

The Daily Telegraph SATURDAY

home

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Breath of fresh air

Radical rethink helps a tired terrace leave the past behind **8**



Decorate Hollywood style **10** **Display** Hadley by Adenbrook **16**

Renovate

The brief

To open and update a historic sandstone home without losing its character.



ARCHITECT

Mark Szczerbicki (above)
markszczerbicki.com

BUILDER

Ferrocon Construction and Management
ferrocon.com.au

STRUCTURAL ENGINEER

Woolacotts Consulting Engineers
woolacotts.com.au

THE SOURCE

Adjustable retractable louvres

Horiso, horiso.com.au

Bathroom porcelain slab tiles

Skheme, skheme.com

Calacatta Oro marble benchtops for

kitchen and bathrooms MC Marble

and Granite Fitting 0404 001 333

Fireplaces retrofitted with Jetmaster

gas units jetmaster.com.au

Fixed and Cabrio skylights Velux,

velux.com.au

LED lighting Superlight,

superlight.com.au

Lighting pendants and downlights

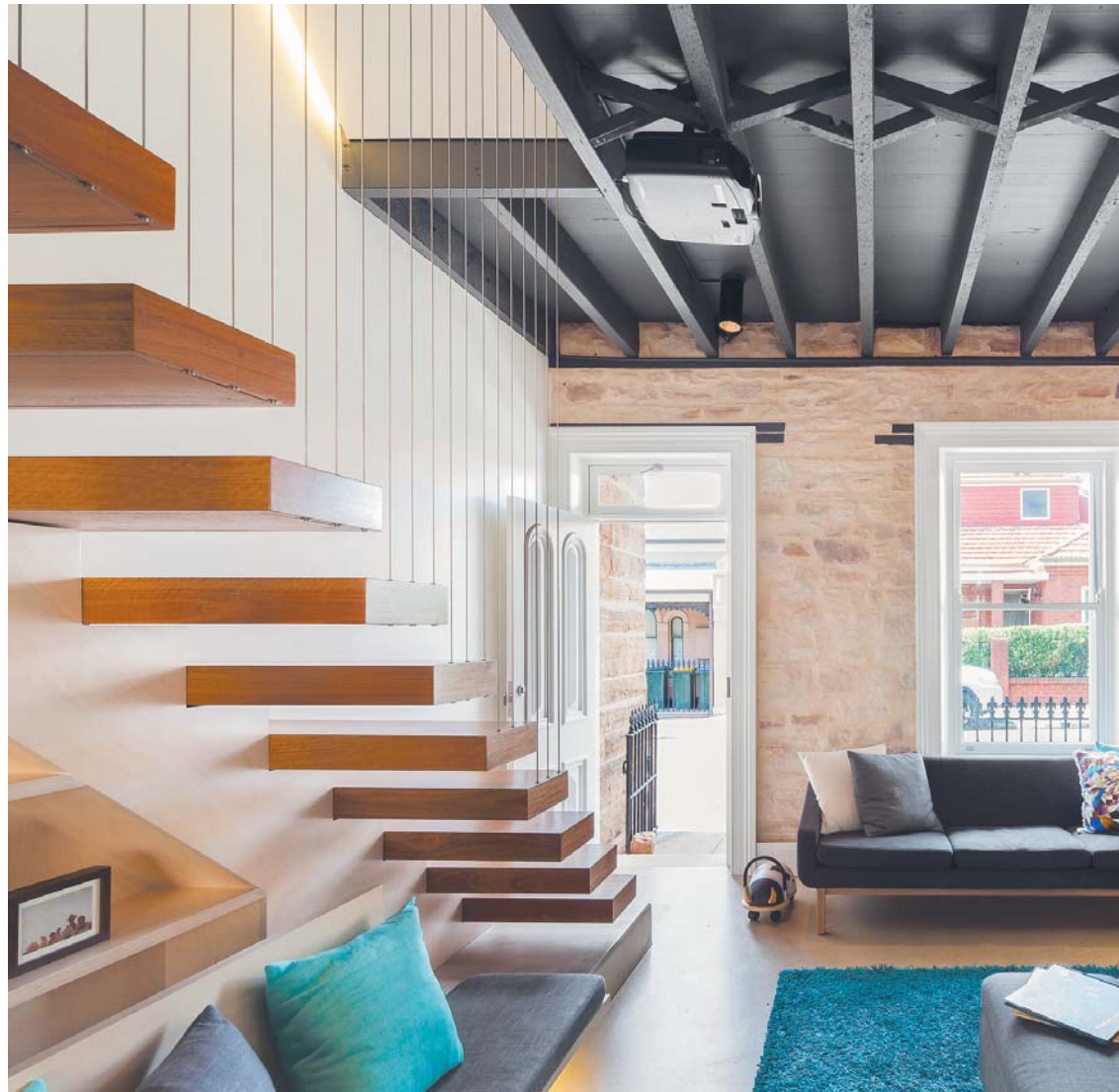
Eurlouce, eurlouce.com.au

Underfloor hydronic heating Urban

Energy Australasia, urbanenergy.com.au



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Ship shape for a new era

A much loved family home is reborn for a new century of living, writes **Robyn Willis**

When you care about a building enough, you're prepared to do almost anything to save it.

