

The Summer Issue.

HOME NZ

easy
living

NEW ZEALAND'S
BEST BACHES

WINE + DESIGN
IN MARLBOROUGH

CLEVER NEW
KITCHEN IDEAS

CELEBRATING
75
YEARS

acp magazines DEC 2011/JAN 2012
\$10.00 inc GST
12
9 414576 001520

A simple garden pavilion on Great Barrier Island delivers every summer comfort.

Jeremy Hansen / TEXT

Jackie Meiring / PHOTOGRAPHY

the bare
essentials





The versatile structure allows the western side to be raised up to reveal views of the wetlands, and sliding panels at either end let the breezes flow through.





Technically, a garden folly is a structure of extravagant impracticality. Architects Lance and Nicola Herbst know this, but have nonetheless elected to apply the term to the very practical outdoor room on these pages that they designed for Andi and Jason Ross and their girls India (15) and Trinity (11) at Medlands Beach on Great Barrier Island. That's because the word 'folly' seems an apt encapsulation of the lightness they felt in designing the dreamy structure. "We call it a folly because it was such an undemanding brief," Nicola says. "Andi and Jason didn't have much money and just said, 'Please make it beautiful'. You aren't arguing the toss about the details, just the poetic notion of putting it all together." Adds Lance: "Projects like this are pure fun."

The folly is a little secret concealed down a slope overlooking the wetlands behind Andi and Jason's basic 1970s bach. The couple had owned the bach for a little over a decade and, with the girls getting older, were becoming aware of its limitations. The girls' bedroom, a mezzanine over the living area, made sleep difficult for them when Andi and Jason had friends over (an active social life is part and parcel of summers at Medlands Beach). Cabin fever came quickly when the family was cooped up inside on rainy days. And although the bach has a small veranda with a sliver of sea view, the couple wanted a better space for socialising. "We had my dad's birthday on the front deck with about 25 people over and someone said, 'It's like having a party in a carpark', so I thought we had to do something," Andi says. That said, the couple didn't want to renovate. "We wanted to keep the integrity of the old bach," Andi says. "We wanted a simple space that could be opened up on great days."

Andi and Jason already knew Lance and Nicola, whose own bach is a little further down Medlands Beach, so they approached them with the idea of designing a building like a boma (the African equivalent of a fale), a rudimentary shelter constructed from readily available materials. And so the architects embarked on a process that was simultaneously limited and luxurious. Local regulations allowed a maximum of 15 square metres in floor area and the site, down the hill and away from any

“We wanted a simple space that could be opened up on great days.”

The building's polycarbonate panels have a rigging system adapted from yachts which allows the panels to be raised or closed depending on the weather conditions.



sea view, didn't seem promising. But there was more than adequate compensation in the pleasure of designing pure space, free from the complications of bedrooms and kitchens, water supplies and electricity. Every house on Great Barrier Island is off the grid, but the folly takes the island's pared-back philosophy to a fundamental level, providing no more than shelter and a fire to cook on.

