

Colorado connection

Brothers Dale and Mark Hubbard were raised amid the mighty mountains of Colorado. Their paths have diverged, but they have a connection at a mountain home in Dinner Plain.

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Moose Lodge - over its three levels, the ground floor contains the entry, the "mud room" and guests' suite; the middle floor is the living level, with the great room, the kitchen and dining area and the master suite and the top floor has the kids' retreat and bunkroom.



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IT HAS TO BE SAID, moose are not all that common around Dinner Plain. There's the odd hereford nearby, the occasional brumby blasts through and wombats and wallabies like nibbling their way along the alpine grasslands.

But moose? They're more aligned to the Rocky Mountains, the terrain around Colorado, Montana and Wyoming.

And that's exactly how Dinner Plain's Moose Lodge came to be named and filled with tributes to that great, lumbering North American beast.

After Australian Caroline Hubbard and Coloradan Mark Hubbard met, they went on a trip to Montana, "it was Caroline's first trip to the Rockies and she fell in love with the mountains and the moose. She started buying moose stuff – you know, rugs and pillows and artwork and people would give her moose things," Mark Hubbard said.

The collection "didn't go so well in beach houses in Sydney or Melbourne," he said, but they've found a perfect home now.

To go back a step, brothers Mark and Dale Hubbard grew up in Denver and went to school in Boulder, Colorado. As boys, the Rocky Mountains provided their home skiing terrain.

Mark Hubbard is now finance director at UXC, a Melbourne-based business services company listed on the Australian Stock Exchange.

He moved from Colorado to New South Wales in 1984; it was his job with an international accounting company that initially brought him to Australia. He skied the NSW mountains, then five years ago moved to Melbourne and started skiing at Mt Buller.

Late in 2005, "I saw some land advertised at Dinner Plain, we'd never been there, so we went up and had a look and fell in love with the place. We bought the land in February 2006 and that Easter, Dale came out to have a look at it," Mark said.

Dale Hubbard, who at 39 is 10 years Mark's junior, is an architect, a graduate of the University of Colorado. He stayed in Colorado and has his home and business base in Boulder.



Left: The living area or great room, inspired by that sense of space encountered in a Colorado mountain home. Above the fireplace is a sheet of flamed steel, a design feature that breaks up the stone work, connects the metalwork and the beam and even radiates some heat. Moose details abound in the great room. The kitchen/dining area is behind the fireplace which itself backs on to the pizza oven.

Right: A moose in plywood from Scandinavia, a gift from Caroline's sister and one of many moose details throughout the lodge.



Among Dale's specialties are Colorado mountain homes, typically around Steamboat Springs or throughout the Vail Valley.

Dale was no stranger to Australia – he'd spent two years in Sydney around the time of the Olympics with his wife Amy – but he'd never seen snow gums, not until Easter 2006.

"It was fantastic, it was like having a fresh canvas. The snow gums are completely awe-inspiring when you first see them ... it's the colour and the quality of the light and the way it filters through the trees.

"There's obviously a lot of background visual stimulus for a lot of the designers up there at Dinner Plain. Just the way the materials went together and the affects of time on the structures and the way they held themselves within those gum trees were big design drivers for me as well," Dale said.

They walked over the land and contemplated its possibilities and then retired to the Dinner Plain Hotel, "we cosied up on a table, got a couple of rounds of Crown Lagers and got to drawing.

"That's the best way I've found to get the ideas down – talking to the clients and drawing. It usually looks like a bunch of chicken scratchings when you're done with it, but the value in those lines is definitely there."

Left: Mark and Caroline Hubbard

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The “chicken scratchings” were refined and then worked through using 3D visual auto-CAD (computer aided design) software modelling back in Boulder – “it was a complicated site with some complicated set-backs, so using the software we could look at the way the building would be pursued on a lot of different levels. “We put the drawings together and forwarded them to the Van Heeks and they took them and ran with them.”

Even from a distance, Dale was impressed with the building process. Ironically, despite the differences in altitude and snowfall, the building season at Dinner Plain is actually shorter than in the Colorado mountains.

“Bob and Rhonda (Van Heek) were fantastic, you can tell they’ve been doing it for a while and they know how to get it done in such a short building season.

“In Colorado, we go year-round, we’ve got a building going up at Steamboat at the moment and a lot of days they start by shovelling two feet of snow off the roof. There’s about three months when you can’t pour a foundation (because it’s too cold) but other than that, it’s pretty much year-round,” Dale said.

