

MID-RANGE NEW HOMES

\$350,000 - \$450,000



HOUSE OF THE YEAR



STROKE OF GENIUS

A builder draws a single line and a supreme winner falls into place



The exciting thing about the 2011 House of the Year is that it's within the pocket of the average Kiwi, says Glenroy Housing's Phil Vile.

"It's not a multi-million dollar house. It cost what the average Kiwi can afford to pay for their dream."

The New Homes \$350,000 - \$450,000 category winner, located in Marlborough's Mahau Sound, pulls off the seemingly impossible: four bedrooms, three bathrooms, kitchen and comfortable living space in an area of just 131sq m.

Judges said the house probably showed more thought per square metre than any other competition entry and they were probably bang on. They also said it was a build with an extremely high level of difficulty and an environmental awareness that was unique in its category.

The design was a collaborative effort between architectural draughtsman Phil and owners Alex and Marcus Myring, and it's as clever as a fox.

The builder says he was liberated by his clients' willingness to think outside the square; the clients say their builder was "exceptional, full of ideas and endless energy".

The interior configuration is particular to the Myrings; the oiled-pine board and batten exterior is characteristic of Glenroy.

The Blenheim builders' design, manufacture and erect houses incorporating a post and beam system devised some 30 years ago by Phil's father John, who is as involved in the business today as he ever was.

"He's 84 and he still beats me to work most days." They can pack all the components of a 95sq m bungalow, including floor, into a 20ft shipping container. Clearly they have a knack with space.

Most of their business comes by word of mouth, and such was the case with the Myrings.

The English couple, who decided to spend the New Zealand summers in Marlborough, saw a house that impressed them and asked the estate agent who had built it.

"It had a certain friendliness and clean lines," says Alex. "We loved the way it was set out and the standard of building." It was one of Glenroy's. →





JUDGES' COMMENTS

“The masterstroke is an angled wall running through the building, cleverly integrating bedrooms and the living space in a compact area on an extremely small footprint.”

Then they saw a section in Mahau Sound, decided it was for them, went to see Phil and told him what they could afford to spend. “They said, ‘It’s a second home. We’re not averse to taking risks. We don’t have to have a normal home. We want it to be fun.’”

First he took a look at the section. “It had quite a lot of challenges. It’s south-facing for one, and we Kiwis love the sun.” But it had great water views to the south, east and west and a bush-clad hill behind. And it was directly across the water from Phil’s holiday cabin.

“I said, ‘I don’t know if I could bring myself to design an ugly house because I’ve got to look at it.’” (Did the hand of Providence bring these guys together, or what?)

Next, what kind of house to put on it? Collective brainstorming drew a picture of a smallish warm house that would comfortably accommodate guests. It would be practical, fun and have an architectural air about it. The southern wall would be fully glazed for views as far as Havelock.

Now, how to configure the necessary rooms without cluttering the place with supporting walls?



An early plan included an internal staircase to the ground-floor guest suite with kitchenette and bathroom. “We’ll save a lot of space if we get rid of those stairs,” said Phil. The Myrings said, “Go for it. External access is fine.” Stairs out of the road, the scene was set for Phil’s eureka moment – the diagonal wall that separates the kitchen area at the front of the house from the master suite, two bedrooms, bathroom and laundry along the back.

“Once we drew that angled line through the centre of the house we had our structural thing, we could hold the house up, and we had our architectural impact as well,” he says.

Judges said, “The simple diagonal cut was the masterstroke of this house, resulting in acute angles and detailing that has been executed with almost faultless workmanship.”

The 10.8m-long wall creates a triangular kitchen space between the sitting area at one end of the living room and the door to the master bedroom at the other. Folding doors conceal storage, microwave and extra bench space recessed into the wall along with fridge; everything else – hob, sink, oven, is incorporated in the 4.5m wedge-shaped

island. “Phil said how good it would be to cook and wash up, looking out to miles of water, bush and faraway mountains,” says Alex.

The island – Alex calls it “the chunk” – is another architectural grace note in a house which, by desire and necessity, is full of them.

Phil suggested tightening the design by dispensing with passageways. “We don’t need passageways,” said the Myrings. To get to the double guest bedroom you pass through a little laundry and the main bathroom, but that bathroom is only used by visitors and becomes an en suite for staying guests. The master bedroom, which also has an en suite, opens into the adjoining single bedroom/dressing room as well as the living area.

The floor in here is Blackwood, laid irregularly by the brilliant Paul Dobson for a warm but sophisticated look, and on the diagonal to flow with the wall. A rare timber, usually sourced from Australia, it was grown and milled in nearby Linkwater. The wood was chosen for its looks rather than its proximity, says Phil, but it’s always nice to support a local.

They built the master bathroom’s vanity unit from offcuts but most interior joinery is pine, →



varnished in a tone complementary to the Blackwood.

The house may be niftily compact but the views are enormous and there are decks to north and south. Generally the smaller back deck is the more sheltered and from it you can look straight through the sitting area and across the Sound and the bush on the other side. The front deck extends across most of the living space. It's angled, so the peak will always get the sun. It's the little things that count.

Phil says the invaluable team of on-site builders, led extremely well by Mike Guillemot (who has been putting up Glenroy Houses for 30 years), do an awesome job and project foreman on the Myring house was Peter Marfell who has an eye for detail."

Factory foreman Fred Vile deserves a bouquet too, says Phil. "He puts his heart into everything required by the site builders."

And a big one for the enthusiastic Myrings who not only gave him licence to experiment but urged him to enter the house in these awards – and were there to see him win.

Right back at you, Phil. Alex says she and Marcus will always be in awe of your foresight,

your understanding of the kind of house they wanted and the quality of your builders' workmanship. "We have a very special and funky home and one that we are proud to own. It's hard to do justice to how we feel about it all and how happy we are to be here, but some things you can't express in words."

Phil says, "The more I see of people who take risks, the more impressed I am." He's one of them. It never occurred to the Viles that anyone would be interested in the bach they designed for themselves. "We had people knocking on our door. Eventually we caved in and sold it."

One day they'll build another one to replace their cabin; the one that looks across the water to the 2011 Supreme House of the Year. ●

JUDGES' COMMENTS

"A masterpiece of a home formed from complex structural parts, and executed to a millimetre-perfect finish to present a functional and magical home."



NATIONAL WINNER - MID-RANGE NEW HOMES \$350,000 - \$450,000



PLACEMAKERS® SUPREME AWARD - REGISTERED MASTER BUILDERS HOUSE OF THE YEAR



WINNER - GIB LIVING SOLUTIONS® AWARD

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