

# Stonewell FARM

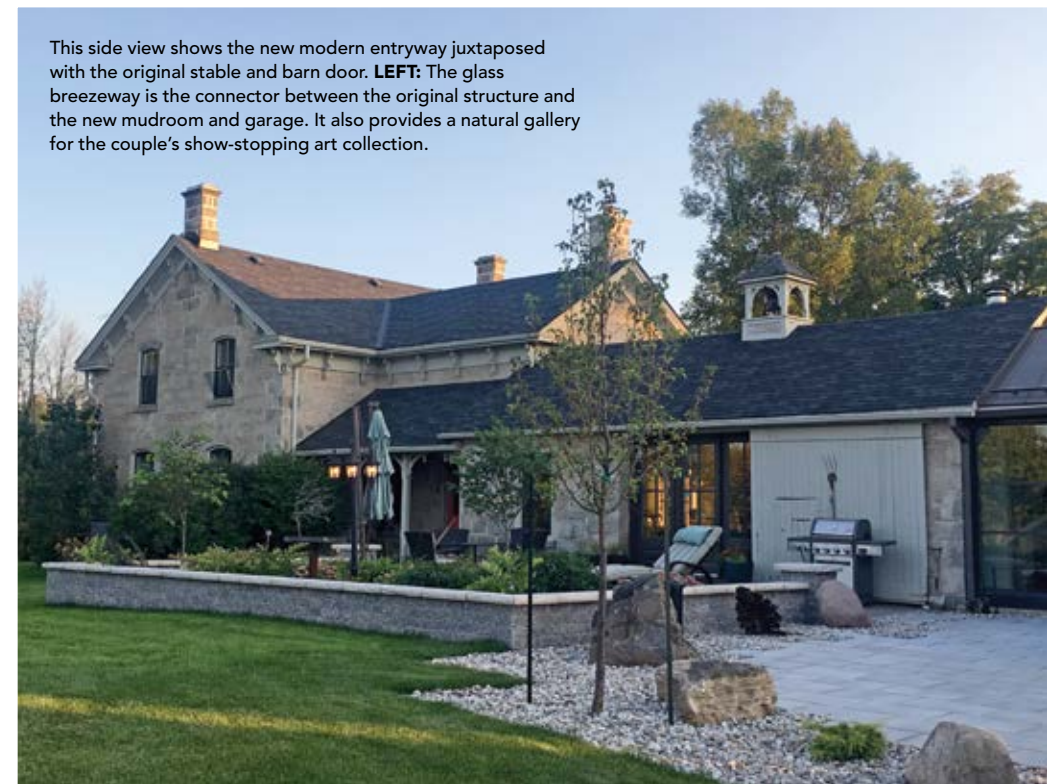


Built in 1872, the stone farmhouse with the orange door beckons from the roadside.



Lee Anne Downey always wanted to live in a stone house in the country. With properties in Oakville and Toronto, her husband, Tom Hitchman, was more comfortable in the city, but he acquiesced and the couple began their search for a new home.

*Continued on page 38*



This side view shows the new modern entryway juxtaposed with the original stable and barn door. **LEFT:** The glass breezeway is the connector between the original structure and the new mudroom and garage. It also provides a natural gallery for the couple's show-stopping art collection.

STORY **MERRILYN PATTERSON**  
PHOTOGRAPHY **JASON HARTOG**  
FLOWERS **WR DESIGNS**





Tongue-and-groove walls and ceilings in the living room are a nod to the century farmhouse, while the marble-faced fireplace adds contemporary style.  
**OPPOSITE:** The stable – converted to a living room – is the main centre for gathering, entertaining and conversation.



Tom Hitchman and Lee Anne Downey in the breezeway with Seamus, their Wheaten terrier.

Lee Anne's country dreamscape included not just a stone house. She envisioned rolling terrain with a pond and a stream – a place where she'd be surrounded by nature and be able to bike and snowshoe on her own property. She also dreamed of planting fields of lavender, raising chickens, and beekeeping. Tom's vision included a barn to house ATVs, tools and sports equipment.

In December of 2016, they found "the one," near the town of Erin. Not only is there a beckoning stone farmhouse, but also a guest house with a stone foundation. There are 93 acres for Lee Anne to plant lavender and develop more of her dream projects. And Tom gets two historic barns.

The two-storey house, built in 1872, had two bedrooms upstairs plus a tired bath in the original second-floor quarters. Downstairs was comprised of a parlour, huge dining room, large centre hall, sunroom and a small kitchen/living room in what was an attached stable. The original owner was a Scottish stonemason and the intricate stone pattern detailed at the front door is his signature trademark. The original stone well, which the farm is named for, remains intact at the front of the house.

Renovations happened in two phases. **Desmond Maraugh of Dreams and Reality** was contracted right away to work on the first phase. The work included painting, new floors, updating the second-floor bathrooms and moving the kitchen from the stable to the sunroom. Not needing a big dining room, it was converted to an office for Lee Anne and a gym for Tom. *Continued on page 40*





**ABOVE:** Lee Anne used door casing found in the barn to fashion trim for the marble facing on the hall/dining room fireplace. **RIGHT:** Farrow & Ball "bee" wallpaper, a treasured find from Beaver Mills Design, found its home in the new powder room off the hall.



