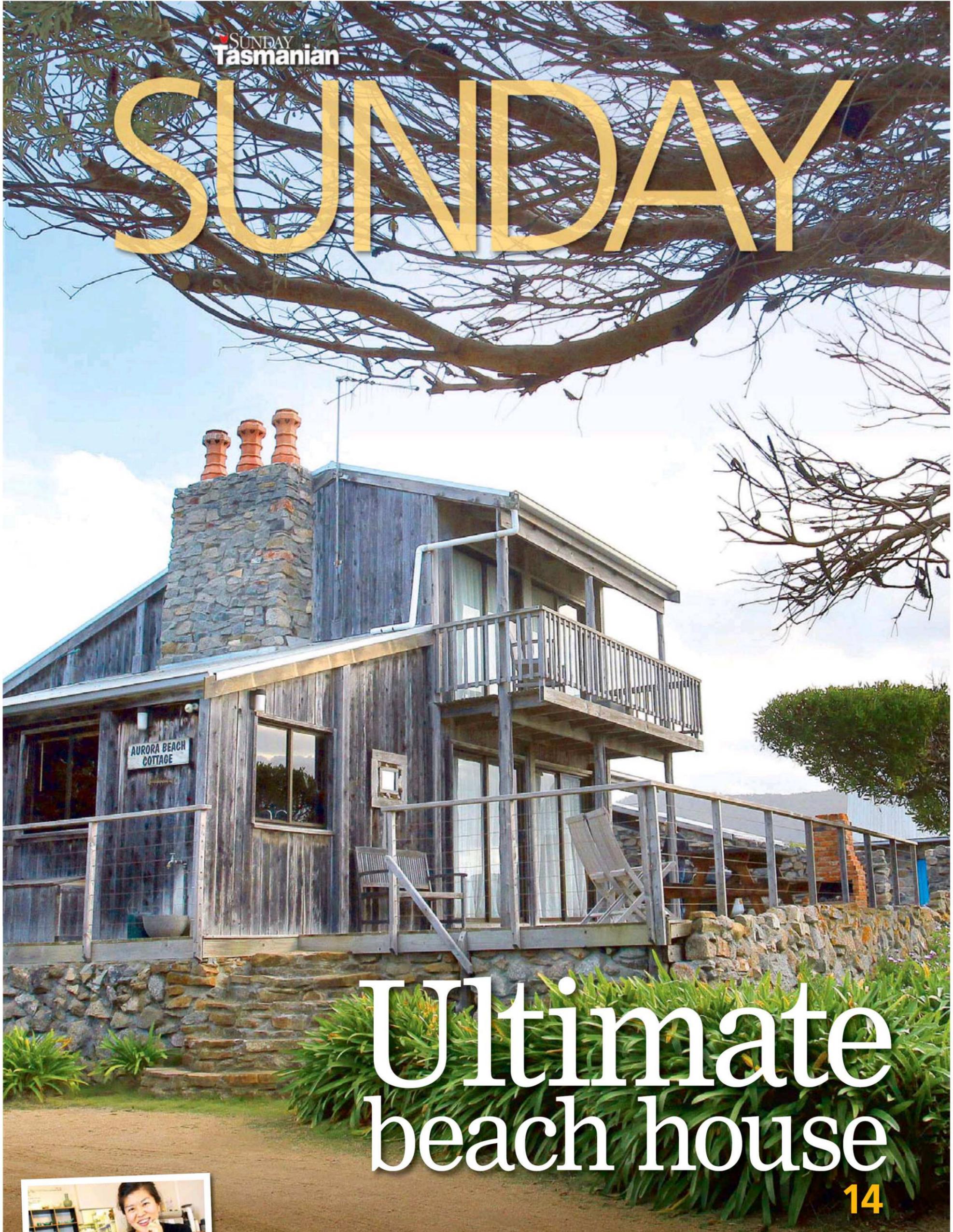


SUNDAY



Ultimate beach house

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Out of the box

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FAITH

Common ground

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GARDEN

Social climbers

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Beachside delight



Is this the ultimate beach house? Many of those who have stayed at Aurora Beach Cottage think so, and so do the publishers of Lonely Planet guidebooks, who named it as their pick of East Coast accommodation.

