

# tranquility BASE

STORY **KRISTIN SCHNELTEN**  
PHOTOGRAPHY **SANDY MACKAY**  
FLOWER ARRANGEMENTS  
**COLLINGWOOD FLOWERS**  
AND HOME DÉCOR



Melissa Emke, Anne, the homeowner, and Pliny Loucks chat on the rear deck.

**V**iews. Pastoral and tranquil, far-reaching and ever-present views.

Situated on a broad hilltop south of Thornbury, this impressive vacation property is surrounded by farmland and forests, through which flow creeks, rivers and gravel roads – each leading your eye to that deep sapphire of Georgian Bay.

The parcel of land was a dream find for the homeowners, who spent their youths in the area but have since moved overseas. “We looked for this exact property for years, and jumped at the opportunity when it came available,” says Anne.

Aiming to showcase their spectacular views and with an appreciation for the particular style of construction, the homeowners chose timber frame design – and hired **Pliny Loucks** of **The Great Lakes Frame Company** to bring their dream house to life. *Continued on page 86*

**ABOVE:** The panoramic view of the Beaver Valley and Thornbury below this spectacular timber frame home. **RIGHT:** Anne’s horse Gwen is an Irish Sport Horse. **FAR RIGHT:** Stone and timbers create a warm welcome for guests as they approach the front entrance.





The soaring stone fireplace dominates the great room. The stone extends to a feature wall that holds the television. The 12-foot timber table was built for the space by The Great Lakes Frame Company. **BOTTOM LEFT:** Open treads on the stairs let light move between the timbers, iron balustrades and simple acorn newel posts.



“We found Pliny after touring a local home he had built, and just falling in love with it. We really needed just the right person for our project, and it didn’t take long at all for us to build a relationship with him. Pliny’s sense of humour and patience with our project meant so much to us,” says Anne.

With Melissa Emke, a full-time architectural designer with The Great Lakes Frame Company, the team was able to design a house that fit the homeowners’ specific needs – including a carriage house apartment for their daughter, who manages the small on-site equestrian centre.

Timber frame construction allowed the homeowners the flexibility they hoped for, and the generous, open plan created room for amending the design along the way. With five separate structures combined into one frame, they were able to move and replace elements of their floor plan as they

moved through the building process.

Pliny and his team have fine-tuned their construction process over the past 30 years, beginning with the sourcing of timbers (predominantly Ontario White Pine). Their timbers arrive from sawmills in Ontario and BC cut to square and are planed to size in Pliny’s workshop. His team notches each mortise and tenon joint by hand with mallet and chisel, using hand-pointed pegs made by a local Amish woodworker.

Installing structural insulated panels (SIPs) between the timbers, along with high-efficiency boilers (from **Quality Air Systems** in Chatsworth) and windows (sourced from **Van Dolder’s Custom Exteriors**), this home is extremely energy efficient, far beyond building code. In fact, with the planned future addition of renewable energy, “It’s built to a near-zero-energy standard,” says Pliny.

*Continued on page 88*



The large windows from Van Dolder’s Custom Exteriors command the view enjoyed throughout the main floor. The glass-fronted fireplace from Chantico Fireplace Gallery sends its warmth into the room and to everyone seated on the leather sofas.



**LEFT:** A bar-height, live-edge table offers a casual spot to sit and watch the chef. The tile floor is laid on the diagonal and its rich earth tones complement the custom wood cabinets. Electrical was installed by Grey Northern Powerline Inc. Apples courtesy of Goldsmith's Orchard Market. **BELOW:** The intricate design of a horse's head with its flowing mane was crafted by Ron Cuddy. Positioned by a lower-level entrance, it appears as a floor mat. **BOTTOM:** The homeowners designed the island (The Stone Shop) with a bar area on one side. Two wine fridges and a sink help expedite drinks to guests.



A second seating area in the great room has a double-sided propane fireplace that can also be enjoyed in the kitchen. The detail of the base of the custom dining table shows the craftsmanship of the mortise and tenon and hand-pointed pegs. **BELOW:** A folding wall of windows opens the kitchen area to the rear deck. The covered seating area has an outdoor kitchen and skylights.



Throughout the home, timber is thoughtfully balanced with stone and glass, including a floor-to-ceiling stone fireplace (installed by [Chantico Fireplace Gallery](#), with stonework by [McCutcheon Masonry](#)) with guillotine glass front door and timber stairs with metal-insert railings.

