



A long breezeway, also known as the bridge, is used as a sitting room and connects the main cottage to the self-contained suite on the garage's second floor.

SUNRISES at WOOLLAHRA

on Little Whiskey Bay

Named after a beloved place in Australia, this cottage turned out to be exactly the right size for the owners' family, friends and yoga students to gather on the east-facing shore of Little Whiskey Bay.

BY PATTI VIPOND | PHOTOS: ISPARKS SOLUTIONS



The cottage was too big. Or rather, it was bigger than a family of three needed. That was Patti Milne's first thought when she walked into the six-bedroom, 4.5-bathroom lake house on Lake of Bays' Little Whiskey Bay in 2008.

Having visited friends on Lake of Bays for almost 30 years, Milne and husband Ian were searching for their own retreat. On this particular autumn afternoon, Milne and her mother were touring Muskoka to do some leaf peeping and view a few cottages with a real estate agent.

"Of course, the first place he showed us was this place," recalls Milne of the 4,803-square-foot cottage on 1.25 acres of property with 315 feet of private shoreline. "I never thought we would look at something as big as this house. The agent asked, 'Well, could you see yourself in this place?' I said, 'I'm almost embarrassed, but yes.' The house was big but felt warm and had a cottage feel. I got a good vibe being

there."

Milne called her husband, who was out of town, and told him she thought she had found their cottage. Ian went up and walked around the cottage for hours, asking the agent lots of questions. By the end of the day, he put in an offer.

The couple called their new retreat "Woollahra," inspired by fond memories of the eponymous neighbourhood they had lived at in Sydney, Australia. The Aboriginal name means "meeting or sitting place," so it was perfect for a family cottage.

"The previous owner was an artist and I loved all the little touches she had given the house like stained glass windows, painted floors and vibrant colours in every room," says Milne, who hasn't changed the home's palette. "When we went outside, the outlook over the lake was stunning. Because the cottage is on a bay, there's not an overabundance of boat traffic. Some people like sunsets, but we love that our

The crowd-sized kitchen has sleek marble countertops, double wall stoves, a vintage-style wood stove, nook with appliances and glass doors leading to the deck.

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Beside the kitchen, the large dining room is warmed by a soaring wood-burning granite fireplace and furnished with antique-style spindle dining chairs around a harvest table.

cottage faces the sunrise. Every morning, my husband and I get our coffees and go out to the deck. We sit on the deck's steps and enjoy watching the sun come up. How could this be any better?"

Any notions that the house was too big were soon banished. With both of the couple's families living in western Canada, the cottage became a kind of magnet that drew family and relatives to Woollahra's welcoming embrace for extended visits during the year. Over 20 relatives arrived for a family reunion bash to celebrate Milne's mother's 80th birthday. Christmas and Hanukkah festivities at the cottage have been enjoyed by large groups of family members. However, it's the summers that have been particularly busy with guests, to the delight of the couple.

"Once my husband said to me, 'Do you

see all these little kids running around and having fun?'" says Milne. "I said 'yes.' He said, 'We're building memories for them.' This cottage really became the family place that we wanted it to be. In summer, my daughter taught yoga at the cottage and would hold weekend yoga workshops where people would come and stay. I have a niece who came from Ottawa with her little kids every summer."

A self-contained suite over the cottage's two-car attached garage became their daughter's studio for Lake of Bays Yoga. The separate suite includes a bedroom with ensuite, family room, kitchenette, front porch and a sunroom with a lake view balcony. Yoga students came from Lake of Bays and beyond. After five years, she closed the studio but the business was so successful that people still ask if she could

teach a class or hold yoga on the dock.

"We always felt that she brought the world to us because people would arrive for classes by boat, Sea-Doo or car," says Milne. "We met so many people that it was quite wonderful and fun. Because the suite has a separate outside staircase, no one had to come through the cottage."

The cottage's interior design has the easy flow of an open-concept space combined with a layout that defines the rooms. This allows plenty of space for entertaining while creating separate places for family and friends to gather together or be apart.

"The cottage can hold a lot of people because there are places for everyone to hang out," Milne says. "You can be in a bedroom watching a movie on computer while others are in the Muskoka Room having a coffee and the guys are at the other

end of the house watching sports. The kitchen is really well set up to have people over for dinner. Everyone hangs out in the kitchen."

The main floor includes a large living room with beamed ceiling and wood-burning stone fireplace, a dining room with two-storey stone fireplace, a laundry room, and a crowd-accommodating kitchen with marble countertops, double wall ovens, wet bar with wine fridge, and blue-tiled nook with double sinks, refrigerator, cabinets and dishwasher. A vintage-style, woodburning cook stove in the kitchen is often used to take off the early morning chill in winter. A step down from the kitchen is a windowed "breakfast" area with a table and chairs for a small group to have a meal.

The octagonal Muskoka Room – with its vaulted wooden ceiling, blue and white striped blinds and walls of windows and sliding doors – is very popular all year. In fact, it's Milne's favourite place at the cottage.

"The red living room with the stone fireplace is my winter favourite because it's darker and cosy," she says. "At the other end of the house, what I call the sunroom is my summer sitting room. The breeze coming through is delightful and everyone likes to lie down and nap on the blue couch. Even in winter when there's usually



The family's favourite place to gather in winter is the red living room with its woodburning granite fireplace, beamed ceiling, hardwood floors and big comfy couch.