This timber shack enjoys a stunning location at Seymour, north of Bicheno, and allows it to be enjoyed in private with no neighbours in sight.

Now tourist accommodation, Aurora was built as a private retreat and it only houses one lot of guests at any time.

The house has a private path down to the beach, and on a winter's day there are no footprints or other signs of humans, just shore birds and a crunch underfoot of sea shells.

"When we first saw it, it was just one of those moments when by coincidence you are in the right place at the right time," owner Melissa Manton said.

Melissa and husband Daniel live in Sydney and they were driving a campervan to Hobart on a holiday in Tasmania.

"We saw a real estate agent's sign and we thought we should see what was for sale on the beach," Melissa said.

"I remember thinking this was a dream come true. After I saw the view from upstairs, I just knew I was going to buy it. I could not understand how it could have been passed in at auction."

Aurora certainly has a breathtaking but difficult position, nestling in sand dunes on a point exposed to constant winds.

When Dick and Margaret James bought the property in the early 1980s, sand was blowing across the point and covering most of it. The area had been eroded after being cleared and burnt for farming purposes and used for sand mining in the 1960s.

The couple bought their land from an owner who had never even set foot on it, let alone built anything.

The Jameses were looking for a beach retreat and researched titles, writing to many owners to tell them they were keen to buy.

The only reply came from Sylvia Hallett in Bath, England, who had inherited the property but never set foot on it. After lengthy negotiations, she sold about seven hectares.

The Jameses had a vision of re-vegetating their property and they started by planting 1000 radiata pines and marram grass to stabilise it.

Dick James built Aurora as a pole home over three levels. It is a true beach house, with celery-top on the outside worn to a beautiful silver grey, and weathered round timber used as screening.

Inside, the heart of the house is the fireplace and chimney Dick built out of locally sourced granite, now decorated with a multitude of seashells.

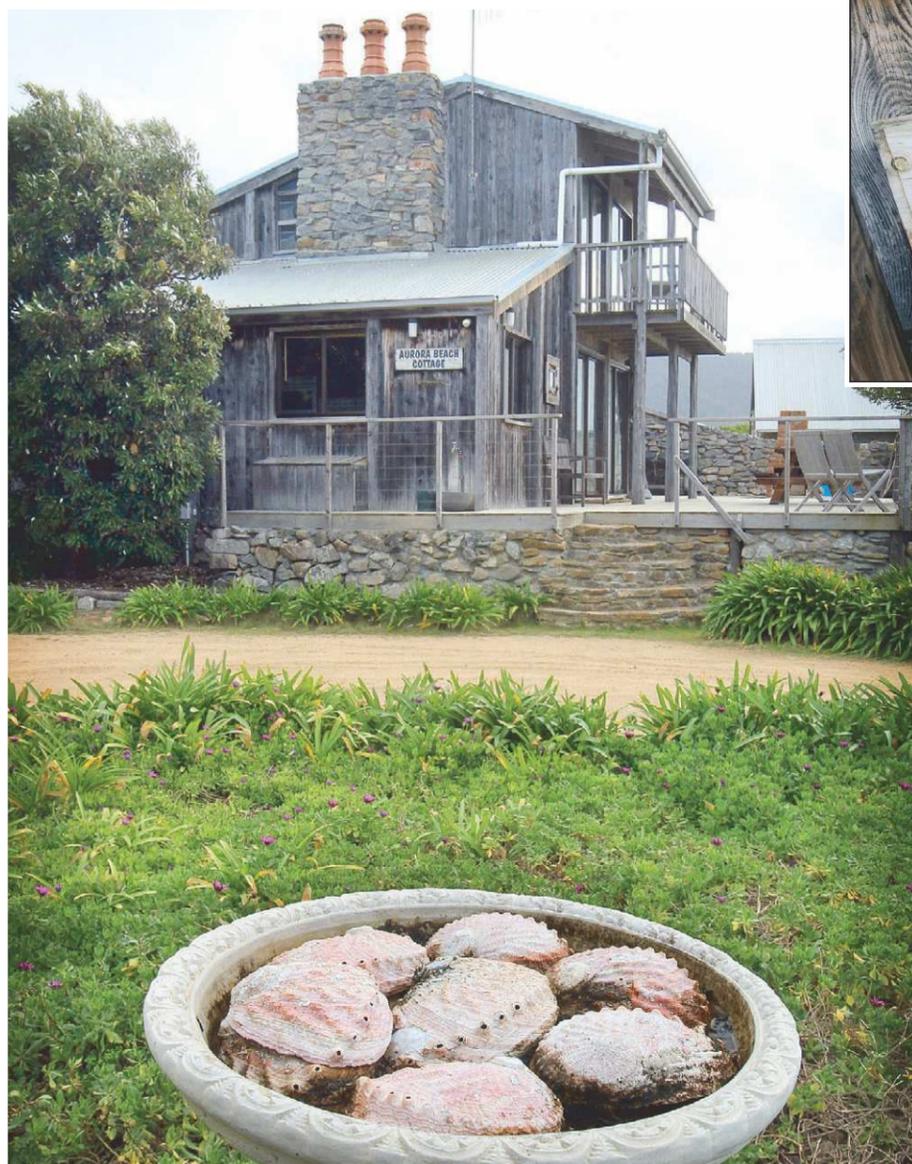
Natural materials have been used everywhere, with pine floors and timber-lined walls.

