

Conquering the Impossible

Story & Images Marilyn Collins

Faced with the task of creating a home on the most difficult of sites, the builder confirms the merits and rewards of tackling those almost impossible jobs.

When the owners first approached multi-award-winning home builders, Stibbard Homes of Singleton, they had already developed a plan to suit their needs with a Maitland-based designer. The challenge for Stibbard Homes was to further refine the design and then build a home on a site with many challenges.

The last few kms of access road includes gradients of up to 23 degrees but rewards the adventurous with a site capturing all the views of the Hunter; from Stockton Bight to Jerrys Plains and from the Brokenback Range to Barrington Tops. It is truly spectacular.

Access for tradesman and deliveries was no mean feat especially for the heavily laden concrete trucks driving in the lowest gear. Each day brought new challenges from difficulties with deliveries to the unpredictable weather conditions working in such an exposed location.

The heavily vegetated block on top of a high ridge was selectively cleared to allow the home to complement the bushland setting and reflect its relaxing and peaceful feel.

The building project called for precision execution of a design and materials concept to meet stringent bush fire regulations. For example, a specific volume of water is required to be stored just for fighting fires. >





The owners too had certain criteria, which was to build a spacious low-maintenance, one-level residence to accommodate their family and friends in a relaxed casual way.

Journeying up the driveway, after gaining entry through a security gate, the first impression is that of the view - simply breathtaking. This makes you realise the effort was well worthwhile.

A feature wall, made of stone, sourced from the property, forms a very solid connection to the earth and sets the ambience for the home - tranquil and working in harmony with its surrounding 100 acres.

Nowadays, the chance to escape the demanding professional world in Sydney and head north to their newly-built residence in the Hunter Valley needs no prompting for the owners. Just about every weekend they leave their inner-city apartment behind in the early mist of morning and arrive in time for breakfast ready to breathe freely the clear country air, relax, read or garden. The home is barely visible from the road below offering almost complete privacy.

The driveway leads into a porte cochere entry. The house is surrounded by easily maintained, fully-lined verandahs. From the porch you step through stunning, wrought iron featured double doors from Buenos Aires (pictured left) into a wide central foyer running the full width of the house and accentuated by vibrant Dulux "Capsicum Red" feature walls.

There are three colourful ceramic pots placed in the corner of the foyer and a central round table set beneath a stunning ornamental pendant light fitting.

The flooring chosen throughout is rich-coloured, 220mm wide Queensland Lemon Scented Spotted gum with carpeted bedrooms.

The living area to the right of the entry is completely open plan with a spacious modern kitchen with a timber top central island workbench. >





left The main bedroom.
above right One of the two bathrooms with a claw foot bath
below left The spacious hallway with copious shelving houses the couple's extensive library and leads to the four bedrooms with own en suite.
below right Custom-designed shelving is a feature of the entire house ensuring everything has its rightful place in the home.



Overhanging is a crafted ceiling mounted wrought-iron kitchen rack to hang pots, pans and cooking utensils. Underneath is a fitted wine fridge and storage areas.

Stainless steel Miele appliances throughout are built into custom-designed cupboards in a taupe shade which blends perfectly with the Capsicum Red entry walls.

An open dining area looks across into the lounge area decorated with copious lounges and cosy sun-filled sitting nooks and to take advantage of the warmth of the fireplace with a brick chimney finished with Murobond Cement paint tinted Dulux Capsicum Red.

The couple's love of reading is evident throughout the home, with custom-designed floor-to-ceiling bookshelves in the living and lounge rooms and along the spacious hallway of the bedroom wing.

These are filled with books to interest all ages and the clever placement of cosy sitting chairs in the hallway beckons their house guests to stop, browse and make a selection.

The four individually decorated bedrooms each boasts their own bathroom allowing for maximum guest privacy and comfort. The main bedroom and a second guest room have been fitted with a traditional cast iron bath for that added touch of luxury. The decision to do away with glass screened shower recesses and opt for a defined wet area has eliminated that tiresome cleaning task for the lady of the house.

To maximize on space a central wall behind each bed head accommodates hanging space and shelving and acts as a buffer between the sleeping area and bathroom.

The fitting of a Dux solar hot water system together with a ring-main and recirculation pump has minimised water wastage in a location where rainfall is the only source. In addition, there is a well-appointed and spacious laundry room and a guest powder room.

No matter where in the house you stand you feel completely wrapped in stunning bushland or mountain views which extend down into the valley below to Gresford and the far distant blue hues of the Barrington Tops mountain range (pictured above).

A same bush stone walling surrounding the entry side of the home is used to form the tiered western and northern gardens. A maintenance-free garden was the obvious and natural choice – one that cares for itself as the owners do not live on the property full time. Australian natives were planted and, to the owners delight, the beautiful and colourful kangaroo paw seems to thrive in the mountain conditions relying solely on rain water.

In the end all the work involved in planning, approvals and building delivered a fantastic result – a home that encourages the owners to visit regularly and linger even longer in the future.

