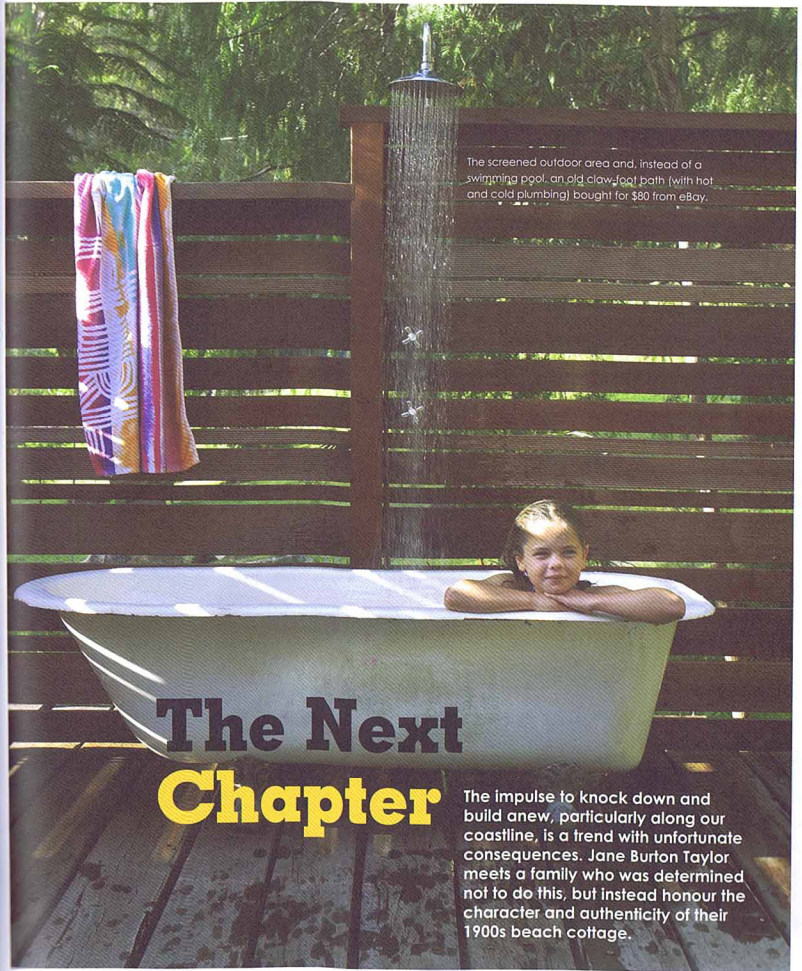
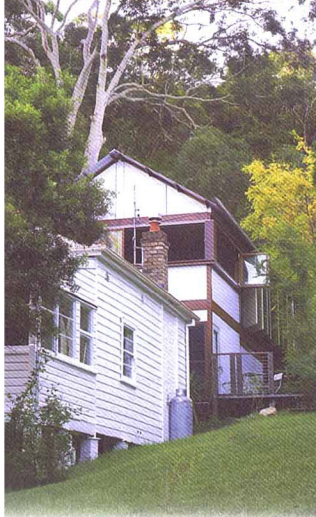




top left The original house is decorated mainly in handbags from its own era. In Mimi's bedroom, there is a wall mural painted by her sister, Jane Kabe. **right** A view of the idyllic Pretty Beach from the wharf at the eastern end. **bottom left** The original house was retained completely and the great contemporary addition, with a sympathetic pitched roof, was designed to step up the hill behind it. **right** The kitchen in the new addition has bench top, cupboards and floor timbers which Sophie recycled after finding at her parents-in-law's. The kitchen fender is a vintage red stool and the floor red gum.



The screened outdoor area and, instead of a swimming pool, an old claw-foot bath (with hot and cold plumbing) bought for \$80 from eBay.

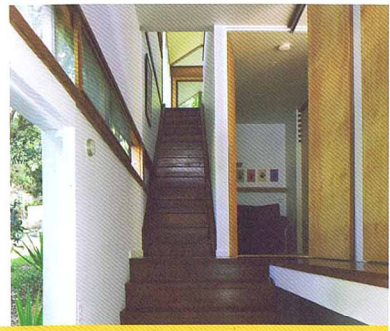
The Next Chapter

The impulse to knock down and build anew, particularly along our coastline, is a trend with unfortunate consequences. Jane Burton Taylor meets a family who was determined not to do this, but instead honour the character and authenticity of their 1900s beach cottage.

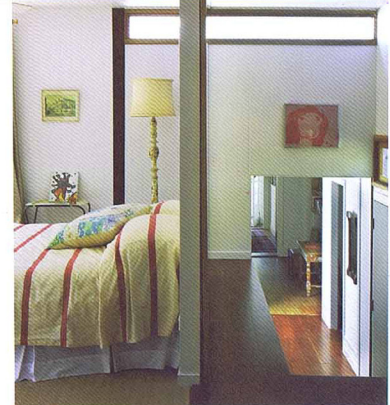


has breathing wall panels. Painted in colours copied from they open manually to let in varying degrees of light and lounge was found at a garage sale in Woy Woy and the one are Sean The Prawn from local shop Mooch Inside.

