



EVERYTHING OLD IS NEW AGAIN

Blending past and present is a winning recipe for happy cottage owners Ian and Helen Berry and their talented builder, **Gilkon Construction Ltd.**

BY M. CAROLYN BLACK
PHOTOGRAPHY BY SANDY MACKAY

This timeless, authentic new cottage on Georgian Bay is a treasure for Ian and Helen Berry. They tried, but couldn't save the old log cabin on the beach. Instead, with the help of their builder, Gilkon Construction, they reclaimed and recycled whatever they could to build this beauty. Even the kitchen cabinets were made of wood torn from the original structure.





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The Berrys have summured on the shores of Cawaja Beach for as long as they can remember; first visiting Helen's sister at her waterfront cottage before making the decision 20 years ago to purchase an old log cabin on the property next door. Ian's work had the family living abroad, but each summer they would return to this idyllic spot.

That cabin, constructed with wooden beams over 200 years old, was originally built in Quebec, disassembled, and then reassembled at the Tiny Beaches location in the late 1800s. "The original log cabin was beautiful but whoever owned the cottage over the years seemed to put on a new wing... and the construction of those wings couldn't stand the test of time," Helen says. "We always knew the cottage would need attention but we wanted to be part of the process so we had to wait."

They'd originally planned to move the existing building closer to the water and renovate it, but many of the lower timbers had rotted and it couldn't be relocated. Due to the cabin's historic nature, the couple felt remorse about tearing it down. Helen, however, admits that "after a while it became liberating because there were no design restrictions and we had a blank canvas to work with." *Continued on page 60*



The dining room table was built of reclaimed wood by Gilkon's cabinet maker Jim Crippin. **TOP LEFT:** The view from the all-season room into the kitchen and main living area. **LEFT:** In the all-season room, during those hot summer days, the windows unlatch and drop completely out of sight into the basement foundation. The gas fireplace warms the space during cold months.



The tall, shallow Rumford fireplace warms the entire main floor. The grey stone surround is a focal point in the room and the painting on the mantel is a family favourite. **OPPOSITE TOP:** The Berrys absolutely love their new cottage and highly recommend Chris Bondar (pictured) and his team at Gilkon Construction. **OPPOSITE BELOW:** The beams from the old log cabin are used throughout the new cottage and blend perfectly with the new construction.



The caveat was that the blank canvas would incorporate as much of the old building as possible. Gilkon Project Manager **Chris Bondar** says, “Eighty percent of the beams in the (new) cottage came from the original structure.” While the vertical beams required for structural integrity were purchased from **S & J Barn Demolition**, all the horizontal beams looked very familiar to the couple. Helen was thrilled the first time she saw them installed on the ceiling of the new 2,900 sq. ft. cottage and recognized certain notches and nicks. She said to her husband at the time, “Those are the beams from the old living room. Oh my God; the cottage is still here.” The white poplar v-groove ceiling contrasts beautifully with the dark

antique beams and a full-masonry Rumford fireplace (**Home and Cottage Centre**) provides a cosy, traditional focal point in the living room. A custom-built cabinet, lined with stainless steel and tucked beside the fireplace, holds firewood.

While the rustic, antique aspects of the cottage are in the spotlight, the Berrys wanted most things modern and high-tech hidden from view. Helen says, of the living room: “Can you picture all this old wood and a big-screen TV up on the wall? I think that would be like a blight on the room.” **Marilyn Lake** suggested a low, built-in cabinet for the TV with a remote-powered lift inside. The cabinet nestles beside the fireplace but is

on castors ready to roll to where it’s needed. The electronics that run the lighting, sound and other house systems are concealed behind closet doors but can be accessed from their city home. The home’s security system is from **Huron Alarms**.

The floor throughout the cottage is reclaimed rock elm supplied by Southern Ontario Mennonites and milled in Bracebridge, then installed raw and finished on site. The large kitchen island, topped with natural granite from Brazil in a pattern called Magna Gold, is the perfect place to lay out a buffet or dessert table for entertaining, and with bar stools tucked beneath, also a great spot to congregate while the meal is being

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prepared by the hosts. "We fell in love with the stone on the island," says Helen. "It's not just a piece of the kitchen; it's a lovely focal point and a part of nature, almost like a piece of art to me." All appliances were purchased at **Barber & Haskill**, including a double convection wall oven, a professional six-burner rangetop with professional overhead range hood, all from Wolf, plus an Integrated Sub-Zero bottom-freezer fridge and a Bosh integrated dishwasher. **Blair Interiors & Window Fashions** provided all window coverings.

Tall glass doors divide the kitchen from one of Helen's favourite and most frequently-used rooms – the all-season sunroom with a gas fireplace for chillier days and nights. In warmer weather all the windows unlatch and drop completely out of sight into the basement foundation, leaving a screened-in porch with a clean Scandinavian feel. The same cedar decking used outside is brought into the sunroom to further unite indoors with outdoors. Helen says, "I'd say that is the room we use the most. Even in the winter we fire up the gas fireplace, put on the coffee and sit out there. We love that room."

Much of the wood in the house is reclaimed from the previous cabin, including all the pine kitchen cabinets, bedroom headboards and Murphy beds, handrails and bookcases. The large reclaimed-wood dining table built by Gilkon's cabinet maker **Jim Crippin** was "a dream" and Helen and Ian

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The upstairs master bedroom is serene and calm with a beautiful view of the bay. The headboard is made of wood from the old cottage and Gilkon used every nook to create additional storage space. **ABOVE:** The master en suite is white and bright with full-spa amenities. The ceiling pitch in every room is perfect. **ABOVE MIDDLE:** This writing nook is located in the master. **ABOVE LEFT & OPPOSITE TOP:** The home has two Murphy beds, both made just for the family by Gilkon Construction. This room is located on the main floor just behind the living area. **OPPOSITE BOTTOM:** A bench sits on the landing at the top of the stairs.



The lower level is huge, and is a wonderful gathering space to watch the big game, play pool or relax in front of the Napoleon gas fireplace. The second Murphy bed is hidden behind the fireplace in a room perfect for additional guests.

are very happy with the result. The ceiling beams had to be notched to fit, then sprinkled with mortar dust and antiqued to match – such attention to detail is why the Berrys highly recommend Gilkon and its staff.

At one point, the roofline the Berrys loved – and that architect **Brian Lee** of **The Ideal Environment** is known for – appeared to limit the storage space they wanted, so Ian and Gilkon Site Supervisor **Doug Hamelin** brainstormed and came up with an ideal solution: create storage under the roofline that eliminates the need for dressers or cabinets that eat up precious floor space. Helen says, “Ian really wanted to keep the look clean and use that space for drawers instead and it worked.”

The well-insulated basement floor boasts a comfortable wood-look vinyl tile able to withstand sandy, wet feet and damp towels after a day on the beach. A see-through fireplace (**Napoleon**) warms both the lower level family room and the adjoining room with a Murphy bed. This spring and summer, the Berrys intend to secure the landscaping services of **Kelly's Northern Landscapes Inc.** All the plumbing, heating and ventilation was done by **Tom Downer Ltd.**

The best part of the new cottage is actually the old cottage. When feeling nostalgic about their old family cabin, all Helen has to do is look up at the ceiling beams. She says, “That’s our old place. It’s still there.” **OH**



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