



The 2,600 sq. ft. timberframe custom cottage of Alan and Alison Bird is reflected in the still summer morning water of Chandos Lake near Apsley.

TOP RIGHT: Through the cathedral windows of the family room, dusk settles over the lake.

BOTTOM RIGHT: Double doors of Douglas fir welcome those who arrive by road.

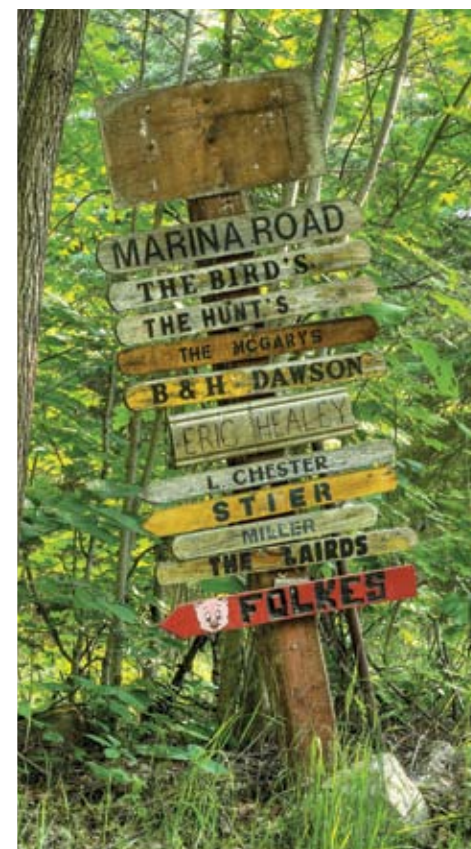
BELOW: A sure sign of cottage country: family directional signs are posted at access road intersections.



THE COTTAGE THAT PAYS *dividends*

BY MANDY MARTIN // PHOTOGRAPHY BY SANDY MACKAY

Months and seasons measure life at the cottage. But, the life of Alan and Alison Bird's Chandos Lake cottage will be measured in decades. *Continued on page 20*





All-season comfort is an important aspect of Bird family cottage life.

TOP RIGHT: The dining room off the kitchen to the right is also open to the two-storey-high family room.

BOTTOM RIGHT: Builders Neal Brinkman and son Mark drop by for a visit.

BOTTOM LEFT: Twenty-two-foot Douglas fir beams anchor the post and beam construction, visible from the ground floor family room and upper floor bedrooms.



Their 2,600 sq. ft. timberframe custom cottage exudes comfort and strength. The cathedral-like windows along the 30-foot-high, 40-foot frontage soak in the lakefront view, pulling it into the interior where the sweet smell and lustre of wood is creating its own patina – like the family within.

When Alan and Alison purchased their family cottage in 2001, they planned a two-storey addition. Determined to use local trades, Alan did his research. Among his several meetings with builders, he visited homes and cottages constructed by **Brinkman Construction** of Apsley and was awed by the post and beam work of father Neal Brinkman and sons Mark and Dave. Their projects are designed to last centuries.

“When the original framing couldn’t support the addition, we decided to demolish the old cottage,” Alan says. “Neal and I sat down and designed this cottage from scratch. At the beginning, it was just going to be a seasonal cottage, but then decided the investment would be better served if we could use it year-round. We had to build on the same footprint as the old cottage, not an inch wider at the waterfront. Neal actually built a scale model that would provide us a better idea of what it would look like at completion. The engineers then reviewed it and approved the design. At that point we had to apply and receive approval for a minor variance from

the municipality due to the addition of a second floor with the cottage being so close to the water.”

Construction began in earnest in 2006. It required meticulous planning and preparation. Twenty-two-foot spans of B.C. Douglas fir were hand-placed on end, then 10-by-10-inch planks placed and braced by tenon to create the roof lines, walls and floors. Each beam was finished with a hand application of beeswax, linseed and lemon oils.

