

NORTHERN DISTRICT Times

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YOUR LOCAL CUMBERLAND NEWSPAPER

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Great War

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Top End tour

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Eco-wonderhouse

Solar hot water, solar pool water heating and photo-voltaic electricity panels

Double-glazing on all windows cuts heating bills

Two rainwater tanks in cellar hold 18,000L for all water used in laundry, toilets, garden and pool

Polished concrete floors hold the sun's heat in winter



EVAN MISTILIS

A RYDE family has built a new house with a clever design that slashes its power, heating and water bills.

The eco-friendly home maintains a comfortable temperature in summer without any airconditioning.

In Australia, the greenhouse gases that cause global warming are produced mostly by coal-fired power stations. But the large

four-bedroom Ryde home has a tiny environmental footprint. It uses as much electricity as a two-bedroom apartment: about \$220 per quarter.

There is a roof-top solar hot water system, a solar pool-water heater and photo-voltaic panels to make electricity.

But the biggest savings come from "passive" design features that cut the need for an airconditioner.

The architect Caroline Pidcock, who is

also president of the Australian Sustainable Built Environment Council, designed the house to be warmed by the sun in winter and shaded by eaves in summer.

There is floor-to-ceiling glass on most of the north-facing side of the house, it is well-insulated and all the fixed windows are double glazed.

To keep the temperature stable, a polished concrete floor in the rumpus room and an internal brick wall at one end of the

living room provide thermal mass. Homeowner Jan Gifford said it cost little more to build than a McMansion that would be a nightmare to keep cool.

"It was something we felt passionate about," she said.

Since moving in 18 months ago, the massive rainwater tanks have never run dry, supplying all the water used by the family of five in the laundry, toilets, garden and pool.

Eco-friendly home, Page 4

Wedding ring found on the pioneer path

THE Pioneer's Track that meanders through Epping, Beecroft and Carlingford has long been known for turning up treasure from generations past.

A large amount of early European history of the area has been gleaned along its course, both by those conducting a professional search as well as by those who have simply stumbled upon a discarded jewel of local history on a carefree walk.



Malcolm Little was traversing the Pioneer's Track near his Orchid Grange retirement village in Midson Rd last week when he discovered a small golden wedding band in an area of Epping once home to the Martin Brothers Quarry.

The date on the inside of the band is unclear but it does contain a short inscription, including the name Elizabeth.

Orchid Grange resident manager Bob Newport has now joined Mr Little in the search for the owner of the ring.

Phone Mr Newport at Orchid Grange on 9869 7112 if you think it is yours.

Home is eco-exceptional

EVAN MISTILIS

THE Giffords find it requires little effort to live in their eco-friendly house.

The three hens in their backyard coop seem to look after themselves and happily keep the kitchen stocked with eggs.

Jan Gifford feeds them food scraps, supplemented with organic feed bought for \$16 a bag every two or three months.

It is a fraction of the price of fresh, organic eggs in the supermarket.

In the living room, the blackbutt floorboards look as good as any polished timber floors.

They were actually bought from a recycled building supplier, sourced from the Scone army barracks.

To build their home, the Giffords had to cut down a silky oak and a camphor laurel tree.

They were sent to a mill and will be turned into furniture, including the family's dining room table.

The garden was re-planted with a lemon tree, a lime tree and Australian natives.

Having lived through two winters, the Giffords found that most of the gas points dotted through the home go unused.

It is comfortable with one moveable gas heater and, in summer, with the odd floor fan.

"We are happy to wear jumpers inside the house. We're not the sort of people who wear T-shirts in the middle of winter," Ms Gifford said.



Jan Gifford (above) with two massive water tanks under her environmentally sustainable house and (left) outside with her chickens, Fluffy and Salty.

Picture: DAVE SWIFT

Of the rainwater which falls on their roof, three quarters is harvested into two massive tanks in the cellar.

When the rainwater is needed in

the laundry, toilets, garden or pool, it is automatically pumped up through a concealed plumbing system.

If the tanks ever run dry, the

system will automatically switch to town water.

But this is unlikely. The tanks have six times the capacity of the common 3000L rainwater tank.

"When it rains, the sheer volume of water pouring into the system is amazing," Ms Gifford said.

If she were building her home again, Ms Gifford said she would install an even larger rainwater tank. But she would not bother with solar power, which cost \$15,000 with a rebate.

It would be much cheaper to buy 100 per cent wind power, sold by accredited green-energy retailers such as Origin Electricity.

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