

Cantilever House

Case Study



masonry.
style and
function



GB Masonry Collection concrete masonry helps build solid architectural character

Project: Cantilever House

Location: Highton VIC

Function: Family residence

Architect/builder/blocklayer: Topic Builders

Structural engineer: Gordon Consulting Engineers

Featured products: Austral Masonry

GB Split Face in Limestone, Austral Masonry

Artique Classic Designer Masonry sill blocks in Limestone

Geelong, Victoria's second city, has moved out of the shadow of its big brother and is forging a contemporary identity all its own. In some measure this is driven by the extraordinary development along the adjacent Surf Coast, home of the Great Ocean Road and Bells Beach. This "sea-change" influence is evident in the design and material selection for Topic Builders' Cantilever House in Highton.

Although this residential suburb is within minutes of the Geelong CBD and was first subdivided over 150 years ago, the Cantilever House is located in Riverfalls Estate, a greenfield development overlooking the Barwon River.

Setting it apart from its neighbours is a cantilevered upper level supported on a solid base of Austral Masonry GB Split Face concrete masonry in Limestone. The design, by Topic

Builders' inhouse architect, Buck Grgic, is as much a response to the site as an aesthetic consideration. The terrain drops seven metres from the rear to the east-facing front boundary of the elevated block. The views into the Barwon River valley are to the north.

The design solution was simple yet elegant. The masonry-clad lower level runs north-south across the front of the block. It supports the long upper storey which runs east-west, creating a solid base, both visually and structurally. The lightweight upper level rests on massive steel beams that oversail the lower storey at the front. It is supported on grade to the rear, thus minimising excavation. Despite the considerable fall, the tallest retaining wall is a little over a metre high.

The base level carries the front entrance, master bedroom suite, study (currently being used as a nursery) and car accommodation while the upper storey has two living rooms, two bedrooms and ancillary areas.

Design dynamics



Although the building is clad in a variety of materials, the solid base of split-face concrete masonry predominates to the street, complementing the cedar panelling. The upper level is clad in composite fibre-cement panels, cedar and corrugated steel.

We asked Peter Edwards, Topic's building consultant, about the all-important first impressions visitors have of the home. "The most striking features of the home are the cantilevered living areas which appear to float out over the driveway, and the restrained use of the GB Split Face masonry which ensures the blockwork is a pronounced feature rather than used as an entire cladding."

The superb colour and texture of Austral Masonry's GB Split Face concrete masonry blocks is largely due to the high percentage of fine white sand used in their manufacture. The split face of the GB Split Face series is formed by moulding a double block and literally splitting it in half. The resulting face texture is unique to each unit, mimicking the rough-hewn appearance of natural stone.

The blockwork returns around the southern side and the back of the lower storey. In contrast, the two masonry walls to the right as you face the house are variations on a blade wall in that they are freestanding and connected by cedar infill panels. The blockwork then continues around the back.

The northern face of the upper level is extensively glazed, framing the view to the Barwon River. Deep eaves protect the living areas on this level from the harsh summer sun while allowing the lower winter sun to penetrate and warm the interior.

Peter Edwards is in complete agreement with the customers' choice of GB Split Face masonry. "It's come up a treat," he says enthusiastically. "Split Face blocks are a great way to add texture to building facade," adds Buck Grgic. "They are also maintenance free and cost effective." Topic Builders are currently completing a nearby property, again using the GB Split Face range to build in distinction and character.

The GB Masonry Collection blocks are available in Smooth or Honed finishes as well as the Split Face specified for this project. They come in a superb range of cool and warm colours, in two size ranges and corresponding fractional units such as half-height and corner units.

The GB Masonry Collection is available in the three east coast states and the ACT through Austral Bricks Design Centres or go online to www.australmasonry.com.au.

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