Anne, a former interior design specialist, appreciates these design elements and the simplistic palette they create, including the handmade interior and exterior doors by [Desboro Doors](#), trim by [Timeless Materials](#) in Durham, and warm hardwood from [BreezeWood Forest Products](#). Tile work includes custom horseshoe inlays that bring additional warmth, "We host friends from around the world, and really wanted it to be a welcome, restful space, focusing on the natural elements."

Their visitors are often found in the kitchen, aiding in food preparation – which is just what the couple planned when they designed the space. The superior craftsmanship of the cabinetry, made by a local Amish carpenter, is complemented by stone countertops from [The Stone Shop](#). *Continued on page 92*



**LEFT:** Anne leads Gwen to the pasture. The timber frame detail on the barn is by The Great Lakes Frame Company.  
**BELOW LEFT:** Looking through the barn from the main entrance, a glimpse of the riding arena can be seen through the double doors.  
**BELOW RIGHT:** Behind the kitchen is the entrance to the garage. Large nails act as hooks for coats and hats and the benches offer a spot to comfortably put on boots. A guest bathroom is also located nearby.



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An additional outdoor kitchen, adjacent to the main living space and completely covered from the elements, welcomes guests during the warmer seasons, boasting skylights and integrated Bluetooth speakers installed by **Georgian Audio Video**.

"We're so happy with the entire project," says Anne, who notes it would not have been complete without the barn and riding facility, where they're able to spend so much time with their beloved horses. The home's ample open spaces and guest rooms offer opportunities to share their vacation home with others who share their passions, frequently hosting horse, yoga and spiritual workshops. *Continued on page 94*

LEFT: The full effect of the intricate timber work can be viewed from the second-floor balcony. The double-height windows frame the view of Georgian Bay.



**ABOVE LEFT:** This antique dresser is surrounded by the timber-framed walls. Wood for the trim work was sourced at Timeless Materials in Durham. **ABOVE RIGHT:** In the en suite to the beach bedroom, Ron Cuddy has worked his magic on the tile work in the shower so that you can almost hear the sound of waves hitting the sand. **RIGHT:** In one of the bedrooms, the casement window over the door (Desboro Doors) to the en suite has a stained-glass insert. The peaked roofline creates interesting angles and guarantees that no bedrooms are alike.

