

Historical Restoration

A former school hall in the Abel Tasman has been lovingly restored, and now enjoys a new life as a family home and luxury bed and breakfast establishment.

Words **Soraya Nicholas** Photography **Lisa Gane**



WHEN MICHAEL MACMILLAN AND Jackie Crow, along with daughter Poppy, returned to the Nelson region from a five-year sojourn in the Marlborough Sounds, they wanted a home that made an architectural statement, and had shortlisted three properties. Neudorf Hall was one of the houses, and they identified with both the current owner and property immediately. "The owner had spent two and a half years restoring this place, and he had already turned down offers to sell," explains Michael. "The difference with us was that he was happy to sell it because he knew we were committed to his vision." The day they walked through the house, Andrea Bocelli was playing and the fire was roaring, and they left knowing in their hearts that it was the home for them. "Then we realised we hadn't even looked around the whole house!" says Jackie. "We made an offer and purchased it, but we didn't even have to see the entire place to know it was right for us."

Their new house was in fact a former school, built in the 1870s with only 53 pupils. It then became the Neudorf Community Hall and later home to a playgroup, before English builder Neil White who had a vision for restoration



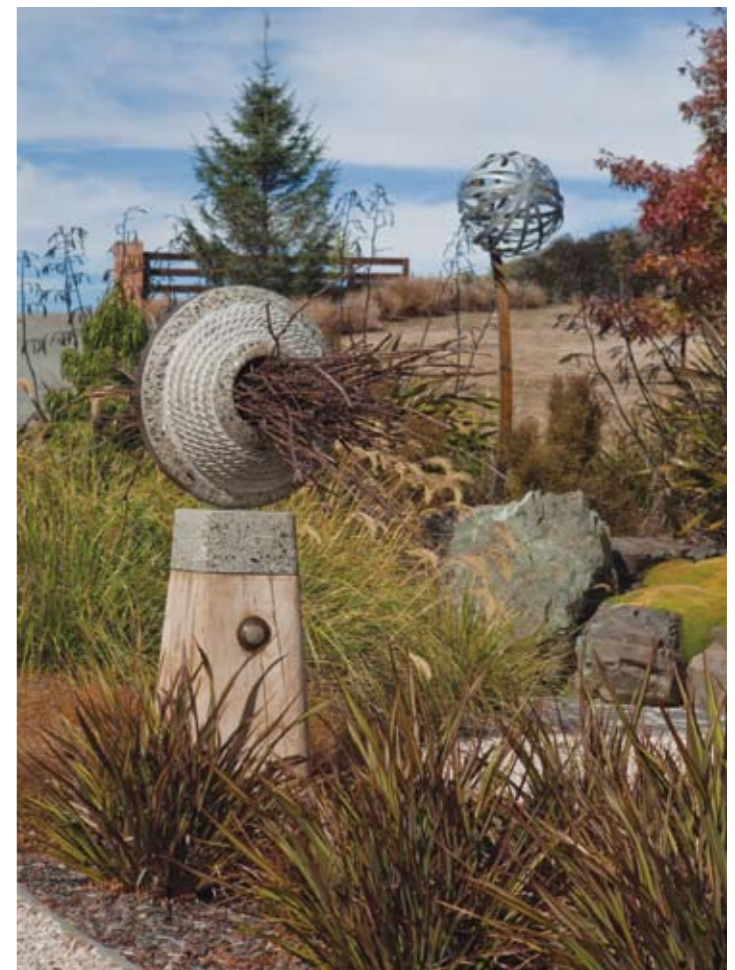
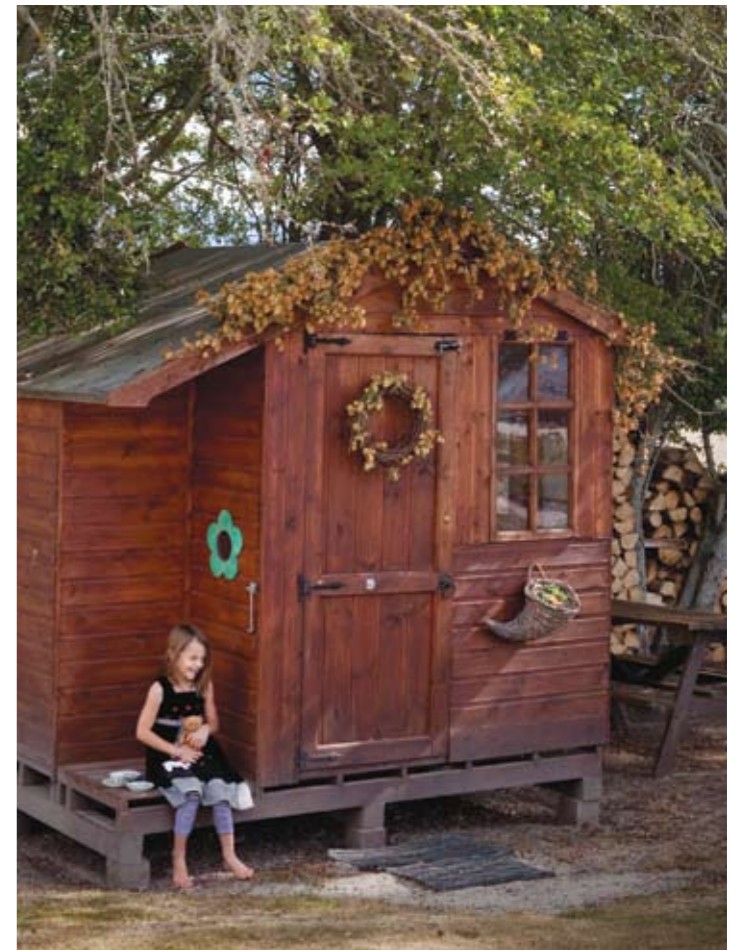
PREVIOUS PAGE Originally a school, Brian Johns' redesign of Neudorf Hall won the category for Residential Alterations and Additions in the 2009 ADNZ awards. The judges appreciated the way the design transforms the old building into a series of generous new spaces that retain sound references to the older fabric.

