



Land's End

On Canterbury's Banks Peninsula, a magically restored, century-old shepherd's cottage has things to teach us.

TEXT / *Jeremy Hansen*

PHOTOGRAPHY / *Simon Devitt*

The cottage sits on a farm hilltop with views northwards towards the horizon.



Above The cottage's fireplace surrounds and ceiling beams still hold the initials carved into them by shepherds who stayed in the cottage during mustering. On the mantle is 'Sunrise' by Christchurch artist Mehrdad Tahan, a representation of daybreak at nearby Pigeon Bay. **Right** The cottage is defined by its modest scale, with low ceilings and just three small windows to frame the sea views.

Some architects approach their work an article of faith. Just as there are Catholics and Protestants, there are modernists and traditionalists, groups who generally stay true to their respective creeds. Some of them are purists who could never imagine deploying a radically different architectural vocabulary in their work, as if doing so would risk some sort of excommunication.

Andrew Patterson is not one of these architects. He has designed some of New Zealand's most assertively contemporary buildings (including New Plymouth's almost-complete Len Lye Centre and the Christchurch Botanic Gardens Visitor Centre, which opened last year), yet here on Canterbury's Banks Peninsula, he has also restored a petite, century-old shepherd's cottage in a way that betrays little suggestion of architectural ego – or even of modern intervention. Doesn't he see this as a contradiction? "I'm agnostic," Patterson says with a shrug. "I just like space and light. Wouldn't it be really dull if the world was all the same?"

The evidence of his diverse tastes is now scattered all over the farm that the shepherd's cottage calls home. The cottage is one building in a range of luxury accommodation options Patterson has designed on Annandale coastal farm. Further down the four-wheel-drive track that leads to the farm's outer extremities is

Seascape, a small, ultra-modern getaway that feels like the lair of a glamorous villain from a James Bond film (it featured on the cover of our June/July 2014 issue). Just over the hill in the centre of a picturesque valley is a contemporary-but-classic farmhouse that Patterson designed that was a finalist in our 2014 Home of the Year award. Earlier, Patterson designed the restoration of Annandale's original homestead. All in all, this group of buildings makes for an impressively varied portfolio. An outsider might find it hard to comprehend that all these projects were led by the same architect.

Annandale is owned by Mark Palmer, a New Zealander who lived in the United States for 35 years before purchasing the 4000-acre farm (which boasts 10km of coastline) and commencing work not only on the aforementioned buildings, but on an extensive project to rehabilitate the land and farm. There was much to do. Patterson started work on the main homestead before he and Palmer turned their attention to the other buildings, which were developed over a five-year period. The shepherd's cottage stands in picturesque solitude on an isolated hillside about 20 minutes' drive down the track from the homestead. A row of macrocarpa trees shelters the back of the cottage from southerly winds. The building had been



Low ceilings and rich timber details make the cottage interior feel like a warm embrace. Patterson opted for a pragmatic approach to the restoration, creating a kitchen more suitable to contemporary needs. He likens cooking in the small space with another person to dancing.





Above left Sunlight casts the shadow of a windowframe on the timber floor. **Above right** The large sofa in the living room allows views of the ocean. **Left** The ground-floor rooms have been subtly reconfigured to make the kitchen and bathroom fit contemporary expectations.

long abandoned when Palmer purchased Annandale and was no longer habitable, except for animals with four legs. “It had sheep running through it,” Patterson recalls. “But basically the form was there.”

He didn’t want to change the fundamentals of the structure (apart from making it meet modern-day expectations of comfort) and essentially stuck with the footprint. The only major change was the addition of a new window under a gable upstairs to create a bedroom in what was an attic. A staircase was relocated from the farm’s original homestead and fitted intact to connect the upper and lower levels of the shepherd’s cottage.

Rather than follow the current fashion of clearly differentiating contemporary insertions from the original structure, Patterson fudged the boundaries. “We mixed new elements by making them look old,” he says. His rationale is that vernacular buildings such as the cottage were progressively adapted by their original owners anyway, and that this is just another in a series of tweaks to make the structure function successfully for the next generation.

There were risks in this approach: renting the shepherd’s cottage costs \$570 a night in the off-season, but it would be hard to imagine anyone wanting to do so if the restoration had burnished it to too

high a sheen, creating a building that felt like an ersatz reproduction instead of the real thing. Patterson has walked a fine line, making the cottage comfortable without destroying its sense of authenticity. He and his team sourced old materials that would feel authentic in the building, re-purposing them as kitchen cabinetry, walls and floorboards. The rich materiality of the interior – the lovely grain of the timber details, and the strong rhythm of the beams overhead – means it never feels as if additional decoration is necessary. (The building won prizes in the Sustainability and Heritage categories at the NZ Institute of Architects’ Canterbury Architecture Awards).

It is difficult to imagine a contemporary architect designing a building like this from scratch. The cottage is tiny, with ceilings so low you almost suspect a tour group to arrive in search of Bilbo Baggins. There are only three small windows addressing the spectacular sea view, and many people would have to crouch to look out of them.

All of this seems to fly in the face of what we now consider appropriate levels of light, space and outlook. Yet the cottage feels like the definition of cosy, without any of the cloying cuteness that word implies. The tightness of the living space, which still boasts its original fireplace, is like being wrapped in a warm




Above left The outdoor claw-foot bath, which was relocated from the homestead, provides the chance to soak up the endless aspect of the sea. **Above right** Old materials were sourced for their authenticity and re-purposed for the walls and floors. **Right** The old staircase leading up to the bedroom came from the farm's homestead and was fitted intact. The bedroom was previously an attic space accessible only by drop-down ladder.

