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Hexagonal living

(By Dorothy Lavin)

Most of us enjoy having an unexpected guest dropping in, but how many could stand more than 250 a week? Mrs Brewster of the 'beehive' house in New Plymouth has welcomed more than 200,000 visitors in the past 15 years.

The house, built on hexagonal lines, was designed by her husband, beekeeper Mr E. R. Brewster.

He told me that he started out to build an aeroplane with honeycomb framework. This created so many problems that he gave up the idea, but decided to build a house on the honeycomb system.

The name of the house, "Norian" was derived from the first two letters of the words "no right angle". I hunted around for right angles and finally thought I saw some where the floor and walls met. Mr Brewster assured me it only looked like a right angle, but was in fact a "radial line to a round earth."



Ten weeks after Mr Brewster started to build the house, with the help of his family, they moved in.

"We thought we could finish it off just as quickly," Mrs Brewster said, "but we had so many people wanting to look over it, that it took us longer than we expected."

Many friends

The only home of its kind in the world, the house has drawn visitors from many countries.

"I never get sick of people calling, and I've made so many friends over the years—it's just lovely," Mrs Brewster said.

The whole house is built on hexagonal lines—even to the drawer in the kitchen table, which opens up on an angle of 30 degrees.

I wondered about cost, but Mrs Brewster assured me it was inexpensive to build.

"We used scraps — offcuts of wood which could be sawn into diamonds or hexagons. We only had £25 when we were married," she said.

Even though there were no inside doors, the house was not draughty — "There is no draught in a circle."

Mr Brewster explained that a hexagon was a compressed circle.

A beautifully hand-carved grandfather clock took my eye.

"It's carved out of kauri, and belonged to my aunt, who lived in the South Island. Unfortunately, we don't know its history,"

Mrs Brewster said. It was carved in 1897.

Mrs Brewster helped her husband make the tables in the house—each one inlaid in different grains and colours.

She made a double bedspread with 1056 hexagon shaped pieces, all hand-sewn. It took her 16 weeks. Scatter rugs throughout the house are cut in a similar design, and even the light shades are hexagonal. They were at one time hung in the Mayfair Theatre, New Plymouth.

People who visit the house send her articles of the same



MRS E. R. BREWSTER standing outside "Norian."

design—glass dishes, biscuit tins and Chinese porcelain—all hexagonal.

Hexagonal pieces of material are framed and hung on the wall. Mrs Brewster told me they are pieces from the frocks of ladies-in-waiting at Queen Caroline's Court (the wife of George IV), which had been brought out to New Zealand by a bride in 1857.

I was intrigued to find that even the meter box followed the honeycomb style.

It was apparent that Mrs Brewster loved her home. "I love living in a hexagonal house, even though I was never any good at geometry," she said.