ABOVE Michael walks upstairs via the Kwila staircase to the master bedroom, which is the only room located on the second floor.

ABOVE LEFT Jackie and Poppy make their way down the path beside the entrance to the gallery.

FACING PAGE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT

Birds nests gathered by Jackie create a natural feature on a sideboard, filled with Quail and blackbird eggs. Poppy's playhouse is more like a mini-home, with built-in bunk beds, a table and chairs inside, along with a dress-up box and toys. It was imported from the United Kingdom by a local business and is made from Cedar. Sculptures from Michael's Cultivator series were inspired by the fourth generation German family farm surrounding the property. The open wood fire features a schist stone hearth.





Q&A
with Brian Johns

What was your design brief?

To take the cavernous, tall and rectangular shape of the Hall and turn it into a family home.

How did this translate into the design?

The Hall just wasn't big enough to accommodate the layout for a 4 bedroom home, so I added areas to the southern and western sides, putting them under skillion roofs. I designed the new extensions externally to look as if that had been the original intention.

Were there any design constraints?

As the Hall was of community interest, the Tasman District Council requested I visually retain the eastern roadside elevation. I also wanted to keep the original roof structure; however to accommodate the new layout I'd removed quite a bit of the Hall's external walls. So a lot went into hiding additional support, without losing the open plan created through the lounge, kitchen and dining areas.

What do you like most about the home?

For me, it's as if it's always been there. This was achieved by placing the Hall more centrally on the site and rotating it more westerly to take in the Mount Arthur range, then sinking it into the landscape and reducing the overall height. Originally the Hall was close and parallel to the Northern boundary, and sat high on the original contours.

ABOVE The master bedroom has a distinct loft feel, with its high-pitch, exposed timber ceiling. When Michael and Jackie have guests staying, Poppy sneaks up to sleep alongside their bed. **BELOW LEFT** Chairs from Nood sit beneath wide windows, providing a great spot to read a book or enjoy afternoon coffee.

BELOW RIGHT The ensuite bathroom has a view to Mount Arthur, and the shower is unique in that it sits directly in the middle of the bathroom.



fell in love with the property. He worked on the home himself, re-building the hall with two other builders and the assistance of Architectural Designer of New Zealand (ADNZ) member Brian Johns. It was Brian who completed the working drawings and design to rejuvenate the building, being mindful of the historical and community importance of the structure. "The attention to detail and careful design really appealed to us," says Michael. "The history, the restoration itself, and the combination of materials makes it special and creative." Of course Michael is particularly drawn to the clever use of materials. He is a well-known sculptor, and he finds the property and its surrounds a never-ending source of inspiration for the collections he works on.