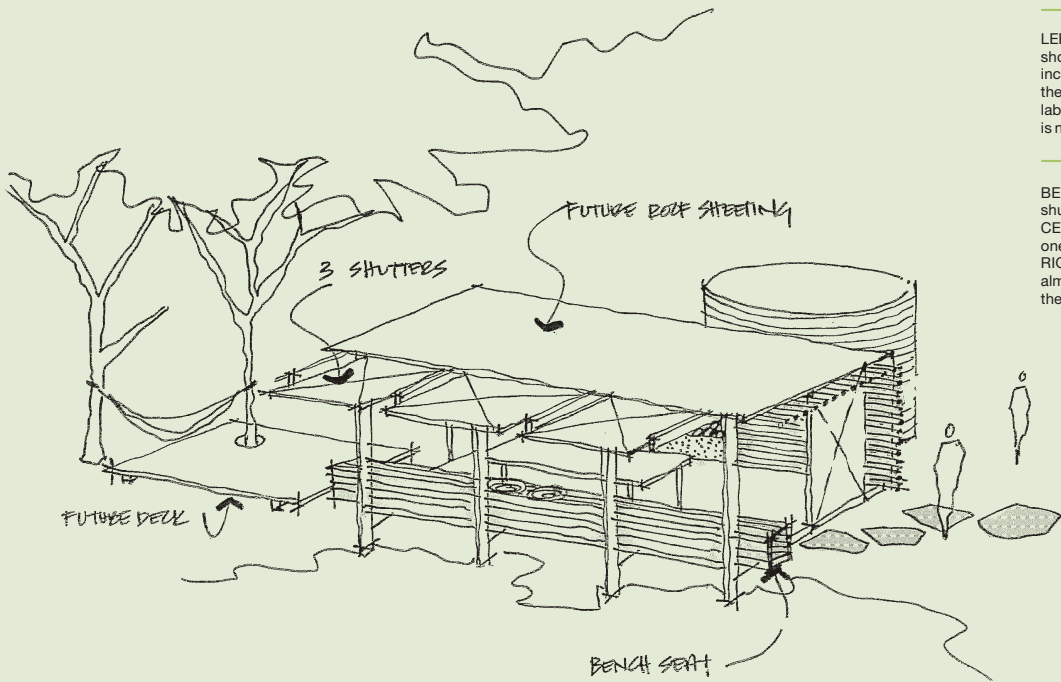
The building may be basic, but it is full of thoughtful details that allow it to be adapted, yacht-like, to the weather. On its roof and eastern wall, its pine frame is wrapped with manuka sticks that filter the sunlight, and topped with a layer of corrugated polycarbonate sheets that keep out the rain. The northern and southern walls feature Cedartech panels (band-sawn gaboon pressed onto radiata ply) that can be slid open or kept closed depending on wind direction. On the western side, three opaque polycarbonate panels are kitted out with sail rigging that allows them to be lifted to open up views of the wetland. Closed down in bad weather, they shift the focus of the view eastwards through the gap in the wall to the fire outside. There are long benches and a wooden table, and the structure's framework doubles as shelving. Andi and Jason, both keen cooks, burn wood in a large wok atop a steel plate that straddles a gabion wall designed by Lance and Nicola; they cook on a grill placed over the embers. At night, illumination comes courtesy of little solar-powered lights, while music is

played on a battery-powered stereo. The couple estimate the whole setup, constructed by builder Johnny Scott, cost about \$40,000.

Andi and Jason are Australian, both working as art directors at advertising agencies in Melbourne. They purchased the bach while they were living in Auckland for five years – “I harangued my husband into buying it,” Andi says – but kept it after their move across the ditch and still holiday there every summer. “We go there to totally relax and decompress,” Andi says. “New Zealanders do it the best – when they switch off, they switch off. They really appreciate what’s around them and their environment. The girls go surfcasting by themselves and bring back fish from the beach. It’s nice to be able to go back to the basic stuff, and that building does it for us. We sit there and connect as a family.” **📍**

ABOVE Manuka sticks sit under a layer of polycarbonate sheets on the roof and eastern walls. RIGHT Andi and Jason burn wood in a wok that sits on a steel plate above a gabion wall, and cook food by placing a grille over the embers.





LEFT A sketch by the architects shows how a deck could be incorporated into the design in the future. The roof sheeting labelled 'future' in this drawing is now in place.

BELOW LEFT One of the three shutters that can be raised. CENTRE Looking in through one of the sliding end panels. RIGHT The structure can be almost entirely open to make the most of summer.

DESIGN NOTEBOOK

*Q&A with architects
Lance and Nicola Herbst*

This outdoor room on Great Barrier Island was an exercise in creating pure space for this husband-and-wife architectural team.

What kind of brief did your clients give you for this space? LANCE It was the idea of a rudimentary shelter with fire and good times. They realised they wanted to do something really lovely, and the only way to do that would be to make something independent of their old bach and let us have a go in a space somewhere on their property. Before this, there was just a messy back yard. NICOLA Having it on the back of the site means they use the wetlands behind them as an experience. The room almost turns its

back on the beach. It's a pure, light space that everyone hangs out in all the time.

Did you enjoy being freed up from the usual logistical constraints of providing water, power and so on? NICOLA [We really enjoyed] the idea of making a little shelter just for the joy of it. It was an absolute pleasure. You aren't arguing the toss about the details, just the poetic notion of putting it all together. LANCE For instant fun, you just need to add people.