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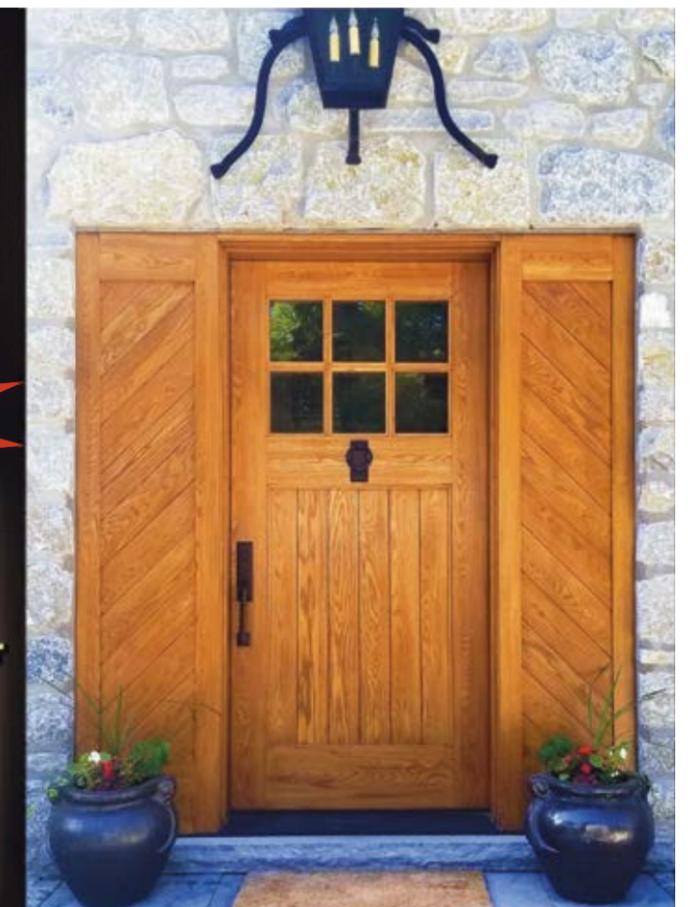
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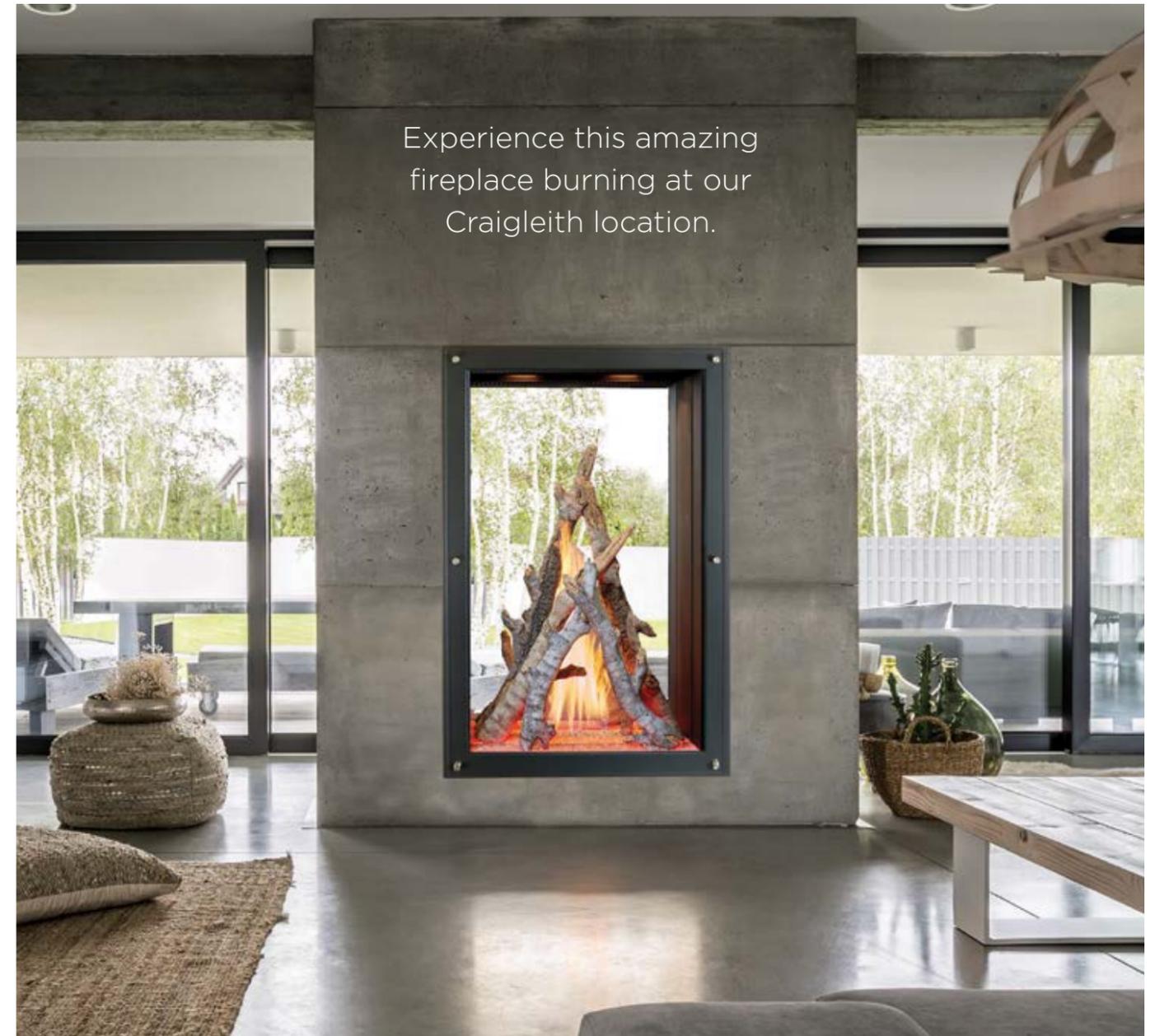


**LEFT:** This second-floor bedroom has a comfortable seating area with a view of the Beaver Valley. **BELOW:** The vessel tub in the master en suite sits next to the large glass-enclosed shower. Earth-tone tile work adds a warmth to the room. All plumbing by Mueller Plumbing Contractors. **BOTTOM:** Sitting in a corner of the master bedroom, a Jøtul fireplace adds ambience to cold nights. A sofa at the end of the bed offers a quiet place to contemplate the view through the sliding glass doors.



Building relationships – be it with the horses, or with family and guests – is important to the homeowners, who brought this focus to their house-building experience, as well.

After the multi-year construction project came to a close, Anne and her husband hosted Pliny and his family “They were such gracious hosts,” recalls Pliny, “And we really had a lot of fun – just as we did building the house.” **OH**



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