

# Solar advantages



**M**ANY people suffered from the extreme cold this winter, making the morning temperature a frequent conversation point among friends.

But in a passive solar concept in Hallin Court, Ardross, it was not an issue as they invariably awoke to a warm home.

So much so that dressing gowns were never worn, according to owners Ted and Helen Mein, and many a time the family moved about barefooted indoors. The house had passed a severe winter test.

Residual warmth soaked up by floors and walls the previous day was still radiating back into the main spaces next morning. It was only after three consecutive bleak and overcast days that the heater had to be turned on — then only a small capacity unit for such a spacious open-plan home.

The disciplined children, with constant reminders, knew that they had to keep the doors closed at night and to close the window blinds at sunset. They were then assured of comfortable conditions indoors.

Now the family is looking forward to the test of summer. Direct sunlight has completely disappeared from indoor spaces and will be excluded till almost the end of February.

Blinds will be pulled down by day and windows opened with the first of the cool south-westerly winds of an afternoon. Ceiling fans will be used in extreme hot weather to move the air and take away the stillness.

The owners were conscious of the benefits of passive solar principles and had done a course on the subject at the Solar Information Centre before looking for an architect who could incorporate them

## ARDROSS ON DISPLAY

- Price: not applicable
- Address: Hallin Court
- Agent: architect Garry Baverstock
- Open: by appointment

in their home. They had found the site they wanted with the correct northern orientation.

The block also rises up from the roadway to exploit an outlook over a treed park. The Meins knew they could maximise this outlook with carefully placed brush fences which would give complete privacy from the street. They asked architect Garry Baverstock to put the site to work and he came up with a tri-level concept that steps up the slope.

Formal and family living areas both relate to a generous veranda like space, where the cover is a solar pergola with louvre blades at an angle of 35 degrees. Sunshine bathes the whole space in winter but is already excluded for the start of the hot weather.

The owners had a good idea of their space requirements and how they would relate, after living in 14 different houses over 15 years, mainly in mining areas. The architect came up with a simple, almost rectangular plan with breaks in the roof ridge to introduce two sets of clerestory windows.

One is to the kitchen and family meals area, where most congregate in the middle of the home, and this ensures a soft diffused level of natural lighting all round. The other works for the children's bedrooms and bathroom.

The house avoids the open-cave look with the carport and garage out of sight at the rear, where vehicles are more secure. The main entry is midway along the long side driveway.

The different levels define main zones, the dwarf wall between formal and family zones being in the same rustic "hand-made" bricks used to the exterior. This helps with the indoor-outdoor integration.

The breakfast area is bigger than the formal dining and can easily take a table expanded to seat 12. The house has the equivalent of six bedrooms, one used as a study and another as a sewing room cum guest's accommodation.

Extensive kitchen cupboards in tasmanian oak were made by Helen's parents and brother and shipped across for assembly on site. Bench tops are in a simulated granite, which is non-porous and easy to keep clean.

The house was built to a strict budget and this had to include floor coverings, curtains and light fittings. The owners were able to move in with just their furniture and clothing.

"We had so much pleasure in building the house because we were able to participate the whole way through, from architect to builder," said Ted Mein. "We were able to make small but important changes, working with co-operative trades people."

The home is not open for inspection but can be seen by appointment with Mr Baverstock, the architect, or with Tecto Solar Homes.

**Frank Platell**