

The Daily Telegraph

October 3, 2009

# home

WIN! THE PERFECT  
COMPLEMENT TO YOUR  
WEEKEND COFFEE



## Summer holiday

How a design classic became the perfect getaway **14**

**12** Compact design makes a clever starting point

**18** The best of the NSW Building Design Awards

**21** Make-up artist's city abode is a little beauty



## FACT FILE

## THE BRIEF

To adapt a classic Sydney design to the requirements of a busy holiday house

## THE OWNERS

Annabelle Chapman and her sister Penny Roberts

## THE ARCHITECT

Annabelle Chapman

**A** Annabelle and Penny **B** The well-planned interior has a timeless feel **C** A skylight illuminates the internal staircase **D** The quirky bathroom **E** Treetop views



# Keeping it simple

Functional, distinctive and affordable, a Pettit + Sevitt dwelling makes a welcome comeback

Not many houses in Sydney are held in equal measures of esteem and fondness as those produced by the pioneering project builders Pettit + Sevitt. Started in the 1960s by Brian Pettit and Ron Sevitt, by 1977 the company was responsible for building 3500 houses.

A young Ken Woolley, now a renowned architect, was the brains behind many of those early floorplans, which combined the best of compact modern design with affordable materials such as Gyprock walls, Monier roof tiles and Stegbar windows.

Along with the skills of landscape architect Bruce Mackenzie, one of the first to incorporate the natural beauty of the bush into his work, the houses epitomise much of what we hold dear today in terms of sustainable and efficient architecture.

These are such important examples of mid-century best practice that in recent years some of those early houses have been placed on heritage registers as buildings of significance by councils and other non-government bodies.

So when architect Annabelle Chapman literally stumbled across a

**"It has lots of light, because it has the skylight windows over the staircase"**

Pettit + Sevitt house in Palm Beach on Sydney's Northern Beaches five years ago, she knew she had to tread carefully.

On the lookout for a holiday house to buy for her and her sister Penny Roberts's families, they initially did not even notice the house was on the market.

"There was a historic stone cottage in the street we were interested in

buying. We took a look at it, but it did not have many prospects and it was hugely expensive," Annabelle says.

"My sister said a friend of hers was a real estate agent and she was showing a house across the road and she just wanted to pop over and say hello."

### Hidden treasure

What they found tucked away from the street was a two-storey Pettit + Sevitt house on a battle axe block with views across McKay Reserve to Pittwater.

"We walked in and we just thought it looked really nice," Annabelle says.

Knowing they were on to a good thing, she says they made an offer that was quickly accepted.

Unusually for the area, the house was positioned on a level block that dropped away to the rear to reveal the view.

Mature angophoras protected the







**F** The house, which is positioned on a battle-axe block that drops away to the rear, has views across McKay Reserve to Pittwater  
**G** A U-shaped kitchen behind the dining space has a number of windows that provide ample natural light  
**H** The rotting deck at the rear has been replaced with a new deck that was level with the rest of the house. This effectively doubles the available living space



house from the harshest western sun, while the dappled light suggested the carefree lifestyle they were looking for.

Inside, Annabelle says the original floorplan was compact and functional.

"The house is not big, but it is well planned out," she says.

"It has lots of light, because it has the skylight windows over the staircase. It is just a very simple house."

The original floorplan offered a side entry to the house with a large open-plan living and dining area opening on to a full-length timber deck.

A U-shaped kitchen sits behind the dining space with windows providing plenty of natural light for the workstation.

To the back of the house, facing the street, there was a large bedroom and bathroom and a small sitting area.

Upstairs, two generous bedrooms have easy access to both the bathroom

and the balcony overlooking the view. But while the layout might appear to be simple, it belies a complex design process that has stood the test of time.

Everything from understanding the appeal of alfresco dining to the need for built-in storage gives the impression the house was designed yesterday.

**"We had to replace the deck so we made it level with the rest of the house"**

"The Pettit + Sevitt houses are very well planned," Annabelle says.

"In the living area, they have full-height doors and details on the windows."

Initially, they just repainted the house and began enjoying their leisure time in it. After a couple of years, however, it was obvious the deck was rotting and needed to be replaced.

Annabelle says it was an opportunity to reassess the house's functionality.

"We had to replace the deck so we made it level with the rest of the house," Annabelle says.

"There were just some french doors opening on to the centre of the deck so we replaced them with a row of sliding doors to make the opening 6m wide.

"The changes meant the decking became part of the house."

**Adding a bedroom**

Because the two families like to holiday together, sleeping accommodation was at something of a premium, so Annabelle converted the old sitting room near the entrance into a fourth bedroom.

"We turned that space into the fourth bedroom and that has made a huge difference with two families

**FIRST FLOOR**



**GROUND FLOOR**



Pool

using the house, because it fits everyone. It was not a space that anyone was using anyway," she says.

With plenty of space to play with, she says they did contemplate doing something more extensive but decided to put any further work on hold.

"I did draw up plans to do another wing on the house, but it would have cost about \$300,000 so we decided to keep it low key," Annabelle says.

"It is nice for a beach house, because it is so simple.

"More rooms mean more cleaning and tidying up." ■

**Robyn Willis**

**MORE INFORMATION**  
**Annabelle Chapman Architect**  
 9449 6523,  
 achapmanarchitect.com.au