

**(THIS PAGE)** This Great Barrier Island bach, designed by Herbst Architects, features an abundance of timber, a material at home in the unspoiled surroundings. The bach's south deck is the place for afternoon sun. The decking balustrade is galvanised steel mesh.

**(FACING PAGE)** Inside, a wall of diseased totara adds a textural element.



# ISLANDLIFE

THE RELAXED APPEAL OF TIMBER IS AN INHERENT CHARACTERISTIC OF THIS BACH THAT TAKES ITS CUE FROM AN ORIGINAL DWELLING ON THE SITE

TEXT by Penny Lewis PHOTOGRAPHY by Jackie Meiring







Campfire cooking, BYO water and a soft sand road were part of Greg and Mandy Liggins' Great Barrier Island experiences for many a holiday. The Auckland couple first started coming to the Barrier more than 20 years ago, staying in a simple 3.6m x 7.2m box-like bach on their section. Over the years the Liggins have planted about 300 trees, revelling in the back-to-basics existence.

With the arrival of children, Samuel (seven) and Jimmy (four), labour-intensive cooking and a lack of sheltered space meant the rustic little bach wasn't so practical for family holidays. The Liggins turned to their friends, Lance and Nicola Herbst of Herbst Architects, to design a dwelling more in line with the family's needs.

Even though the original dwelling wasn't workable any longer, there was much about the humble structure that Greg and Mandy sought to emulate in their new holiday home. They continued to use the old bach as a living space when a new timber "sleeping tower", containing a children's bedroom downstairs and the master sleeping space upstairs, was built alongside.

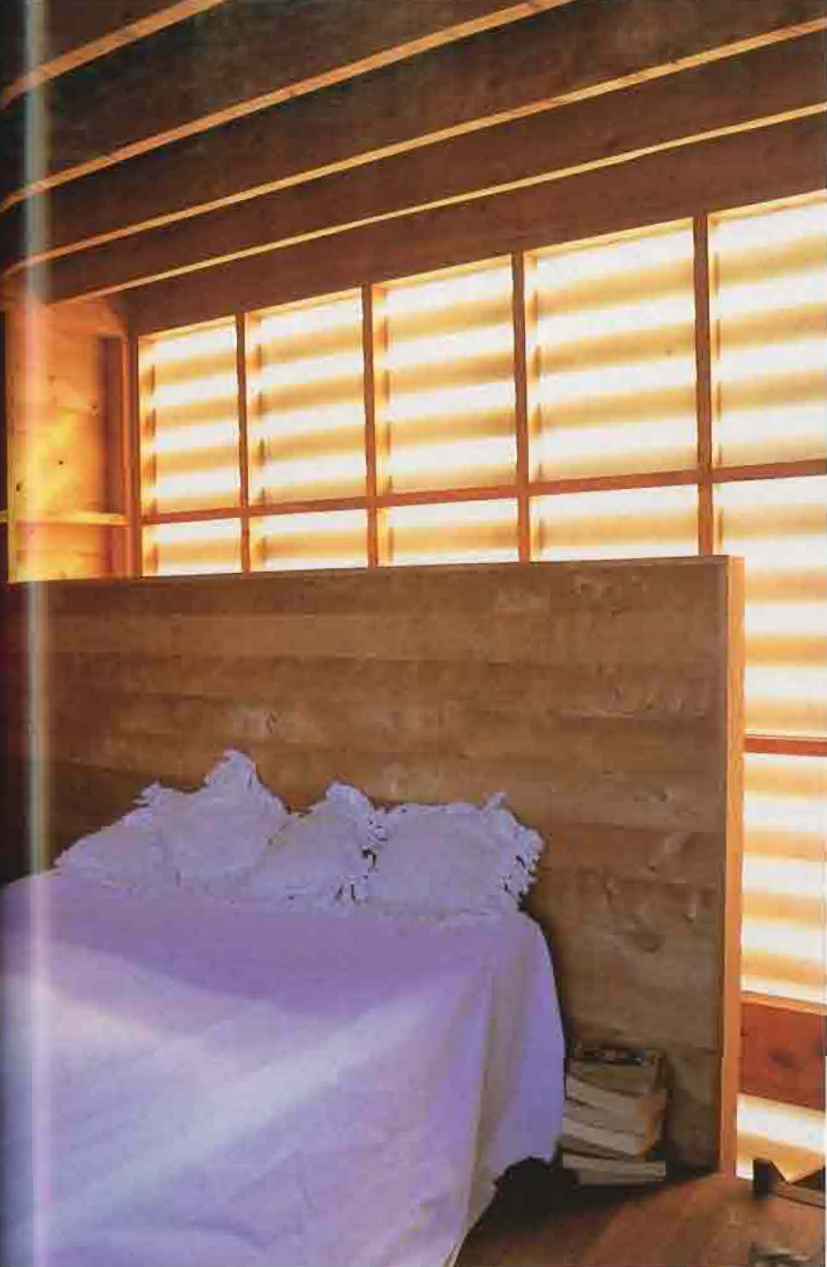
The second stage involved constructing the new living zone in late