The finished family room is the natural centre of the cottage. In the 30-foot-high ceiling, accent lights are nested in the timbers, a feature that particularly delights Alan: “I do enjoy sitting back and looking up at the cathedral ceilings. It makes you really appreciate their (the Brinkmans’) craftsmanship.” On the left wall of the room is a fireplace with floor-to-ceiling cultured stone from **Friendly Fires** of Peterborough and Cobourg. **Horst Masonry and Sons** of Bancroft installed the stonework.

“As a construction company, they far exceeded my expectations. Ultimately they took on the job as general contractor,” Alan says of the Brinkmans. “It was really a team approach. They suggested some great alternatives from their years of experience with this style of building. Their suggestions proved to be right in almost every situation.” *Continued on page 22*





Oblong stonework on the walls brightens the cottage kitchen.

BELOW: Alan grills on one of the three sides of the verandah surrounding the cottage.

Wherever possible, local trades were incorporated in the project. “If you’re going to live in a community, you should work with local people,” Alan says. “I believed it would pay dividends down the road, and it has. In fact, I would also tell you their quality exceeded anything I could have imported from Toronto.”

Chandos Plumbing and **Koehler Electric**, both of Apsley, met with the Brinkmans and Birds to create the best possible outcomes.

Electrical wiring and plumbing was carefully planned and installed. The ground floor propane-fired radiant heat under one-foot by eight-inch wide stained Douglas fir flooring was installed by **Henry Levesque Heating and Cooling** of Apsley. The floor and fireplace are the main heat sources.

All the plumbing is contained within one quadrant at the back of the house for the main floor kitchen, bathroom, laundry room and the upper floor bathroom, with the capability of adding an en suite bathroom off the upstairs master bedroom at a later date.

The house features four bedrooms – one guest room downstairs to one side of the main foyer next to the home office and three bedrooms up the open stairway, “so you can view the lake as you enter the cottage,” Alan says. QuietRock soundproof drywall was used for all walls facing the two-storey-high open family room. The master bedroom upstairs extends the width of the house from front to back, the high, exposed timbers and cathedral windows allowing a tree top view with an abundance of sunlight. *Continued on page 24*



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feature



Sunlight streams through a cathedral window in the open master bedroom on the second floor.

TOP RIGHT: Practical and accommodating, the second-floor bathroom combines quality with comfort.

BOTTOM RIGHT: Bunk beds with a view promise sound sleeping beneath the warm timbers of the cottage.



Loewen Windows, a Canadian company proudly using Douglas fir, are featured throughout the home. All interior doors, again, made of Douglas fir by the family-owned **Madawaska Doors** of Barry's Bay, were used.

Donia's TIM-BR Mart Hardware of Apsley was sourced for exterior second-floor siding.

Alison took care of the interior decorating and finishing when Alan was involved with the sale of his technology business in 2007.

Walden's Kitchen Centre of Peterborough ensured there was lots of counter and cabinet space, forming an L-shaped work area incorporating all the appliances. Mark Brinkman built a large, wooden island topped with a thick wooden butcher block that serves as additional eating, work and storage space, including what Alan calls "the best appliances at a cottage – the wine cooler and compacter."

To brighten the kitchen, the Birds installed panelling of small, oblong pieces of stone on the side and back walls. Darker marble was used for the kitchen countertops.

In the front door foyer and both bathrooms, tile flooring, showers

and accent marble countertops were sourced from **Turco Tile Limited** of Peterborough.

Alison has found furniture and décor items at **Lockside Trading Co.** in Young's Point and **Stoney Lake Furniture** in Lakefield. The L-shaped distressed leather sofa came from Restoration Hardware in Toronto.

With the front shoreline mere footsteps from the cottage's front and side decks, **AMTech** landscaping of Apsley worked closely with the Birds and other tradespeople on site to complete a casual but solid and finished shoreline treatment.

"Cottages keep families together," Alan says. "The kids keep wanting to come back, even as they get older." From the first of July through the Labour Day weekend, wife Alison will be full-time at the cottage. Daughters Kristin, 20, Lexi, 16, and Lauren, 14, will also centre their summer lives at the lake while Alan comes and goes on business.

"It's been a great collaboration," Alan says of his relationship with Neal, Mark and Dave Brinkman. "We've become very good friends." The Brinkmans agree.

The dividends just keep coming. **OH**

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