

03

Mountford HOUSE

by Shaun Lockyer
Architects

• BRISBANE, QLD •

This postwar home in Brisbane has been renovated with an instinctive understanding of the daily rhythms of life.

Words by [Margie Fraser](#)
Photography by [Scott Burrows](#)

Throwing the baby out with the bathwater is a common enough syndrome in residential renovations, when stripping away, fiddling about and layering up can readily destroy original intentions. Sometimes it's all for the best, but often the decision to renovate rather than demolish derives from a love of the spirit of a place, or an appreciation of those small, elusive moments that are difficult to identify but that thread together into a meaningful whole.

This postwar home in Brisbane's inner north was well loved by its long-term owners. Solid and substantial, it spoke of times when size mattered less than quality craftsmanship and big-statement forms were subservient to function and practical materials. The owners had extended it on two earlier occasions as their family grew and then shrank, as they do. Now edging closer to retirement and enjoying plenty of grandparental babysitting duties, the couple craved a little more amenity: northern light, improved access to the garden, easy circulation routes and relaxed, open living areas were all on the wish list. Equally important was the urge to retain the parts of the house that still functioned well. It was a keeper.

Their brief to Shaun Lockyer was, in one sense, a dream brief, although not because it craved architectural wonderment or provided a spectacular budget. Almost the reverse, in fact. The budget was comparatively small and the ideas weren't wildly adventurous, but were instead grounded in an understanding of the daily rhythms of life and what worked, or didn't, in the existing house.

The no-nonsense approach was praised by Shaun, who had engaged in a renovation of his own postwar home a couple of years earlier. "The clients were able to recognize and appreciate the essence of the place," says Shaun. "They take joy in simple things and were not asking for something flashy. It was all about how to make it work and how to enjoy it more." Having seen Shaun's own renovation published in *Houses* (Issue 74, *The Lighthouse* by Shaun Lockyer Architects with Arkhefeld), the clients liked the humble approach and the idea of grafting on a contemporary pod while making the older part of the house relate to it and function well with minimum intervention.

Their strong, instinctive understanding of the value of architecture was much assisted by the fact that the original house was designed by Frank Bell, one of the famous Bell Brothers of the eponymous

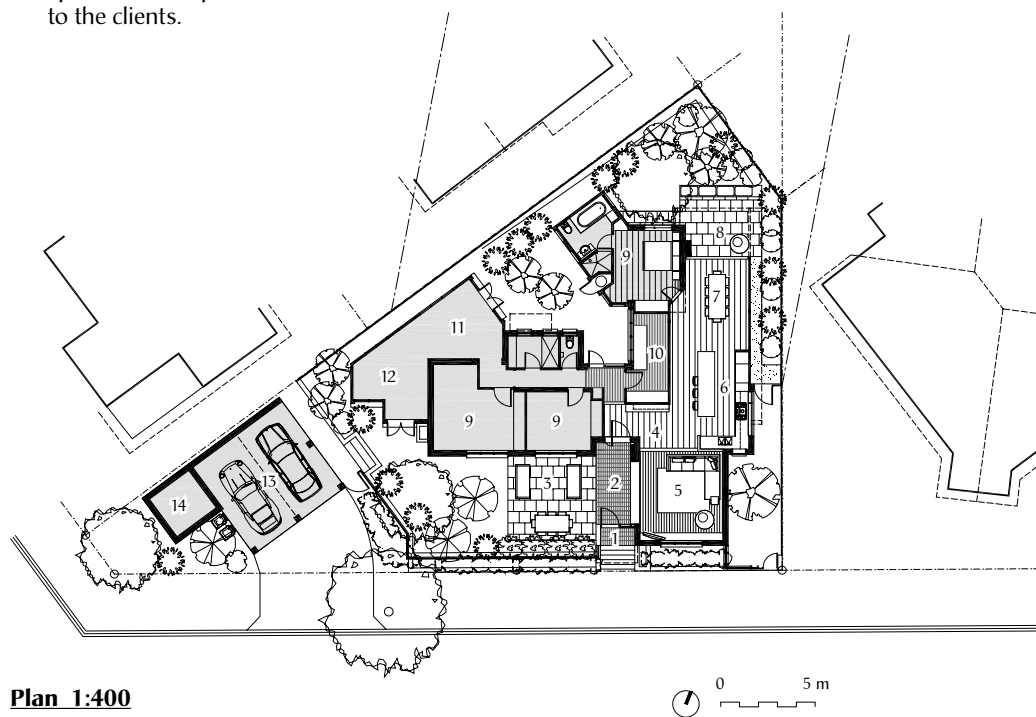


01 The new kitchen/dining pavilion on the northern edge flows directly into the back garden.



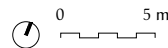
02 A relocated front door and additional entry structures enclose the southern courtyard.

