

Homes of the Year: Kauri homestead a Victorian showcase

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'The Retreat' historic farmhouse ,Te Hana. Photo / Supplied

This 140-year-old gothic revival homestead has been The Retreat Bed and Breakfast for the past 19 years. Lush pastures, majestic mature trees and a romantic driveway all protect what is one of Northland's best-kept secrets.

Built by Edward and Eliza Browne in **1867**, and owned by only two families in the first 100 years of its life, the kauri homestead behind the hedges was once central to the historic Albertland Special Settlement Scheme.

In its heyday it was the main house on 485ha of lush farmland, but now all that remains is 3.5ha and a garden that plays host to garden tours.

Constructed largely from heart kauri milled from the surrounding land, the interior is a showcase for all things Victorian. Kauri is in abundance, exposed in the wide-boarded floors, the staircase and the stripped ceilings in the drawing room, though painted elsewhere in conservation neutrals that suit the grand proportions of the rooms.

The present owners bought their home with the major structural repairs completed. As a result, they were able to concentrate on decorating and furnishing its five bedrooms, study/library, three bathrooms and living spaces to provide a range of options for family or home business alike.

Outside are a self-contained, two-bedroom cottage, the former share milker's quarters, sheds and barns.

There's a lawn for **croquet**, a goldfish pond, a herb garden in the shape of a Celtic cross and a vegetable garden.