

Eight years ago Edoardo and Lorenzo Canal with the support of wives Teresa and Melissa, had the opportunity to purchase a 20 acre lot in Smelting House Cove. They had spent their childhood holidays adventuring around Mahurangi West; in the very close bach community of Jameson's Bay. Now with their own families they wanted to give their kids the same opportunity that they believe moulded them, and what better than the exquisite island of Kawau.

Following the dream of the perfect small Bach community they developed the land into what is now Hideaway Cove, 10 sections with communal land, all sharing the key infrastructure of an all tide jetty, inclined lift, gravel track linking sections, power to site and its own sandy beach.

In June this year Edoardo and I (Teresa) completed the construction of the first Bach. Now 6months later, a second building for the Taylors is in process of getting building consent, and Lorenzo and Melissa are finalising the design for their build. It is truly exciting seeing the place transform.

As for our own build many have been curious, so I thought I would share the process.

Sitting amongst the Kanuka on top of our section looking down Bon Accord Harbour it was hard to imagine that there would ever be a house here. But, after five years of pondering and camping on site, we finally made up our mind with the expert design of Architect Tim Dorrington and the project management of Nat Holloway at Box Living.

Conscious that we weren't the first to live on this spectacular site, which was once the home to the sea roving Ngatitai and Ngatiwai tribes, we wanted the design to celebrate that rich history. The house could not intrude on the very elaborate pah adjacent to the site. We also wanted to preserve as much of the site's natural contours and the stunningly tall Kanuka Trees, where the Morepork roost. The final design wrapped around the sloping hill, the deck running seamlessly into the hillside, whilst the exterior of the building had a distinct fortress-like feel to it, all the while remaining nestled amongst the trees.

Like many builds on Kawau we were mindful of the added cost of getting everything there and accommodating our crew. For this project to work on time and to budget it had to be run with absolute precision. As Edoardo and Lorenzo had already project managed the construction of the Jetty, Cable Car and track on the Hideaway Cove development, we were well prepared in managing island logistics – Barge, Helicopter, Boat, Tide, and the unpredictable weather. Nat was briefed and a plan was hatched.

By May 2010, with building consents in hand, we decided to schedule the build post winter, and on the 15th October 2010 Edoardo with the help of his friend Aaron laid the first foundations. We were ready for Box Living to start on the 22nd October 2010.

Sandspit: 6am on the 22nd October 2010, the barge was loaded with the first consignment of supplies. It set sail without a hitch, into a flat sea with a backdrop of a calm blue sky. The children and I could not contain our excitement; imagine our tent being replaced by a house. We watched every load being dropped into place by the very talented crew from Skyworks. That first night we slept in the old cottage down by Lidgard House as it was a little too cold to camp, and as we ate our dinner we saw out the cottage window a very plump yellow full moon rising directly above our building site. That truly auspicious moment somehow reassured us, that we had made the right decision and this project would go well. From that day on we never looked back.

Bruce the Builder and his wonderful team worked tirelessly every step of the way. Over the summer we stayed in the tent, and the children kept a close eye on what was happening, checking safety standards by swinging precariously on the scaffolding, and ensuring solidity by dancing on the roof. Every room was closely scrutinised by their playful watch. For all of us it was an incredible journey seeing a house grow up from the ground.

Seven months later and the house was completed - on time and on budget, thanks to the Box Living team. The weather held strong for the best part of six months, and other than a small hole in Edoardo's boat caused by the jetty and me, the project went without mishap. Although many are put off by the prospect of building I can honestly say it was a truly satisfying experience. With a good project manager, a tight reign on the spreadsheet, and an understanding of local logistics, I believe building on

Kawau is as easy as building on the mainland and wouldn't hesitate to recommend it to anyone.