



# Small, but perfectly formed

Transforming a tiny 1850s cottage into a modern home presents plenty of challenges, but Bill and Penny Holmes say that their lengthy and complex renovation blends the very best of country and town living.

**P**ioneering heritage and modern living may appear to be strange bedfellows, yet they sit side by side in a sympathetic and endearing conversion at this settler's cottage in the heart of Tanunda. Owners Penny and Bill Holmes have not only restored a 1850s heritage-listed cottage in Goat Square, but created an inspired extension that epitomises stylish design. An original entrance door, period features and lath and plaster ceilings at the front of the cottage give way to lofty ceilings and bright, spacious and contemporary living spaces at the rear.

The home is one of three originally owned by the Historical Society in Goat Square – as the name suggests the square was a prominent meeting place and market in the 1840s. Of the three original cottages Penny and Bill's is the only one to be sold to a private owner.

Purchasing the property from a friend in 2001, the couple left behind a vineyard, sheep stud and their family home of 32 years in the rolling hills of Gomersal to take up town living on a 620 square metre block.

While they fell in love with the charm of the house and its quaint surroundings, Penny says they inherited a four room stone and brick cottage built using 19th century construction techniques. The house needed reroofing, underpinning and a partial rebuild where a wall caved because of water damage. The thin steel strengthening rods that run the perimeter of the rooms are a distinctive feature of the house.

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“We loved the feel of the house and its place in the square; so it seemed the obvious thing to do,” says Penny Holmes. “The finished product was much better than I envisaged; you never know how it’s going to look, but I was happy with the end result.”

*Bill and Penny Holmes (above) have spent almost two years renovating and extending this old worker’s cottage in Goat Square. While adhering to strict heritage guidelines they, and their architect, have managed to create a modern, light-filled and highly functional living space which still preserves the charm of the 19th Century original. The building project involved salvaging the original stone cottage, building a 150 square metre extension and creating a productive vegetable garden. The couple now divide their time between their farm and this Tanunda town house.*

“People kept asking us, ‘what are these poles everywhere?’ she says. “There are no foundations and the poles hold the wall together.”

With patience and vision Penny and Bill have executed a remarkable transformation. Following an eight-month build (and a two-year project overall), the original cottage now houses an elegant yet cosy sitting room, a guest bedroom, an open plan kitchen and a smart dining room. The kitchen features Smeg appliances, marble benchtops and a generous stainless steel bench; a Falcon gas stove replaces the original Metters Stove in the chimney. At 150 square metres the extension is deceptively large, wrapping around a central private courtyard.

The extension incorporates a spacious living room, a master bedroom with an ensuite, another guest bedroom featuring Karl Schmidt-Rottluff artwork, a spacious bathroom, a functional office and separate laundry.

French oak floorboards flowing throughout the extension were sourced from AP John Cooperage, while louvre windows custom built by Paul Ehrat provide natural cross-ventilation and cooling.

The extension was designed by Jamie Gladigau of JBG Architects in conjunction with heritage advisors Douglas Alexander and Sam Hoskings. Bill says the principles of heritage conversation are now much more flexible than they once were: “They want (heritage buildings) to be preserved but habitable, recognising that we live in the 21st century and people’s requirements today are vastly different to that era.”

That union of old and new is evident throughout the house, with bright, light filled rooms perfect for eight boisterous grandchildren (including twins) without compromising the heritage features.

Family heirlooms and period furniture grace the bedrooms and living areas, including a French cherrywood dining table. Artwork adorns the walls. The airy living spaces, decorated by Jenni Ermer, are elegant and comfortable. Floor-to-ceiling windows overlook the courtyard, which features a Vergola with automatic rain sensor to maximise alfresco living.

Penny has recreated much of her ‘farm’ lifestyle in her new digs, with flagstone pavers weaving a path through vegetable and flower gardens. “We’ve always been self sufficient; a lot of nights [on the farm] we’d sit at the table and eat our own lamb, drink our own wine and eat our own vegetables, and that hasn’t changed,” she says.

While Bill and Penny are still daily visitors to the Gomersal Farm – Bill and son William have 34 hectares under vine while Penny runs the sheep stud – they now happily call Tanunda home.

“It was not that we intended to live here when we first bought the property, but it was a big block of land and we loved the feel of the house and its place in the square, so it seemed the obvious thing to do,” Penny says. “The finished product was better than what I envisaged; you never know how it’s going to look, but I was happy with the end result.” **bl**