The tightness of the living space is like being wrapped in a warm blanket.

blanket, a more secure space in which to wait out a storm than a grand, glassy building, no matter how well-constructed. "We all want to have a seamless change between inside and out," Patterson says, "but sometimes it's fun to protect yourself from the outside. As soon as you walk out the front door you can be in a salt-laden gale and see for miles in every direction."

The stark contrast here between indoors and outdoors reminds us what shelter is really about. The building's small size has the added (if illogical) bonus of making it feel less likely that the weather could damage it. It's almost as if it is too tiny to be noticed by a passing storm.

The small scale of the cottage's interior can teach us other things. The contemporary demand for more living space often seems insatiable, but bigger buildings cost more to construct, and too many people blithely trade off quality of materials in order to get more space. Small structures like this can remind us that there are surprising pleasures in petite rooms. "It's better to have a space that's too small than too big," Patterson says. The little kitchen, he says by way of example, "means everyone loves cooking there, because you have to cook together in a way that's like dancing together."

The preservation of scale is probably the purest aspect of the cottage's rehab, a reminder of the beauty inherent in a simple interior that holds us close. You get the sense, from talking to Patterson, that this delights him, too. It's as if he feels that the diversity of his output gives him a certain kind of freedom. "It always makes me laugh how people want to put rules on things all the time," Patterson says. "I love modernism but we don't have to do it all the time. We do some very contemporary buildings but that doesn't mean you can't appreciate the others. It's just about celebrating space and the human condition." 



DESIGN NOTEBOOK

*Q&A with architect
Andrew Patterson*

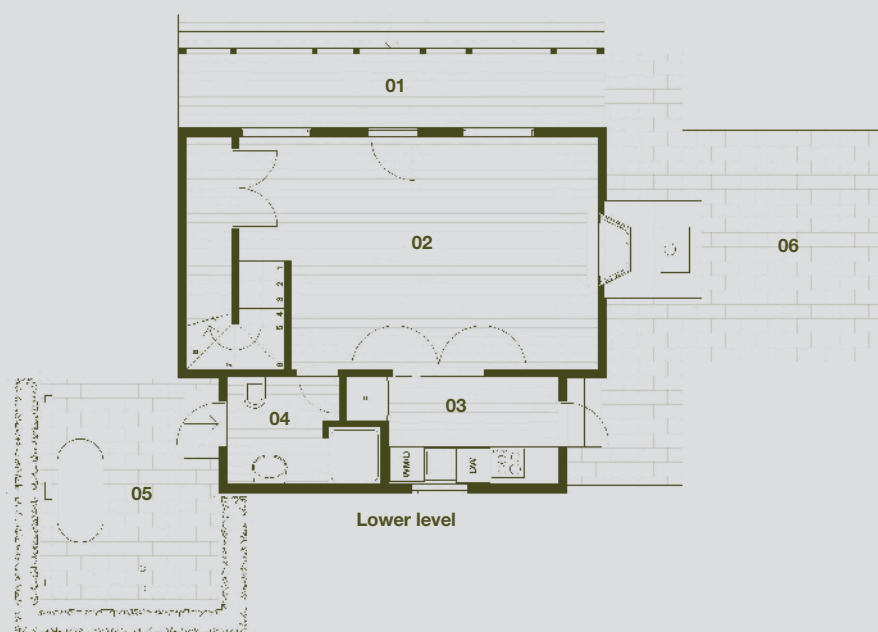
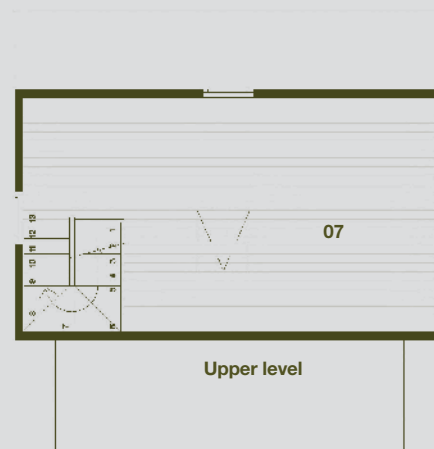
1. Verandah
2. Dining/living
3. Kitchen
4. Bathroom
5. Outdoor bath/shower
6. Terrace
7. Bedroom



What sort of shape was the cottage in when you first visited? It was in shocking condition. You wouldn't have believed it. Basically it had sheep running through it. But it had some big pieces of timber, good timber. The form was still there.

How did you decide what to do with it? We didn't change the structure much. We put in a new window upstairs facing the sea. We stuck closely to the original room configuration. We introduced new elements but made them look old – we searched for materials from the time that were authentic. The peninsula had a lot of totara originally, so much of the original timber was that.

Restorations can be fraught with complexity. How did you decide to handle this one? There's a fundamental heritage dilemma. Heritage in the last 20 years has moved to the point where you're expected to create an obvious division between new and old. There are lots of buildings being restored with elements added that are obviously new. We don't believe in that. We see a continuity in buildings, and it's okay to build in their original style. In our work we often do a different methodology, where we invent a different history for the buildings. We imagined the Axis Building [a refurbishment in Auckland] not as an old Nestlé factory but that it was designed in Gotham City. At D72 [also in Auckland], we imagined New Zealand where the treaty had been seriously honoured for Maori, and imagined what effect that would have had on our architecture. The shepherd's cottage imagines a world where shepherds were quite well-paid and respected and had beautiful surroundings.



Right Sitting on an expanse of clipped lawn, the cottage faces seaward.

Far right The home's only bedroom is situated on the upper floor. Reservations to stay in the cottage can be made at annandale.com.

