

Riverstone

As Diane and Tim Reynolds travel over the Kopu-Hikuai stretch of SH25, en route to their Cooks Beach bach, the thoughts clogging their minds from their busy lives in Auckland start to untangle and, once they have arrived and have got their toes in the sand, they feel back to their normal selves.

"I just love it. It kills me when we can't get down here for more than a month," Diane says.

As the director and operator of two thriving pre-schools, and husband Tim, a director and kiwifruit grower in their other family business, the Reynolds lead busy lives in Pukekohe. They built their holiday bach as a retreat for their whole family – four adult children plus partners and six grandchildren – to relax and unwind.

Sharing their first holiday together with extended family in the bach they call 'Riverstone' for Christmas 2017 was a long-awaited dream.

"We searched many coastal areas to buy or build in, but kept coming back to Cooks Beach where we made many fabulous memories holidaying when our children were young," Diane says.

In more recent years, they stayed at Cooks Beach with good friends and got itchy feet for a place of their own.

After several weekends checking out real estate, the Reynolds found the current site, then an empty section set up for a caravan and utility, on a quiet cul-de-sac they had always fancied, within a

five-minute walk to the beach. They made an offer on the side of the road on the way home.

The Reynolds wanted to create a lodge-style bach and were not daunted by building, having previously built their Pukekohe home, a category winner for House of the Year, in the early 2000s.

Rod Percival was the local, multi award-winning builder they had in mind, having admired his previous projects. With his focus now on consultancy, Rod put them in touch with his nephew Damian Percival, who trained with him and owns Percival Construction.

"After a phone call and our first meeting with Damian, we both knew he was the man for us," Diane says. "We had visited some of his projects around the Coromandel, just to confirm, and of course he has done very well, with Master Builder Award wins. Damian and his team didn't disappoint, they were all so friendly, real perfectionists and nothing was too much trouble," Diane says.

The Reynolds knew exactly what they wanted, and engaged Hurley Architects in Pukekohe, with the plans already mapped out on paper.

The riverstone surrounds of the open fireplace create a cosy environment during winter.



Top: The expansive living space opens out through 7m-wide stacker doors to the covered alfresco area.

Middle: (Right) Tim and Diane Reynolds at the doorway to their Cooks Beach home. (Left) Home decor is a passion of Diane and daughter Stacey.

Bottom: Tim loves wood and wanted to create a rustic feel with generous use of band sawn timber.

Tim loves wood and wanted to create a rustic feel with generous use of band sawn timber.

The black, painted band sawn board and batten exterior is accented by wide, white window and door surrounds. The fascia boards are band sawn too, as are the exposed rafters and ceilings throughout.

Privacy was a priority, so they opted for smaller windows from the street front, but once inside the expansive living space opens out through 7m wide stacker doors to the covered alfresco area, which can be enjoyed at all times of the day, even if it's raining.

In time, the fence will be painted black and dense, tropical gardens will provide privacy and finish off the relaxing and tranquil feel of the outdoor living space.

The name they have given the house, 'Riverstone' leads from the large, locally-sourced riverstone exterior chimney and inside, the ceiling-to-floor riverstone surrounds of the open fireplace, which creates a cosy environment during winter.

The whole family had input into the finishing, with Tim and sons Brad and Thomas completing the interior band sawn board and batten walls, architraves, door surrounds and painting. Thomas made the large metre-wide front door from band sawn timber and of course, it's painted black.

While interior decorating is a passion of Diane's, one of their daughters, Stacey, is an interior designer and at the time owned two homeware stores. "We were very fortunate to have her input and great prices for décor items," Diane says.

"It turned into a real family affair with everyone lending a hand, which made it personal to us," Diane says. "Our daughter Kate is a very good cook, she kept us all going with yummy food as well as sanding the door surrounds. Everyone contributed where they could, so we all feel ownership of Riverstone. And we all work and have hectic lives, so it's a lovely retreat for us all. There's no asking permission; you just take a key and go," Diane says.

Builder Damian says the Reynold's enthusiasm to be part of the build was a great dynamic.

"When you spend time there, you really get a feel for how connected the family are to the space," Damian says. "One of the most rewarding parts of this job is when you get to see the end result. We build houses, but it's the family's ideas and input that make it a home."

Riverstone's open and casual style accommodates everyone in-together and there is plenty of room for the odd tent or caravan as well.

"The dining table is big enough to take the 14 of us and acts as a preparation surface too, as we didn't want an island bench. At night, we clear it for our grandies to play board and card games with their Pop. There are areas for everybody, it doesn't feel crowded when we are all there at all," Diane says.

In the future, Diane hopes she, and Tim might split their time 50/50 between Cooks Beach and Pukekohe. For now, her monthly hair appointment at Whitianga's Stilo Hair & Co, ensures they visit at least once a month.

"I just love coming to stay, even if it's only for the night. It's our happy place," Diane says. ●

