



A Lakeside HAVEN

A proven partnership between a designer and builder / daughter and father duo created a family dream home which will remain enduringly beautiful for many years to come.

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Images by Natalie Grant, Impact Photography.



Melanie Symington is a multi-award winning building designer who always looked forward to being able to design her own family home in a peaceful locality – a place where her children to grow up with a carefree lifestyle.

Melanie and her husband, Carl Hughes, had been looking for a perfect home site on the southern end of Lake Macquarie for several years when Melanie's parents notified them that the cottage two doors away from where they had recently purchased a property was for sale.

At that stage, the couple had the extra challenge of coping with one-year-old twins and were not anticipating such a large project; but the location won them over.

"We decided in the end that a waterfront reserve site would suit us better," said Melanie. "The reserve was,

and still is, very quiet and we have the benefit of being able to take long walks along the waterfront. We also have this lovely lawn area to the water's edge that we don't have to maintain."

In the Year 2000 they purchased the original 1950's style one-bedroom weatherboard cottage with a lower-level boatshed.

The position was perfectly sited in Taylors Bay on Lake Macquarie - a quiet, protected area suitable for mooring yachts but also perfect for swimming. The wide, grassy reserve was envisaged to be great for family games of cricket or croquet.

The site faced north and the resulting cooling, north-easterly breezes were a wonderful bonus.

One of the main considerations in the design of the home was a suitable office space for Melanie's home-design practice, "Seaside Homes." ▶





With young children, Melanie decided to operate from a home-based office until the children were of high-school age. Melanie says that an added advantage is being able to display one of her projects to her clients when they visit the office.

"It's great to be able to discuss French doors and cantilevered balconies with my clients by actually showing them the features in my home."

The boatshed, the floors and some of the walls of the original cottage were retained to base the extension on.

The couple decided on a brief for the house to include living rooms with a strong connection to the view and the breeze, a playroom, office, three bedrooms, two and a half bathrooms and a sitting room.

Of course, the outside living spaces would be crucial, so wrap-around decks and bedroom verandahs were incorporated.

The design allows for future conversion of the boatshed into a rumpus room by replacing the existing laundry with a staircase for internal access.

The fantastic, 40-degree pitch of the roof also means that the roof space can be converted into a loft bedroom for their son.

The style of the house was a favourite architectural style of Melanie's. She had been waiting for the right site to design a home in what she refers to as a "Maine holiday house" style.

The home was built by Melanie's father Bill and his business partner Tony.

Many discussions took place concerning the roof's pitch. Bill wanted it reduced to simplify construction techniques but Melanie was adamant this would undermine the aesthetics of the building.

"My father is an "old school" master builder who started his career as a carpenter, so the challenge of building something as unique as my place was very enjoyable for him," said Melanie.

In the end, the pitch remained at 40 degrees and the roof took many weeks to construct. Some of the rafters had five cuts in them.

Thankfully, it was agreed by both of them that the end result was definitely worth the extra effort.

"I would not specify a 40 degree pitch for any of my clients because it does have a significant impact on construction costs, but for my own home it was a great decision," Melanie explained. ▶

