

PHOTOGRAPHS GRAHAM SPRING

# Cape Cool

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Looking to their surroundings for inspiration, the owners of this home atop the Woakwine Range on the Limestone Coast chose stone from the local paddocks, recycled timbers and colours in keeping with the nearby sand dunes to blend with, rather than overshadow, the landscape. *Grete/ Sneath* finds a house at home in its environment.



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WEAVING DOWN THE LONELY DIRT track towards Derek and Anna Hooper's house is like driving to the end of the Earth – and what a breathtaking spot it turns out to be. When looking for a place to call home, the couple chose some of the most hostile land on the Limestone Coast.

Located one kilometre west of Cape Jaffa as the local flock of yellow tailed cockatoos flies, this could hardly be called “the good country”. Rock strewn paddocks and battle weary trees which gave in to the wind years ago make this desolate environment look more akin to a lunar landscape than lush countryside. But there was one big selling point: some of the most quintessentially South Australian views you could imagine. To the east of this 110 hectare property, a blanket of pine forests stretches to the horizon. To the west, fertile farmland rolls to Kingston and beyond. And straight ahead, the next stop is Antarctica.

Not surprisingly, the couple wanted to capitalise on the stunning visual diversity by designing a home which sat harmoniously with the environment while soaking up the surrounds. The end result was a natural extension of their work at their vineyard and winery, which operates on holistic principles to produce the Cape Jaffa Wines label and has just become fully certified as biodynamic.

“We selected one of the highest points on the Woakwine Range,” explains Anna, “but the last thing we wanted to do was to have something that would dominate the landscape – it was more a case of working in with it in terms of materials, colours and energy use, in order to minimise our footprint.” Enter stone collected from surrounding paddocks and ruins, corrugated iron the colour of nearby dunes, and timber salvaged from wool stores and retired bridges.

Apart from gas for water heating, all the energy requirements for the house are supplied by a wind





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generator. While this was more expensive than connecting to the electricity grid, it sat well with Anna's and Derek's beliefs in sustainability. The extensive use of glass, clever louvres and concrete flooring has also created a climatic equilibrium, with a large open fire reserved for only the frostiest days. The layout of the home is equally accommodating, with Tanunda based architect Jamie Gladigau designing a living space which fulfilled the couple's wish list. "We wanted the panoramic views – not just out in front towards the sea, but either side as well, and we also wanted something to suit our lifestyle and personalities," says Anna.

The house is designed around a central atrium which offers year round entertaining away from the buffeting winds. It's bordered by glass on three sides to provide unobstructed views, and the western side has a



**Top:** Elements of the surrounding environment have been incorporated into the home in a style the couple describes as "contemporary rustic". The windows throughout the house, are raised slightly off floor level to give the feeling of floating in the landscape. **Above:** The master bedroom is at the front of the house – a spot specifically chosen for its instant surf reports.





dramatic stone feature wall with an arch which frames the farmland and, according to Derek, “takes the whole house into the hill”.

Inside, an L-shaped passageway surrounding the atrium leads to the rear bedrooms belonging to children Daisy, Harry and Grace, as well as a bathroom, loft, playroom and office. The master bedroom is at the front of the house – a spot specifically chosen for its instant surf reports based on the waves breaking over Baudin Rocks. The moon, which Anna and Derek study for its effects on their biodynamic vineyards, is also clearly visible. Curtains, of course, are nowhere to be seen.

The living area, with its raked timber ceilings and central freestone fireplace, is next to the master bedroom. There’s no television or artwork here, simply because they can’t compete with the 180 degree views of the Southern Ocean. Here the windows have been cleverly designed to finish above low cupboards rather than at floor level, adding to the feeling of elevation. “If they were floor to ceiling you’d be able to see the ground, but instead we almost feel like we could be in a skyscraper,” says Derek.

In fact, the Hoopers couldn’t be further away from such a high rise environment, and a strong sense of



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*Above: The home, incorporating stones from the surrounding paddocks and a colour palette inspired by the nearby dunes, blends with the stark landscape. Right: The internal courtyard provides a living and entertaining space that is protected from the elements all year round without blocking the breathtaking views.*

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earthiness prevails. Anna calls it a contemporary rustic vibe which blends old and new without the clutter. In the kitchen, for example, ultra modern and minimalistic white cabinets (“ideal for accurate colour evaluation of wine”) sit on a raised floor of recycled jarrah boards. “We tried to keep them looking as old as possible, by rough sanding them without filling any holes,” says Derek. “It’s almost like a woolshed, where you can just sweep the floor and look down the cracks.”

Concrete flooring is a striking feature in the remainder of the living area, the corridors and even the bathrooms.





“We didn’t want a shiny, terrazzo look – we wanted it to look like old concrete, so I ground the concrete lightly, leaving some variations in the overall appearance, and then finished with a matt sealant,” explains Derek. And the rustic look is hard wearing ... perfect for a home in the middle of a paddock.

According to Anna, the couple “wanted to place a strong emphasis on easy living – we often return from the vineyard all dusty or from the beach all sandy, so practicality was at the forefront of our minds”. In essence, it’s about living life well. “It wasn’t an easy place to put a

home – and our builders can attest to that – but the more time we spend here the more we enjoy it,” says Derek.

With wind generated power, ample rainwater storage, home grown vegetables and lamb, fruits of the sea such as crayfish and snapper, and a good supply of wine down the road, the Hoopers agree they are not too far from becoming fully self sufficient. “And that’s what we love about it – we’re quite social people, but we also absolutely love the sense of isolation,” says Anna. “You couldn’t go to many other places and get this same feeling of remoteness and sense of freedom. South Australia is great like that.” 🍷