The new upstairs bath is stunning. With huge skylights streaming natural light into the room, and the back wall covered in sparkling grey-and-white glass tile from **Barton Bath + Floor**, it's an oasis of serenity. The freestanding tub calls for a long soak and a glass of bubbly at the end of a busy day on the farm.

Early in the initial renovation process, new windows became very important because the old ones were drafty. "Our biggest challenge was honouring the age and history of the house but wanting a contemporary interior décor," explains Lee Anne.

The new, brown vinyl windows have a modern, almost industrial feel, but provide the perfect transition between the contemporary kitchen and the lavender fields outside.

In the new kitchen, the original stone walls dominate the room, and are the backdrop for a spectacular piece of artwork by Canadian artist Joanne Currah. The couple's love of art is evident throughout the house. All pieces are by favourite Canadian artists, with the exception of one work from Vietnam.

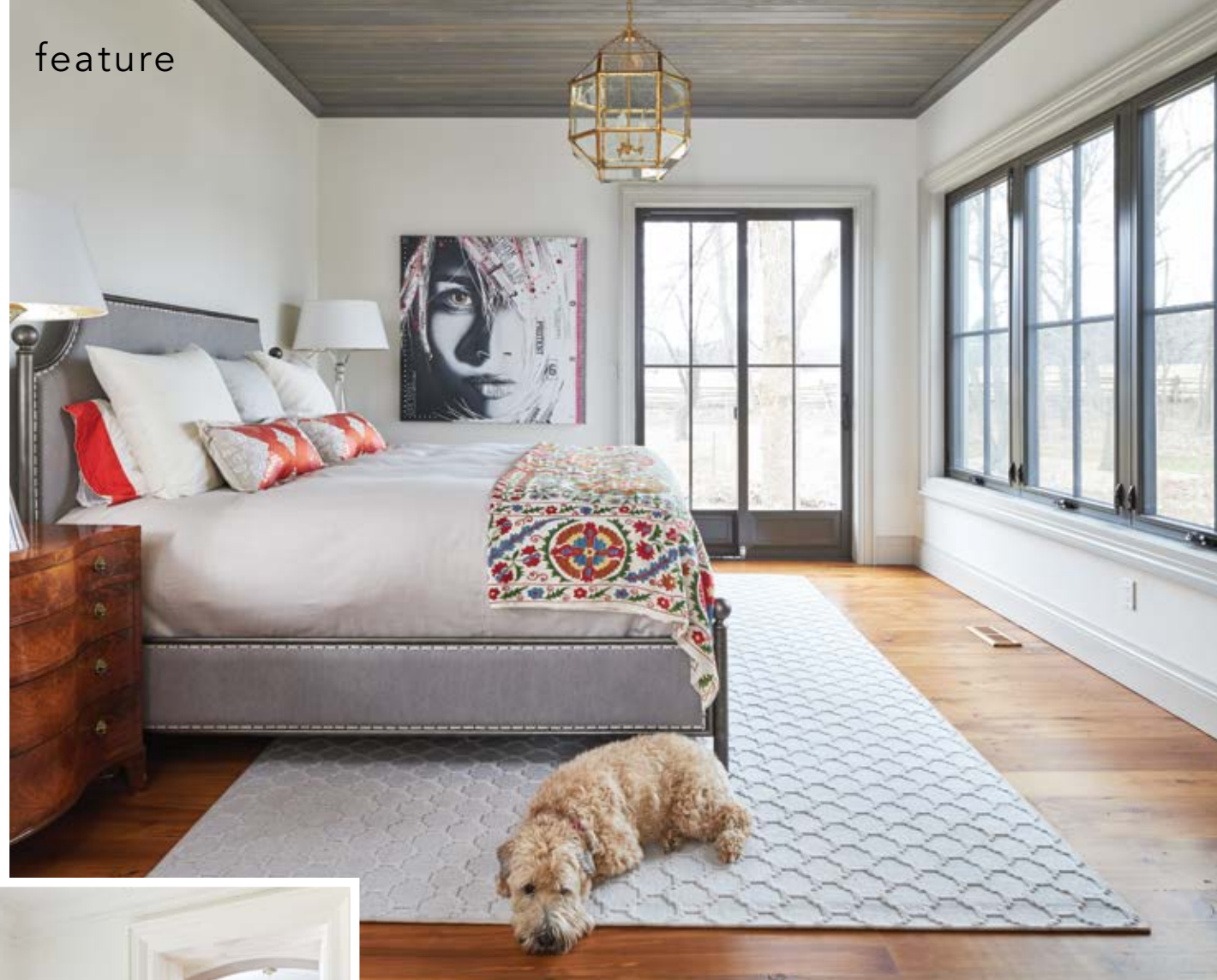
"I didn't want anything to compete with either the stone walls or the view," Lee Anne says. "Thus, I went with the soft warm grey and solid white counters (Quartex Simply White fabricated by **Custom Granite & Marble**) in the kitchen. The rest of the house followed with **Benjamin Moore** Revere Pewter and Dune White paint throughout, highlighted by soft satin brass hardware. Likewise the closet cabinets were selected to complement the stone, as it is the star." Kitchen cabinetry is Cabico. *Continued on page 42*



Tom and Lee Anne often eat in the kitchen overlooking the lavender fields. The orange banquette was inspired by a visit to a hotel in Miami. **ABOVE:** Lee Anne and her father repurposed original kitchen cabinets for the bar in the living room.