Built in the late 19th century, Shipley House as it was originally known, was one of a pair of sandstone terraces in a quiet street in Birchgrove that had seen better days.

Owned by the same family for more than 40 years, the house had been passed down to the present owners, who lived in it for some time before deciding it could do with a little love if it was to survive for the next 100 years. Architect Mark Szczerbicki said the house was not in the best shape when he came on board.

"It was in an original state, to put it nicely. It was fixed up a little bit but over the years they had added an ad hoc kitchen and a ladder up to the attic level," Mark says.

The plan was to transform the two-bedroom, single-bathroom home into a three-bedroom, two-bathroom residence with an emphasis on open-plan living.

The enclosed rooms on the ground floor would be opened up for easy flow between living, dining and kitchen areas while access to the attic would be formalised to create a direct link to the new main bedroom suite on the third level.

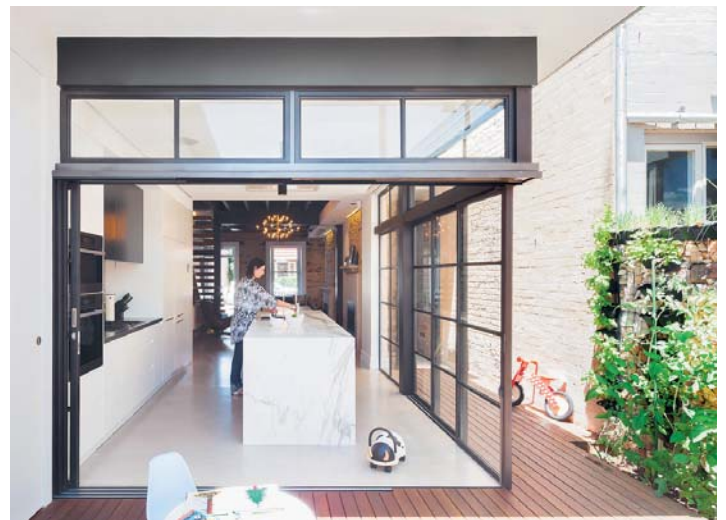
Stone age

Given the house is only 4m wide internally, space was at a premium.

Mark's solution was to create a 90cm-wide utility zone down one side to accommodate the new stairs, built-in furniture and kitchen joinery on the ground floor.

"The main concept was to put the skylights, storage, staircase and everything else along the shared wall in a 90cm strip," he says.

"It actually helps to free the rest of that narrow space as much as possible."



The most immediate obstacle to completing the work was the old stone walls.

"The age of the house was one of the main challenges because nothing was square or plumb about the existing walls," Mark says.

"The sandstone walls were extremely brittle and the old lime mortar was in poor condition. The walls also had rising damp so they were difficult to stabilise."

To give them as much space as possible to work with, they decided to completely remove the ground-floor walls.

However, this would potentially make the house even more structurally fragile.

Mark proposed inserting a steel framework inside to act as a support for the house.

"We had to put in a structural cage. It extends up into the attic and supports the sandstone walls. It's like a new skeleton inside the house that allows the rooms to be freestanding," he says.

Because they could not interfere with the shared wall, the floating staircase was attached to a steel frame with the timber-clad treads cantilevered off the side.

"We didn't want the feeling of enclosed stairs. When you walk in, you can see up to the other two levels," Mark says.

Light industry

The space under the stairs provides a mix of open and closed storage. Mark and the owners were keen to retain the industrial style of the home, with plywood joinery and exposed timber rafters. Floating stairs let in the light.



The first floor would be remodelled to create three bedrooms and a bathroom, while the top floor would accommodate an open-plan bedroom and ensuite that captured as much light as possible.

"Rather than having a separate bathroom, the custom-made bed and bedhead becomes the bathroom cubicle on the other side," Mark says.

"There's a big cut-out in the bedhead because it has views to the city in one direction and Garden Island in the other."

Slow and steady

With a clear plan in place, Mark says the owners were philosophical about the seven-month council approval process.

"It was complicated by the fact that existing parts of the house crossed the boundaries with pockets of the house jutting into the neighbours' place," he says.

"That was part of the negotiation and it eventually helped with waterproofing and the fire rating between the two properties.

"In the end, things always get approved but you have to go with the process.

"They will always agree if you can show due diligence."

Original artist

The owners were keen to retain as much of the original house as possible.

Stonemasons repaired the old lime mortar in the walls and restored the old fireplaces, which were updated with gas models. Timber rafters, which form the ground-floor ceiling, were repaired and restored so they could remain on show.

Exposing the raw materials and maintaining the home's rustic aesthetic was important to both Mark and the owners.

"We didn't want to mask the walls with too much plasterboard. We went with polished concrete and steel for a slightly industrial look," Mark says.

Concrete floors also allowed for underfloor heating to be installed to keep the home toasty all year round.

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Pictures Katherine Lu



Kitchen storage and work space is contained in the 90cm utility strip on the common wall.