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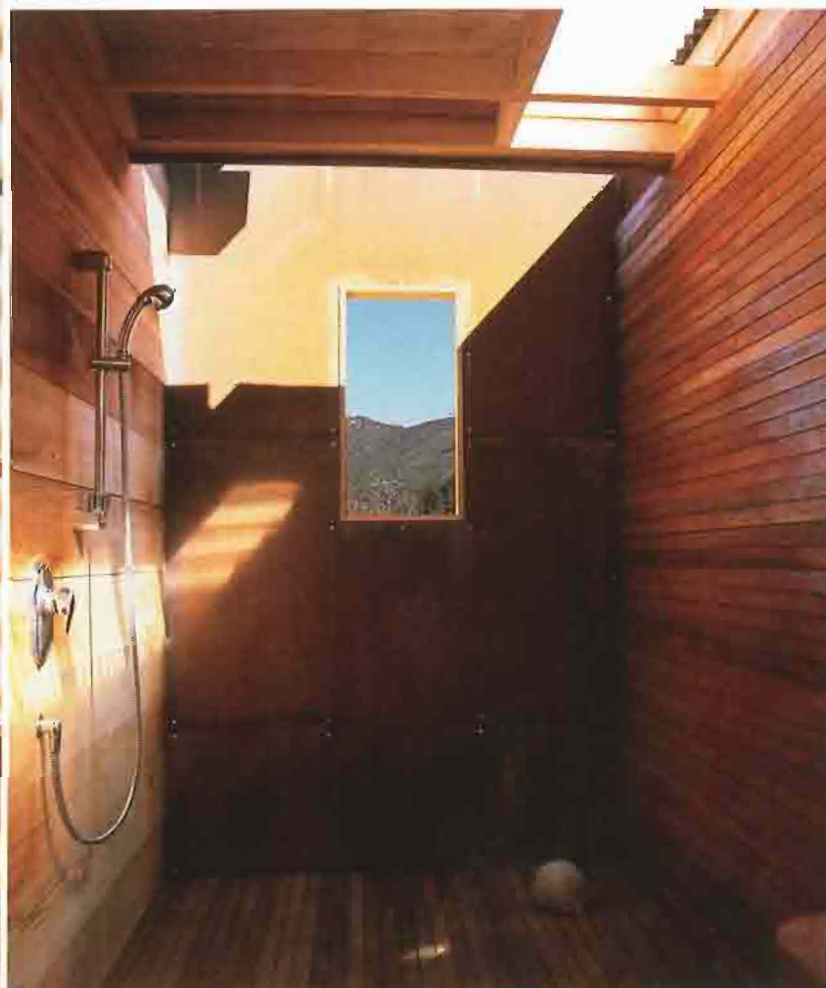
## DESIGN NOTES

■ Diseased totara, kauri, cedar and macrocarpa reign supreme in the Liggins bach, but other materials include Corten, a hot-rolled steel used to encase the fireplace and bathroom (see facing page). Corten, with New Zealand Steel's specification name of HW250, is more corrosion-resistant than normal mild steel, but it is designed to weather and rust in effect, without undermining its structural integrity.



**[FACING PAGE]** The kauri units in the kitchen have an unfitted, furniture-like look. A 7.7kg snapper, which graces the wall, is evidence of the island's superb fishing.

**[THIS PAGE]** Soft light floods through translucent corrugated sheeting into the master bedroom. The bathroom is designed as an all-wet area. Waste water collects in a drip tray under the timber floor.