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top An old lair to laundry was the only part of the original house knocked down to make the link between old and new. An well as a second entrance, allowing visitors to walk up a side path and into the new living area. **bottom** The first level of the new addition houses the main bedroom, an ensuite and a great from which the main bedroom sits between the original green, which now contains the bedrooms of the four children, and the new upper level family living area.



When Sophie and John Stewart came back from living in England for ten years, they had a dream. John was a surfer and Sophie wanted to swap city life for the more relaxed pace of a small coastal community.

Their search led them to Pretty Beach, a suburb on the Central Coast north of Sydney, aptly named for its idyllic location hugging the gentle curve of a beach and backed by national park. The property they settled on was similarly charming, a beach house dating from the early 1900s.

"We knew exactly what we wanted, one of the increasingly rare authentic old weatherboard cottages that gave the area its charm, unchanged and full of character," Sophie says. "We wanted something special without the price tag, something we could work with."

Everyone in the family loved the house, but living there proved limiting. The cottage was modest and only had two bedrooms, so the children – Katie 15, Celia 13, Wilfred 10 and Mimi 8 – had to share.

Sophie says that initially they planned to excavate into the slope, but this would have compromised the house and delivered dark "subterranean living spaces". Coincidentally, architect David Boyle was living next door and they soon realised he had a kindred passion for the old beach houses.

David designed them a lightweight pavilion which steps up the hill behind the existing house. The new structure, about half the width of the original, can't be seen from the street and is designed to link in with a timber cubby house that John built for the children at the top of the block.

Walking into the home for the first time, your immediate experience is of the seductive old world of the cottage. It is not until you walk past the freshly painted rooms, decorated with inherited and recycled furniture, that you reach the new addition. Stairs lead first to the parents' new bedroom and sun-drenched side deck, then up to the delightful living space.

This new space is essentially one long room that opens to a north-east view to water at one end, and the bush at the other. Most unusually, it has breathing walls along each side: panels that open with simple stays, to let in varying degrees of light, air and connection to outdoors.

"It is like living in a bit of a veranda up here," Sophie says. "You can close it down or open up. The cross-ventilation is amazing."

"I like the way the sun swings around and lights up the rear of the panel," David adds.

The doors are painted in various shades of greens and browns, to fit in with the surrounding bush. "We got our inspiration from the leaves and flowers of local grevilleas," Sophie says. "We picked a variety of tonal colours that integrate well. Often you can get bored with colour but because the doors mirror the surrounding environment, they just blend in."

The doors are also angled for privacy from the path that runs up the side of the block.

Standing on this right-of-way David points out the way the pavilion is sympathetic to the original house in its form – it has a pitched roof – but contemporary in its detailing.

It has totally changed the way the family lives, Sophie says. Specifically, the old house has now become the children's domain. "There are now four multipurpose rooms for the kids," she says. "They get to live in this great informal house."

"Sophie and the kids have taken possession of the old house in a really positive way," David comments. "It is quite hands-on. People think a building should be so precious, but it shouldn't be."

In the front room, Katie the eldest has painted a mural around the white weatherboard wall. In another bedroom, Celia has followed her big sister's lead, painting her version of sea creatures as her own wall art. "The kids wanted to paint on the walls, so I just said yes," Sophie laughs.

Sophie has also recycled a lot of family resources and treasures found in local second hand furniture stores and garage sales. In the new pavilion for example, the kitchen cabinetry and floor are finished in timber uncovered in her father-in-law's shed in Lennox Head.

"We had to get it tongue and grooved (to make floorboards)," she says. "We then varnished it and it went this deep red. It really sets the whole space off."

Another treasure that Sophie says was a challenge to retrieve is an old claw-foot bath. It now sits on a terrace just behind the old house and is a beloved bathing spot, in both winter and summer.

The way the house has been decorated is organic and in keeping with the couple's yen for the handmade and the re-using of the old. "Some people think that in building a house you go into a showroom and pick what is on offer," Sophie says, "but this house has been a process that has gone on for years."

"When we first came to the area, one of the most fun things to do was to go out on Saturdays to Ettalong and pick up stuff; a lot of the things in the old house come from that phase."

For the family, their new pavilion with playful breathing walls has given new life to the old. It has let Sophie and John create the space they needed for their four children and it has rewritten the way they all use both their home and their generous block.

Now the children, particularly the eldest, Katie, feel they have their own space, while the parents too have a place to entertain, or simply sit and commune with the landscape, most of which has been retained because of the restrained size of David's new addition. "It is like a moral shift we are all going to have to make," Sophie says, "to revere the old, rather than obliterate it. We all need to start thinking in a different way."

"And it can still be modern," David adds. "You can just add another layer of history to the house rather than knocking the whole thing down."