Part of Michael and Jackie's desire when they first purchased the house was to share their home. They run a luxury bed and breakfast facility, as well as making products from locally sourced materials for their guests and



ABOVE The former hall is positioned on a plentiful lifestyle site, which Michael and Jackie keep strictly organic. No sprays are used outside, and handmade toiletries are preferred inside. **BELOW LEFT** West Coast schist was used for the floor in the dining/living area. It was split then placed amongst concrete, and despite not having underfloor heating, it provides welcome passive heat by soaking up the sun's rays and slowly releasing the heat. **BELOW RIGHT** Jackie breezes through their open plan kitchen, where she maintains a gluten and wheat free diet for the family and their guests.





CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE The computer nook on the upstairs landing is one of Jackie and Michael's favourite areas of the home. All of the guest bedrooms are located on the ground floor. Poppy's bedroom is a fun and practical space, with her pink beanbag and Danish-designed bed purchased from Nelson store Sprog Hogs. Michael is well-known for his sculptures, but he also uses his creative flair to design and make household accessories, such as the coat rack stand in the entrance area.

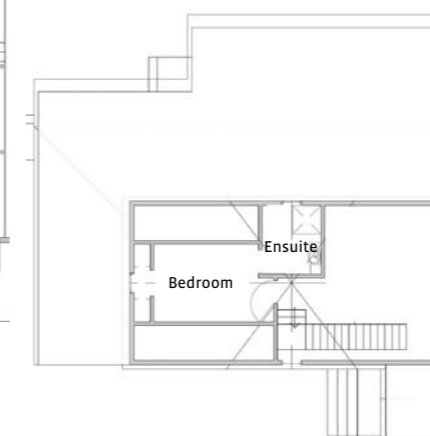
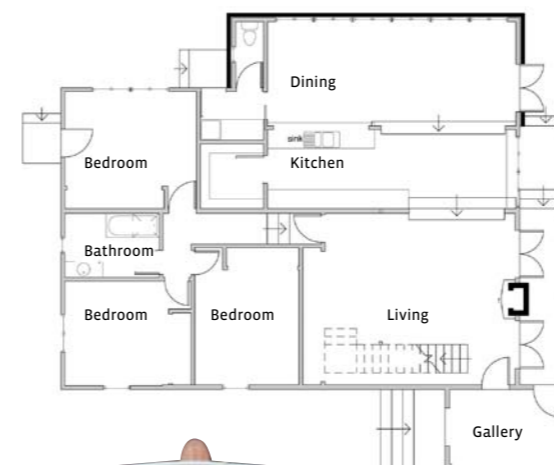


other visitors to purchase. "We have many international guests, and part of the experience here includes handmade toiletries, gluten and wheat free meals, vegetables and fruit straight from our garden and a completely organic experience overall," says Jackie. "We make wreaths and other decorative items from Neudorf Vineyards grape prunings, Oak platters, and we also make wine infused wood smoked chips from the wine barrels."

Michael and Jackie were fortunate that all the hard restoration work had been completed before they took over residence, but they do have plans for the future. "We want to build separate accommodation so we can take more guests; and one day it would be nice to create indoor/outdoor flow out the back

of the home, but we love the house as it is. It's a home with great bones, and although the property is only one acre in size, when you're here it feels like there are 500 acres because of the surrounding farmland and vineyard." So far, the only enhancement they have made to the property is in the garden, with the addition of a bountiful vegetable garden, olive grove and orchard.

There is no chance Jackie and Michael will be leaving anytime soon, but they will move on one day. "We do love the sea so you never know, but we will be here a while." For now, they cannot believe their good fortune in finding such a property, and Michael is feeling very inspired, working on a Cultivator series of sculptures, inspired by the land surrounding Neudorf Hall. ■



Materials

ACCOMMODATION A small plaque at the home's entrance introduces Neudorf Hall Bed & Breakfast.

FURNITURE Nood furniture features throughout the house. Michael and Jackie appreciate the European design influence of each piece.

BEDWARE After a thorough search for the right bedlinen, Jackie came across the perfect look for the home from New Plymouth based Bianca Lorenne who have a sumptuous range of cushions, quilts, comforters and more. www.biancalorenne.co.nz

ACCESSORIES Michael crafts items from French Oak Barrels, sourced from the nearby Neudorf Vineyard. He makes gumboot racks, platters, wine buckets, coat rack stands and vine trees. For more of Michael's fine art sculptures see page 23.

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For more information on Neudorf Hall
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THE SPECS

Nelson
\$600,000 - \$700,000
200 Sq m



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