The main bedroom upstairs opens on to a balcony facing the ocean and boasts another fireplace.

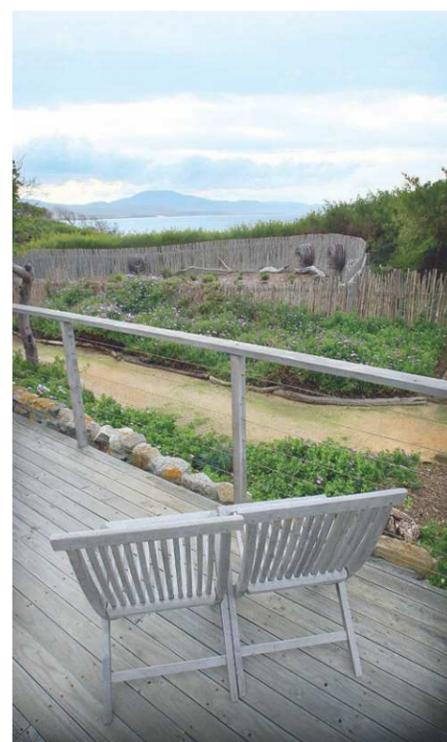
There are two alcoves off the main living area that can be used as additional sleeping areas or for just relaxing on a sunny afternoon.

The bathroom on the middle level also has a big window and soothing views, while the kitchen has been built out of second-hand Baltic pine.

Back in 1988, Home Beautiful magazine awarded



WELL WEATHERED: Aurora Beach Cottage at Seymour.



SEASIDE SCENES: The view from the lower deck, above, and the nearby beach, below.



the house the title of home of the year. Not much has changed from the pictures published at the time, apart from more modern equipment in the kitchen.

True to having been built as a weekend retreat, the house has a shack feel about it, complete with old magazines and paperbacks – who could resist Suspenseperiodical from November 1959?

"It is the quintessential Tassie beach house. It is very honest . . . it really is a shack," Melissa said.

"We bought it from the Jameses eight years ago and we have been careful to preserve the spirit of the place.

"We have made changes, such as putting in a new picture window in the bedroom upstairs, and changing over the garden by planting natives and taking out the radiata pine.

"But we are not going to change it to be anything other than a Tassie beach shack."



COSY: The fireplace in the lounge was built from locally sourced granite.