03 Open, easy circulation and access to outdoor spaces were important to the clients.



- 1 Gatehouse
- 2 Entry
- 3 Pergola
- 4 Foyer
- 5 Lounge
- 6 Kitchen
- 7 Dining room
- 8 Courtyard
- 9 Bedroom
- 10 Laundry
- 11 Retreat
- 12 Office
- 13 Garage
- 14 Store

Plan 1:400



furniture manufacturing family. Bell Brothers was a household name in mid-century Brisbane, favoured for its solid timber contemporary and antique reproduction furniture. The bedroom wardrobes still bear the trademark plaques denoting their provenance. "The quality of the place was so high, and we wanted to continue that presence throughout," says Shaun.

The brick-and-tile original was constructed with a dovetail neatness and a solidity that deter radical intervention. Circulation routes through the house were knotted and inward-facing, with a kitchen almost severed from the rest of the house and a tucked-away dining room with little connection to the outside.


The southern courtyard, just inside the entry gate, was a favourite spot of the clients. This pergola-covered space is now given a prime role in the entry sequence, with the establishment of a brick entry pier and solid timber door at the front boundary. The courtyard is a shady summer escape or evening dining room. Large glazed sliders open into the living spaces, and the original solid front door is now a large transparent pivoting panel.

A new pavilion attaches neatly to the narrow northern edge of the site, lifting the roofline into a lofty clerestory that brings in light while claiming privacy from neighbours looming close above. The

new kitchen/dining space flows into a private grotto garden that is carved out of the steep hillside.

After the more compressed spaces of the original home, this light-filled volume acts as a pressure release valve. Views of the sky and surrounding foliage make it a continuous barometer of external conditions and weather patterns. The easy ebb and flow between inside and out are further enhanced by ventilation through high louvres and a delightful high corner of glazing that greets the morning sun.

The space is a pivotal point and passage between the two courtyards, the central station of the living quarters from which all other spaces peel away. A crucial new sightline from the new pavilion, through the home's core and to the street, is made with the simple exchange of original opaque casements with a bank of transparent louvres. Elsewhere cabinetry is made to match the quality of original bespoke pieces, and original timber floors connect seamlessly with new spotted gum boards.

This beautiful, grounded garden room cleverly mediates between internal, compressed volumes and close neighbours to render all as a calm, light void. It shows a light touch and a masterful control of scale and planning. 

04



04 Clerestory windows and "a delightful high corner of glazing" let in plenty of northern light.

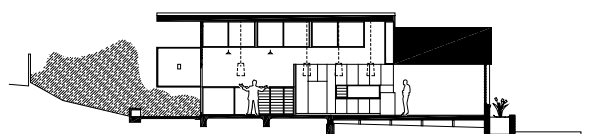
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05 Foliage surrounds the new space, while close neighbours are carefully screened out.

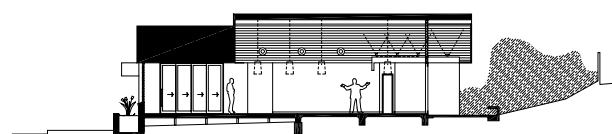


Short section 1:400



Long section A 1:400

0 5 m



Long section B 1:400

06



Architect

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Practice profile

Established in 2010, this is a small design studio focused on residential and other bespoke commissions.

Project team

Shaun Lockyer, Shane Marsh,
Richard Pain, Corinne Bolton

Builder

Waymore Constructions

Consultants

Engineer: Westera Partners
Hydraulic engineers:
Aqualogical

Products

Roofing: Lysaght Spandek
roof sheeting, Zinalume
finish

External walls: James Hardie
Scyon Linea weatherboard
and HardieTex blueboard,
rendered and painted; Wilson
Timbers shiplapped spotted
gum

Internal walls: Wilson
Timbers shiplapped spotted
gum; plasterboard

Windows and doors:
Allkind Joinery and Glass
New Guinea rosewood
frames

Flooring: Wilson Timbers
tongue-and-groove spotted
gum floorboards

Lighting: The Caribou Group
internal and external lights;
Inlite wall lights

Kitchen: Bika cabinets, 2-pac
finish; Quantum Quartz
'Ice' stone slab benchtops;
Oliveri Sonetto sink; Abey
Gessi Oxygene tapware; Ilve
appliances; Westinghouse
fridge

External elements: Decor
Stone Nambucca natural
stone pebbles; Eco Outdoor
Abyss split stone slate tiles;
Robert Plumb Mark Wall
letterbox

Floor area

549 m² site
160 m² existing
42 m² new

Project cost

\$350,000

Time schedule

Design, documentation:

3 months

Construction:

5 months

06 Spotted gum floorboards "connect seamlessly" with the original timber floors in the rest of the house.