BELOW: Although it may look like a log cabin was constructed in the middle of the cottage, an artist skillfully painted the room's walls with chinking and logs. RIGHT: Over the attached garage with potting shed is a self-contained suite with a comfortable bedroom, four-piece ensuite, family room, kitchenette and sunroom with balcony.



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With floor-to-ceiling windows and sliding glass doors beneath a vaulted wood ceiling, the octagonal Muskoka Room is cooled by cross breezes all summer long.



The secluded primary bedroom has sitting and office areas, a freestanding wood stove and an ensuite with clawfoot soaker tub, glass shower and dual sinks.



The ensuite bathroom in the primary bedroom features white dual sinks, double mirrors, a clawfoot soaker tub, wooden ceiling with potlights and tile flooring.

snow all around the glass, that room is bright and warm.”

A notable feature on the main floor is the bathroom near the entrance foyer. The room features a red Muskoka chair toilet and handpainted mural of a pair of friendly bears conversing in a forest. Beside the dining room is another surprise. There

appears to be a log cabin in the middle of the cottage. On closer examination, the very convincing logs and chinking turn out to be painted. The ‘log cabin room’ is currently an office but its four-piece ensuite would make it a unique bedroom.

As well as the self-contained suite, the cottage’s second level has four more

bedrooms, including the large primary bedroom with sitting room, office area, two walk-in closets and freestanding wood stove. The primary ensuite has a claw foot soaker tub, glass shower and dual sinks. A separate full bathroom, accented with pinecone and fir tiling, serves the other three bedrooms. The upper hallway



Both slips in the boathouse are equipped with hydraulic boat lifts to keep crafts safe from wave damage and to allow easy storage during the winter.

overlooks the kitchen, dining room and waterfront.

Outside, multi-level wooden decks stretch invitingly across the cottage. Stone stairs leading down to the waterfront arrive at a patio with stone firepit before continuing to the docks around the two-slip boathouse. The large slips both have

hydraulic lifts to keep boats safe from wave damage and for easy winter storage.

Gorgeous flower boxes decorate the outside of the boathouse and the lake front screened gazebo. The gazebo is furnished with a couch, two chairs and a table.

“When you’re in the gazebo, it feels like you are right over the water,” says Milne.

“It’s lovely to come down there at 5 o’clock with a glass of wine and have a chat or read a book.”

Extensive perennial gardens and lush lawns surround the cottage along with mixed mature forest. Ian is the gardener in the family and loves to spend his days outdoors working among the flora.

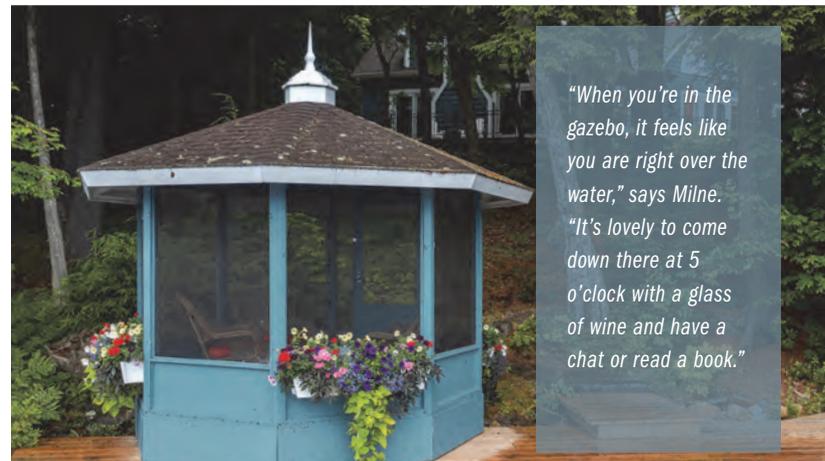
After many happy years at Woollahra, and with their daughter’s family living out west, the Milnes have decided their time here is over.

“This cottage has served us well as a family,” says Milne. “It’s a beautiful lake and we have amazing neighbours. For us, it holds a lot of wonderful memories. Sometimes I’ve been up with my camera just as the sun is rising. The light is a beautiful gold and it just makes your heart swell.”

Woollahra at 4113 South Portage Road on Little Whiskey Bay in Lake of Bays is listed at \$ 4,850,000 by David Smith and Elissa Boughen at the Lake of Bays office of Chestnut Park Real Estate Ltd. in Baysville. Listings and photos can be seen at lovenuskoka.com or lobmuskoka.com. For more information or to arrange a tour, contact David or Elissa at 705-767-2121 or email lakeofbays@chestnutpark.com.



LEFT: Guests using this powder room for the first time are surprised by its red Muskoka chair toilet and painted mural of two friendly bears in a forest. (Submitted photo) RIGHT: Three bedrooms on the upper floor share a bathroom featuring dual sinks, a stained glass window and forest green tiles with accent trim featuring pinecones and fir.



The waterfront gazebo on the dock is a pleasant summer place to have an evening glass of wine and some conversation with a lakeside view.