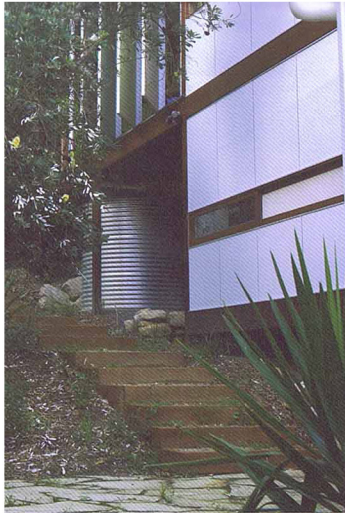


top Katie started the craze for murals in her own room. The mirror is from a furniture shop on Wardsworth Bridge Road in London, from when the parents were living there. The patchwork quilt is Sean The Prawn from Mopac Trade. **bottom** Katie and Mimi play guitar in the new kitchen which has wraparound windows to "feel like it is a veranda," Sophie says.



The back deck has been designed to dovetail with a small cubby John had built for the children when they first bought the house.

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top left A rainwater tank is stored in under the new addition and provides water for the garden and toilets. **right** The operable panels on the living room provide privacy from the right-of-way which runs up beside the house, and also gives those on the path a pleasant view, sympathetic with the surrounding bush. **bottom** The windows in the kitchen capture north-east views over the beach; the wall space is decorated with framed paintings by the children.



Specs:

Architect
David Boyle Architect
www.davidboylearchitect.com.au

Builder
Build One Constructions

Engineer
Northrop Consulting Engineers

Site planning principles

- Retain the existing building fabric in its entirety thereby minimising the amount of new work required.
- Minimise the amount of work required to refurbish the existing building.
- Design new work as a pavilion attached to the rear of the house.
- Minimise excavation, site disturbance and overland flow paths by stepping the floor levels up the site with lightweight construction and pad footings.
- Retain existing mature trees and landscaping on the site.
- Minimise the building footprint so as to maintain site coverage appropriate to the area.

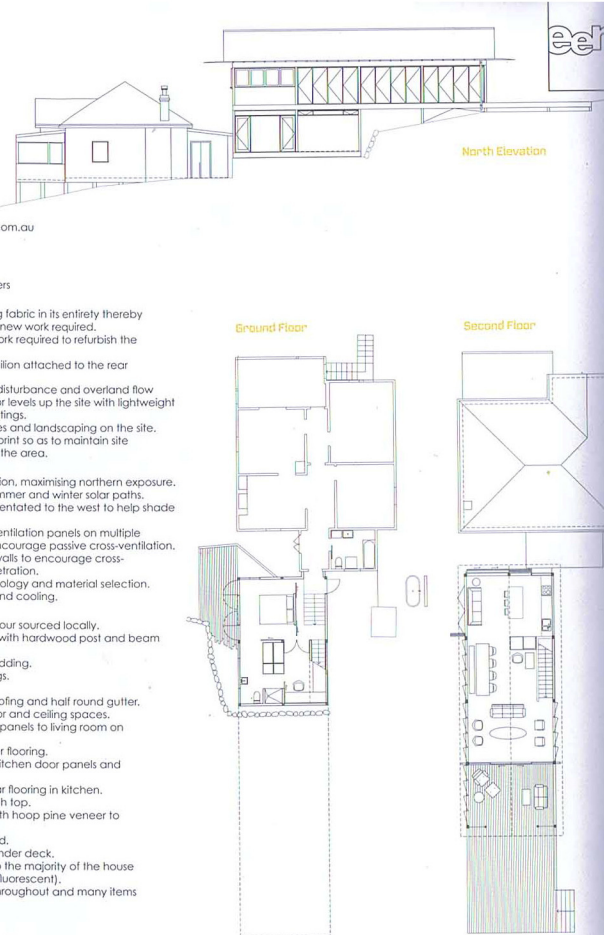
Passive design principles

- East west pavilion orientation, maximising northern exposure.
- Eave overhangs to suit summer and winter solar paths.
- Outdoor covered area orientated to the west to help shade building fabric.
- Operable windows and ventilation panels on multiple orientations (4 sides) to encourage passive cross-ventilation.
- Flexible internal partition walls to encourage cross-ventilation and solar penetration.
- Low tech construction typology and material selection.
- No mechanical heating and cooling.

Building materials

- Building materials and labour sourced locally.
- Lightweight timber frame with hardwood post and beam structural system.
- Fibre cement external cladding.
- Plasterboard internal linings.
- Timber framed windows.
- Zincalume Custom Orb roofing and half round gutter.
- Bulk insulation to walls, floor and ceiling spaces.
- Solid core ventilation wall panels to living room on friction stays.
- Recycled Red Gum timber flooring.
- Recycled solid timber to kitchen door panels and island bench top.
- Recycled Australian Cedar flooring in kitchen.
- Laminex to southern bench top.
- Marine grade plywood with hoop pine veneer to other joinery panels.
- Low-VOC paint, Murobond.
- Rainwater tank located under deck.
- Low-energy use lighting to the majority of the house (fluorescent or compact fluorescent).
- Recycled furniture used throughout and many items sourced locally.

Sean The Prawn
sean-the-prawn.blogspot.com



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