**"WHEN YOU SPEND SO MUCH TIME ON THE DECK IN THE SUMMER, IT MAKES SENSE FOR THE DECK TO BE YOUR HOUSE"**

2000. The old box was moved to the back of the garden, while the new wing, complete with a third bedroom, kitchen and bathroom, was built to envelop the footprint of its predecessor.

Greg admits to being "a bit of a wood freak" and wanted to replicate the soothing qualities of the original bach's timber in the new design. "I love the positive feeling of wood. In the old bach, even though it was a simple box, you'd walk in and feel instantly relaxed," he says.

Lance and Nicola's design for the new-and-improved Liggins bach centred on a timber pavilion, linked to the sleeping tower by a deck only. Anyone crossing between the two effectively steps outside and is among the elements. The Herbsts' focus was on two separate forms, rather than one large one, to respect the traditional small scale of buildings on the island. Not that the tower shys away from making a statement. "The tower's siting and vertical nature are an intrusion on the landscape, deliberately setting up a dialogue with its surroundings," Nicola says.

While the master bedroom at the top of the tower looks out to a view of the beach over a sand dune, the living pavilion hunkers down at ground level. This creates a seamless connection between indoors and a grassed area, providing privacy for the family from a path and road that pass the property. The section falls away steeply across the width of the house, so its south face reveals a lower level contained within a concrete-block perimeter wall. Here, there's room for a garage, utilities,

a large water tank and plenty of storage space.

The structure of the living pavilion is a series of kwha portal frames, connecting with purlins to support a mono-pitch roof. Untreated cedar cladding will weather and blend into the environment. "In a way it's like time etching itself into the materials," Nicola says.

The main body of the home functions as a covered deck. "When you spend so much time on the deck in summer, it makes sense for the deck to be your house," Lance says. The entire northern face can be opened up to bring the outside in. An outer layer features three cedar-slat shutters, which slide to one side and can be stacked on top of each other.

Moving inside, cedar-framed glass sliders 1.5m behind the shutters provide another layer of defence. In summer, the sliders are usually stacked away in a cavity, while one of the shutters may be pulled over, giving a sense of enclosure.

Inside, the southern wall is made from diseased totara. Greg had spied the wood in a demolition yard and kept it in storage for a number of years before the bach was built. Virtually all of the interior is crafted from timber – a job ably performed by builder Tony Simpson, of Ocean & Earth Builders. "It wasn't as if he could just finish up and leave the rest of the job to the Gib-stoppers, as there is no plasterboard in the house," Greg says.

Besides the diseased totara wall, other internal walls are macrocarpa,



**[THIS PAGE]** Sliding cedar shutters on both the living pavilion and bedroom tower allow privacy and a sense of enclosure. Solar panels and a rooftop deck are hidden behind the tower's parapet.



## THE BATHROOM, DESIGNED AS A WET AREA, IS OPEN TO THE SKY AT ONE END; A WINDOW PROVIDES A VIEW OF THE GARDEN.

the deck/flooring was built from kwila and the ceiling and exterior cladding is cedar. Auckland-based Gloucester Park Joinery built the kitchen units from rimu. A fireplace surround, made from local schist, acts as a visual anchor. Externally, the fireplace is encased by Corten, a hot-rolled steel product designed to oxidise and display the rich colours of rust, but not deteriorate. The same material is used to enclose the bathroom at the other end of the house. The bathroom, designed as a completely wet area, is open to the sky at one end, while corrugated translucent sheeting forms part of the ceiling, admitting natural light into the room. A window provides a view of the garden outside.

Translucent fibre sheeting appears on one flank of the bedroom tower; underneath timber lattice cladding. In addition to the tower's windows, the translucent sheeting admits soft, natural light during the day, while at night it glows like a lantern, emitting candlelight from inside.

The articulation of the sleeping tower's interior walls is reminiscent of New Zealand's most modest, unlined buildings. Except, of course, these days it takes more to create something that looks so simple. Macrocarpa framing is layered on top of macrocarpa tongue-and-groove, which conceals building paper. Moving from the building paper to the exterior face, plywood is covered by vertical timber battens, and finally, horizontal cedar slats. This style suits the Liggins just fine. After all, the language of their traditional Barrier holidays hasn't changed – it's just that the vocabulary got bigger.

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