

HOME WOMBARRA NSW

Shells by Tide Treasures, sourced from Etsy, and a landscape painting by artist Kate Broadfoot adorn the sitting area. **FACING PAGE** Homeowner Harriet Allen enjoys a cuddle with her son, Scout, on the deck, which features a dining setting from Woodbury Furniture and a stylish Bambrella umbrella.



castle in the sand

CRASHING WAVES AND RUGGED TERRAIN ARE ALL PART OF THE ATTRACTION FOR THIS YOUNG FAMILY IN WOMBARRA, NSW, WHERE LIFE IS JUST SWELL.

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THE OCEAN'S PRESENCE is felt deeply at Harriet Allen and Brad Kirkland's shack perched on the cliffs of Wombarra, an hour's drive south of Sydney in Dharawal country. A sapphire expanse forms the view from the back of the cedar-clad home, and fresh, salty air permeates the rooms. When the swell is up, the force of the waves pounding the rocks below vibrates through the dwelling's 1940s bones. "It shakes the house!" Harriet says. "It can keep you up at night and is scary for others at first, but I love it."

At the beginning of 2020, full-time mum Harriet and her fiancé Brad, a beverage company owner, lived in Manly on Sydney's Northern Beaches but were increasingly stressed by the traffic and busyness. The birth of their son, Scout, prompted thoughts of moving closer to Harriet's family and the laid-back region she once called home.

At their first viewing of the quaint Wombarra property, the couple faced a hotchpotch of renovations from the 1980s and '90s, along with a yard overgrown with invasive lantana and coral trees. However, the uninterrupted ocean outlook proved to be an irresistible proposition that had the family packing up their life and heading south.

A six-month settlement gave Harriet and Brad enough time to plan their updates and get their ducks in a row before the renovations started in October 2020. Structural touch-ups, backyard clear-outs and clever cosmetic refreshes completely transformed the mood of the cottage. "My main objective was to give the house some old character and also make it functional and clean for family living," explains Harriet, a design enthusiast drawn to spaces that nod to the past. >

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CLOCKWISE, FROM LEFT Brad and Scout go exploring; the facade features the original cedar cladding; open kitchen shelving keeps everything handy; a hallway light from Emac & Lawton complements vintage wall hooks from Honeybee Homewares, and a cabinet found on Facebook Marketplace. FACING PAGE The Illawarra escarpment rises out of the waves.



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Adjacent to the kitchen, the sitting area is an inviting space with a cosy MCM House love seat and ottoman, floor lamp from Few & Far, side table from 55 Parrots, pendant by The Society Inc, curtains by I Love Linen, and an Ikea rug. Meanwhile, the Norwegian Rose marble benchtop, from Marable, shines in the kitchen. Taps by Brodware, an Ikea sink, and handles from The Society Inc complete the fresh look.



Shiplap and moulding now clad the interior walls, the original floorboards sparkle with a light whitewash and the new open-plan kitchen is a modern take on traditional style, complete with a Norwegian Rose marble benchtop and a reclaimed timber kitchen table custom-made by Harriet's brother, Felix Allen. The work was completed swiftly and the family moved in on Christmas Day in 2020.

Since then, Harriet has decorated the rooms with vintage finds, natural ephemera and handcrafted pieces that bolster the property's romantic charm. "I really wanted to use as much second-hand [decor] as possible," she says.

Many of the original artworks on display depict the surrounding area and its dramatic stretch of coastline hemmed by the Illawarra escarpment. Local plein-air artists are drawn to the rugged beauty of the terrain, which is a familiar and comforting landscape to Harriet.

"I remember a slow childhood of spending a lot of time outside, going to the beach and bushwalking," she recalls, adding that her outdoorsy memories reflect Brad's upbringing in Christchurch, New Zealand. "After visiting his home town recently, I see the similarities of the lifestyle he had growing up to where we are now," Harriet adds.

With their second child due in November, the couple is pleased that their little ones will experience easy, relaxed days filled with nature walks and fortifying coastal breezes.

To accommodate their growing brood, Harriet and Brad plan to rebuild on the block, creating an expanded dwelling that nestles quietly into the coastline. There's no question they have planted themselves firmly in this salty outcrop. "We'd like to build something that looks like it has been here for years, but will also last for years to come," says Harriet. "Brad's main request in life is to live by the ocean, so he definitely feels really at home here."

In fact, the freshly turfed lawn is the only thing standing between the family and the great deep blue. "Every morning, I have my coffee while watching the sunrise, which is my all-time favourite thing about living here," Harriet says.

The novelty of dolphins and whales gliding through their extended backyard will never wear off, either. "I didn't anticipate how much change you would see in the sea," she adds. "There's always something to look at, and it's never the same. That's what's so special about living here." *CH*



CLOCKWISE, FROM ABOVE Harriet says the pigeonhole shelving unit, a Christmas gift made by her brother, Felix, is "one of my favourite pieces in the house." The unit is topped with a Kate Broadfoot painting; the TV nook has an MCM House sofa and ottoman, with an Ikea sisal rug and I Love Linen curtains; Porter's Paints Turmeric enlivens Scout's bedroom, along with a framed tea towel from Castle and Things; "You feel like you're a world away," says Harriet of their coastal haven. **FACING PAGE** Harriet keeps Scout's toys behind a skirt of fabric. Felix crafted the wire face sculpture, while the art was a second-hand find.



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In the master bedroom, a cherished artwork by Harriet's late grandmother is lit at night by Fat Shack Vintage wall lights. A second-hand stool from Wombat, vintage Persian rug and luxurious bedding from Hale Mercantile Co, Society of Wanderers and House of Baltic Linen creates a romantic feeling.



ABOUT THE HOUSE:

- Porter's Paints Popcorn is used throughout, with French Green in the master bedroom, and Turmeric in Scout's room and the bathroom.
- In the kitchen, the couple splurged on the Norwegian Rose marble benchtops from Marable in Sydney's Botany, but saved money by using Ikea base cabinets, updated with custom cabinet fronts made by a joiner and handles from The Society Inc.
- "I enjoy collecting pieces over time," Harriet says. "When I'm in a new town, I will look for a second-hand store. Other than that, my mother has an incredible collection, and I often leave her house 'borrowing' something." Locally, she frequents Wombat and the vintage section at Backyard Blooms, both in Thirroul.
- Harriet cites interior designers Sibella Court and Tamsin Johnson as sources of inspiration, along with Deborah Bibby's beach-shack book *The Originals*. "There is too much throwaway furniture these days," Harriet says. "I really like people who incorporate older pieces and do things a bit differently."

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