

THIS PAGE The bunk beds and toy box in this kids' bedroom are from Country Living 011-706-4555. The Adirondack-style chairs on the deck are from Wetherlys 011-788-9504 and the cushions from Bay Decor 044-533-0309. OPPOSITE Anne and Robert on the steps that make the perfect spot for family portraits.



all hands on DECK

A spectacular wraparound deck has transformed a none-too-pretty face-brick 'blockhouse' in Plettenberg Bay into a show-stopper

Text Julia Lloyd Production Darryl le Clezio Photographs Elsa Young

home solutions
SEASIDE MAKEOVER

Anne Hartmann is a woman with vision. Where most people would have simply seen an ugly 1970s face-brick blockhouse-style holiday home perched on a hill in Plettenberg Bay, Anne saw a home with great bones. 'Although it was nothing to look at and very gloomy inside, the house was a great shape to work with – there's a lot that can be done with a strong double-storey, rectangular-shaped building, particularly when it's so close to the sea.'

And that's the other thing that won Anne and husband Robert over – the location. 'It's within walking distance of the beach and there are fabulous views from upstairs,' says Anne. 'You can smell and hear the sea too, which is very important for city slickers like us.' Robert is the director and co-owner of well-known furniture-manufacturing company, Hartmann & Keppler, and Anne owns Home Sweet Home, a Johannesburg-based business that designs homes from start to end detail.

Anne convinced her brother and family friends to come on board. A syndicate was formed, the blockhouse purchased and renovations began. 'Our decision to buy something that we'd need to renovate from afar was made easier by the fact that my father had just finished doing up a house in the area,' says Robert. 'He knew all the right people, had a team assembled and was ready to move in and take over. We also struck up a relationship with Shayne Pretorius, a wonderful young local fisherman who became our site manager and helped us immensely.' Having local knowledge on a project is invaluable, says Anne.

Surprisingly, the extensive renovations were completed within six months, just in time for the December school holidays when 16 people descended on the home. 'It was a huge challenge to design a holiday home that would please so many people,' says Anne. The goal was to create a low-maintenance yet homely, easy-living space that was a comfortable home for three families, who might choose to spend their time together or apart. This is where the idea of creating identical and entirely self-sufficient living spaces on both floors came from. 'It's all very well for a large, extended family to take off for a blissful month of sea and sun but you have to consider the chaos that might turn a peaceful break into a nightmare,' says Anne. Particularly relevant when there are seven children between 18 months and >



AFTER

The once dark blockhouse structure has been totally transformed into a Cape Cod-style holiday home. To create the look of a clapboard exterior without going to huge expense, grooves were made in the external plaster right around the house using an angled hand tool. This was done when the plaster was almost, but not quite, dry. For it to be successful the plasterer must keep the bands straight and parallel. The same technique was used in the two internal bathrooms.

BEFORE

The house was built in the 1970s. At the time of purchase its external walls were part face-brick (typical of houses built at this time) and part plastered and painted brown. The ground-floor doors and windows were set into arches – another 1970s design feature.





The deck has become a vital living space – it's where 'we spend most of our holiday'



BEFORE

The problem with many Plett houses is that, in order to face the sea, they look due south. This means that they are often cold and dark – and have not maximised the fabulous views across the valley towards the mountains. The roof was clad in asbestos roof tiles, which had to be removed and disposed of.



RIGHT Clear Chromadek roofing was used on the patio to let the light through. The 'latte' ceiling was created using lengths of bamboo that were widely spaced so as not to darken the area unnecessarily. **OPPOSITE TOP** The children's shell collections displayed in large glass cookie jars. **BOTTOM** The kitchens, which were designed by Anne, are tailor-made for family cooking. The units were manufactured and installed by Wooden Wonders 044-533-4367. The tops in the sink area are Nero St Lucia granite, and the central island top is solid oak that was tinted a chocolate brown.



AFTER

In order to bring light into the home and maximise views, huge windows and doors were added on both levels on the northern side, allowing in sunlight and giving extra views across the valley to the mountains. The doorframes, window frames and balustrades were all painted white. 'I love the crisp and fresh look of white-painted woodwork,' says Anne.

The asbestos roof tiles were replaced with Chromadek 016-889-3140 roof sheeting, which was installed on the existing roof trusses. Since no structural changes were required, it proved a surprisingly affordable solution.

BEFORE

The original home did not cater much for outdoor-indoor living. Although there was a small stoep on the first floor it was exposed, making it too hot during midsummer and unusable in the rainy season. During renovations it was removed and the double-storey wraparound deck added.



13 years old involved: four boys (Anne's surf-crazy sons) and three girls (Anne's niece and two girls belonging to the other family in the syndicate).

'Three bedrooms, two bathrooms and a kitchen and living area were created on each floor,' says Robert. 'The two levels are identical – right down to the tin-openers,' so it doesn't matter on which level each family stays, they'll find everything just where they left it on their previous visit. 'An internal staircase connects the two levels, which means we can have one large unit if we wish but otherwise the upper storey has a separate entrance and functions as a unit on its own,' he explains.

Nothing structurally needed to be done upstairs (the rooms were all good sizes). But a warren of rooms on the lower level was opened up to create a large living area and the space was redesigned to mirror the upper floor. All the bathrooms were gutted, redesigned and refitted. New lime-washed pine flooring was laid throughout, which is warm on the feet and easy to keep clean – particularly important when you have so many feet walking in beach sand! But certainly the most dramatic change has been to the facade. The addition of a wraparound deck has had an enormous impact on the look and feel of the home. And the deck has become a vital living space – it's where 'we spend most of our holiday,' says Anne. The deck plus the stone cladding, which was added at the base of the house, give the home balance.

With no sign of its former blockhouse incarnation, the home is a triumph of clever renovation and testimony to the power of a great vision (and visionary). □
Hartmann & Keppler, 011-463-5005
Home Sweet Home, 083-290-0243



AFTER

The addition of the wraparound deck was the most expensive part of the project but had the most dramatic impact on the look of the home. 'It was a part of the home that everyone agreed on: the amount of use it would get, and the huge change it would make to the look of the house,' says Anne. 'My father in law introduced us to a fantastic carpenter: Gerhard Mynhardt of Jack Coetzee Thatch 083-262-3285. His expertise and his understanding of the way wood behaves in the Plett climate were invaluable.' The floors of the deck (and the internal ones) are CCA-treated SA pine that was first sealed with Dulux Timba preservative and then lime-washed using a mixture of Plascon Floor Varnish and Woodoc Full Moon stain (100ml of stain per 5 litres of paint).

THIS PAGE The base of the house was clad in locally quarried stone. Anne consulted Awie at Barney's Paint Centre 011-516-6310 in Johannesburg on paint colours, which were then mixed locally to her specifications. **OPPOSITE** Pine was chosen for the deck and flooring because it is reasonably priced, and because Anne loves the knots in the wood.