Moose Lodge was ready for Mark and Caroline and their two boys Taylor and Connor to occupy on the season-opening weekend in June 2007, but it wasn’t until Christmas 2007 that Dale was able to see the results of his work.

“It was great, I guess we must have got the metric stuff right,” he quipped, “it wasn’t as easy as I thought it would be initially – I’m glad it didn’t turn out one-fourth the size!

“Seriously though, it was great to see it. I had my family with me, my wife Amy and our twin boys Grady and Charlie. It’s actually nice to be able to stay in a home that I’ve designed – I’ve been to social events in other homes I’ve designed, but not much more than that, so that was a special treat.”



Mark and his dogs Ollie and Syd (think of the year 2000 for a clue here).

The table in the kitchen/dining area is made of messmate, milled and prepared from a tree at a property belonging to a friend of the Hubbards’ at Redbank, near Ballarat. With a bench seat along the wall, the table seats at least 12 people.

The wood oven backs on to the fireplace in the great room. It was imported from Italy and set into the stone wall – Mark and Caroline originally wanted an open fire on both sides, but that creates problems with draughts. The wood oven was the solution – it warms the area and has also been used for roasts, for numerous pizzas and Mark confesses to an ambition to bake bread in it. A coffee maker has been installed next to the wood oven and the light fitting to the right is a creation of Richard Walker.

In designing a mountain home – for the Colorado or Australian mountains – Dale says there are “definitely some specifics that go into it. They’re typically places where a family or multiple families come together and have a great time together, so we have large gathering spaces in these homes, where everybody can be together at the end of the ski day.

“The kitchen is integral to the ‘great-room’ areas, it’s fully accessible, and typically everybody gets off the mountain and comes back to the ski house for a meal and hangs out. “There are tried and true architectural languages and vernaculars that are used in the mountains. I was born here in Colorado and you get used to the typical Colorado mountain home. When people come out to Colorado, they want it to look like that. “To be able to go to this environment and to be able to design completely out of the box the way that I felt like I was able to; it’s really

opened up a whole new mountain language.” This is where what has been created in the Australian mountains has given a new dimension to what is being created in Colorado.

“When I show pictures of Moose Lodge to people here, prospective clients who are looking at mountain homes, they look at it and you can see they start to think about the aesthetic of a mountain home a little bit differently.

“There’s almost a modern aspect to it that would not be allowed in Beaver Creek or downtown Vail, because, as we like to say, the ‘yodel factor’ hasn’t been sufficiently dialled up on it.

“What it has done for me is allowed exploration into what a modern mountain house might look like.”

His work on Moose Lodge at Dinner Plain led Dale towards Mt Hotham, where he has put forward some designs for the Ray



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Group's Freehold 1775 project, one of them, Solaris, features on Dale's website (see link below).

"We've been able to put forward some concepts for that freehold block and that's allowed us to push the envelope even further," Dale said.

"You get up on that hill and you're in a new environment all over again – on the moon or something like that, we thought we'd make a nod to the fact that the site is up on top of everything.

"What we try and accomplish in this office is the creation of community alongside respect for privacy. In Solaris for example, everyone can come together in the great

The master bedroom's ensuite, with open shower and a tub with a view.

The master suite carries through a sense of space from the great room. The ensuite is behind the wall at the bedhead. A feature is a gas fire, for the warmth of its flame.



The kids' retreat and bunkroom, an area partly inspired by a Steamboat Springs mountain home Dale and Mark stayed in as children and partly inspired by Dinner Plain's snow gums. "There's such camaraderie when the kids are all in one space," Dale said. The use of timber in the area makes it cleverly open and private at the one time. "When you get into those snow gums and the sun shines through, you get this kind of layered affect with light and dark and we're kind of trying to play with that a little bit here for a sylvan kind of experience," Dale said.

room overlooking the ski hill, but when it's time for them to go to bed, they find themselves in as much comfort but with privacy. All the rooms have ensuite bathrooms – it's almost as though there are three master suites," he said.

Back down the road at Dinner Plain, where the moose are resting comfortably inside Moose Lodge, for Mark and Caroline Hubbard and family, the building is working brilliantly, although their original intention of making some income from it has been dashed somewhat.

The main problem is, they like it so much, they're nearly always there, "but we're thinking about doing some executive rentals," Mark said. **AS**

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