**ABOVE:** Two feet of stone around an original window was removed to create the door from the master en suite to the dressing room. Original door casings are 11-inches thick. **RIGHT:** The wood floor in the master en suite is original. Sleek modern finishes add a contemporary touch. **TOP:** The master bedroom exudes an eclectic mix of antique furniture, modern art and cultural purchases from travels abroad.

The stable is now the living room with a marble fireplace rising to the vaulted ceiling. Lee Anne found a piece of marble with cracks and faults that she loved and used it to face the fireplace. The tongue-and-groove treatment on the walls and ceilings are a nod to the farmhouse look and are a neutral backdrop for more artwork and Lee Anne's treasured rock collection.

The centre hall of the original house has doors to the newly located living room and kitchen. "It's really the hub of the house," Lee Anne says. The fireplace was existing and would have been the source of heat for the whole house. It had a red brick facing that has now been updated with another of Lee Anne's marble finds from Ciot Surplus. She has had the antique tiger stripe oak table "forever," and it opens up to nine feet, when the occasion calls for a sit-down dinner. The 150-year-old 1.5-inch thick pine floors were found on Kijiji, requiring a floor sander to be set up in the barn, and help from her dad to pull out all the square nails. *Continued on page 44*



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**RIGHT:** The serene grey and white colour scheme in the second floor guest bath sets the stage for a spa-like experience. The sparkling grey-and-white glass tile on the back wall is from Barton Bath + Floor. **BELOW:** Guest bedrooms feature a line of Egyptian and hand-embroidered bed linens that Lee Anne used to import for her business.




Phase two of the project included the addition of a new main floor master bedroom suite and a mudroom/garage added at the opposite end. **Colin Cherry Renovations** was tapped to do this phase. The living room now leads to a new glass breezeway, which is the connector between the old house and the new garage. The breezeway has doors from Bigfoot Door that look onto the stone well and terraced approach to the house and provide a gallery effect for treasured paintings.

The mudroom is heated solely by hydronic floors and has abundant storage space, both open and behind cabinet doors, to keep this active blended family organized. Seamus, the Wheaten Terrier, has his own shower in this space.


The new master suite is at the front of the house. Tom had a major say in the decision. He wanted a bedroom that looked out over the lavender. Where the parlour once was, they closed off the door. That space is now the



master en suite. Cutting through the stone base of a window off the centre hall to make a door to the new bedroom, they've created a virtual indoor/outdoor experience that needs to be seen to understand its delight. Panoramic floor-to-ceiling windows create the feeling that you are one with the natural surroundings. There are rolling hills and trees, deer and fields of lavender, just like Lee Anne imagined. *Continued on page 46*



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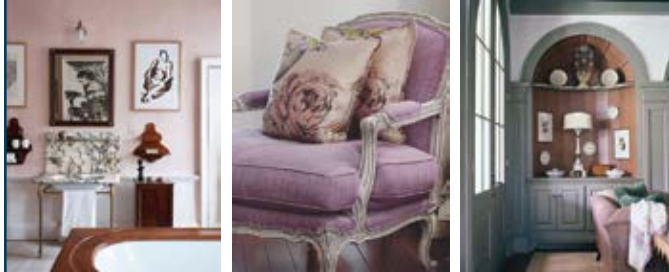


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feature



**LEFT:** Country living breeds practical props. The mudroom was a necessary addition to the renovation plan. **ABOVE:** Seamus gets clean after a day on the farm – in his own shower! **BELOW:** The colourful rug at the front door of the house is a gift to Lee Anne from the King of Bhutan.




*Lee Anne's fields overflow with lavender – just as she dreamed!*


A dainty powder room with Farrow & Ball bee wallpaper from **Beaver Mills Design** was carved out of the parlour space.

Much of the stone in the interior and exterior of the house has been meticulously repointed. In the case of the wall in the breezeway, and the exterior of the mudroom, they were carefully restored or built to look as originally intended. **Sean Culp** of **Culp Restorations** adds to the home's history of master stone masonry. Lee Anne hand-picked the stone for the new walls from the property, making many trips on her ATV.

The plan is still percolating as Lee Anne and Tom enjoy life on the farm. The bees have arrived and Tom says his to-do list for this year includes that chicken coop Lee Anne has on her list. The stone mason has been called back for another project, and there might even be a retreat in the future, where you'll be able to visit and enjoy Stonewell Farm too. **OH**







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