and light, with simple lines.