

On an isolated bay on Banks Peninsula, a new building by Pattersons reimagines the classical farmhouse.

STORIES

LAND sea & SKY



He has lived abroad for 35 years, but Mark Palmer never lost his connection with New Zealand. He grew up on a farm in the Bay of Plenty but left the country in his early 20s for the United States, where he eventually built a successful property company, married, and raised six children. But the lure of farming never left him, and the urge to return to the land led to his purchase of Annandale, a sheep and cattle station of approximately 1600ha with more than 10km of coastline on the northern side of Banks Peninsula.

Palmer divides his time between the farm (which is run by a farm manager) and the US. Since he purchased Annandale, he has carefully renovated the farm's original homestead and brought its magnificent gardens back to life. He has also overseen the restoration of a shepherd's cottage on the remote northern reaches of the farm, a half-hour drive along

a gravel track from the homestead. The farm itself is now functioning efficiently and is fully stocked. He has planted thousands of native trees.

You would think that would be a logical place to pause, but Palmer hasn't finished yet. On the farm's northern extremity, about 10 minutes' drive further on from the shepherd's cottage, work was recently completed on two new buildings, including an all-new farmhouse that pays elegant homage to its gorgeous setting. Palmer had already been working with architect Andrew Patterson and the team at Pattersons on the restoration of the homestead and shepherd's cottage, and it was them that he asked to come up with a design for this isolated bay.

The brief was loose, leaving Patterson to fret, for a while, over what might be an appropriate form for this starkly beautiful location. Patterson is well-known for creating some of the country's best contemporary

EIO

ARCHITECT

Andrew Patterson, of Pattersons, has won many national architecture awards, designing buildings such as Auckland's Site 3, the Clubhouse at The Hills golf course near Arrowtown, and the new visitor centre in the Christchurch Botanic Gardens. His firm's design for New Plymouth's new Govett-Brewster Art Gallery is currently under construction.

The home occupies a picturesque coastal segment of Banks Peninsula.



Clockwise from top left: Verandah with a view; the central fireplace; the home's two gabled forms almost appear to slide past one another.

buildings – including Auckland's Site 3, The Hills Clubhouse at Michael Hill's golf course near Arrowtown, and the new visitor centre in the Christchurch Botanic Gardens – but a strong vein of classicism also runs through his work. Here in this valley on Banks Peninsula, he resisted the temptation to do something ultra-modern. "I laboured very hard about whether to do a completely abstracted form on that site," Patterson says, "and I didn't want to do that because that bay is eternal, and one thing that you do know is it's likely to be a farm for a long time. If you pick a contemporary form, you fight the timeless nature of the bay. But the building is reasonably abstracted in a material sense – everything about it is still very contemporary."

Curiously enough, Patterson grew up near another Annandale Station, this one in the Waikato, which boasted an 1892 rendition of an English country house owned by the parents of one of his high school friends (and now listed as a Historic Place Category One building by the Historic Places Trust). Patterson remembers the house, with its simple verandah, and sought to emulate the authenticity of the place here on Banks Peninsula.

HOME

HOME magazine publishes New Zealand's best new homes. Its Home of the Year award is the country's richest architecture prize and is now in its 19th year.

The symmetry of the bay made siting the building at its centre seem logical, and the first glimpses of it, as you descend a rugged four-wheel-drive track from a ridge line, are breathtaking. Its cedar skin, which wraps the exterior walls and the roof, has the same honeyed tones as the parched grass that surrounds it. Its simple forms appear to rest in absolute harmony with the arresting landscape. The house

occupies its site confidently without ever appearing to need to compete with it. The arrangement of forms is completely inviting: you want to get down that track and see what it's like inside.

The building runs east to west, but instead of a single extruded elevation, it features two connected gabled forms which almost appear to be slipping past one another. The entrance is located in the area where these forms connect, where a lovely waft of the home's macrocarpa linings is apparent as soon as the door is opened. A tall, thin hallway to the right leads to a bunkroom and a bedroom, while a high door to the left opens into what can only be called a great room: a long, lofty space with, at its heart, a fireplace and chimney made of stone from the farm's own quarry. The gabled roof is expressed inside with the macrocarpa linings rising to a peak, while big doors reveal a view over the deck outside and across the field to the rocky beach. The large, practical kitchen looks onto another, south-facing deck protected from breezes coming off the water. Each of the three main bedrooms has its own simple bathroom and a view towards the sea. The house feels a million miles from anywhere.

Palmer envisages the home as a place for the family to stay when they're visiting and also as a luxury holiday rental property to be included in Annandale's coastal farm escape and luxury villa collection. You can see why he appears so proud of the place: it is easy to imagine guests never wanting to leave this home, so in tune is it with its marvellous surroundings, its wonderful sense of calm perfectly compatible with the isolated bay it overlooks.

STORY JEREMY HANSEN

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