

Recycled house

Relocating an original Brunswick cottage to historic Chewton allowed the perfect blend of old and new, and plenty of scope for creative reuse.

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CALAN AND SARAH WERE KEEN TO LEAVE THE RAT race after 10 years in Melbourne. They settled on vibrant and community-minded Chewton, just outside Castlemaine and 110km north-west of the city, where land was relatively affordable and commuting was still a possibility. In the end their recently purchased Brunswick house, a historic but dilapidated double-fronted weatherboard, made the move with them.

As *Sanctuary's* graphic designer, Calan had no shortage of ideas when it came to building his own home, but one stood out. "The idea of recycling a house had big appeal," Calan says, "A, for heritage value and B, for the reuse." "It was tragic to think this 110-year-old-house - which we heard was built by the Brunswick Mayor - was going to be demolished," adds Sarah. "It was nice to think that we could give it another life." →





Relocating an existing house had big appeal for Calan and Sarah, A) for heritage value and B) for reuse. Here the first two of four sections of the house are loaded on to the back of trucks, leaving Brunswick for its new site in Chewton.



Calan and Sarah reused as many materials as possible in the renovation. Bricks from the original chimneys, which could not be transported with the house were used to make paths around the property.

Originally, the idea of relocating a house was about saving on building costs, but an opportune flow of events quickly gave it momentum. They spotted the characterful house marked for demolition around the corner from where they were living and decided “just to knock on the door,” laughs Calan. The sale was agreed soon after, and having already found a north-facing block on a quiet Chewton street overlooking bushland, there was no need to wait.

“It was pretty much what we wanted – an old Victorian house with a back that could be renovated to be north-facing, and it would fit in with the area,” says Calan. “We fell in love with it, even though looking back it was in pretty bad condition.” His carpenter brother and his father, an “over-engineering old-school builder”, enlisted as the project builders were less sure, “but

once we started working on it we found the original part was solid as anything and the timber joints were amazing.”

The period features that had won them over were lovingly restored, but not without hard work. Damaged during the move, the house had to be gutted and replastered. Nothing was wasted though, and even the stripped, broken-up plaster was used as part of the foundations for the driveway.

The new, slimmer plasterboard meant the original picture rail was too short for the renovated rooms, which were suddenly 50 millimetres bigger, so it was repurposed for the edging of the new pressed metal ceiling feature in the living room. The skirting boards were retained and extended to fit using excess from the third downstairs bedroom, which was converted to a separate toilet, bathroom and linen cupboard.

All doors were restored and reused, with the base of the door frames newly lined with period-faithful skirting blocks, handmade from old roof timbers. A creative collage and a striking lightshade were crafted with some of the original walls’ lath timber, with the rest stored under the house for future use.

A north-facing open plan addition to the rear replaces a shoddy 1960s renovation that “was a bit of a rabbit warren: it had a tiny lounge, a study and a kitchen all out the back,” says Calan. The previous owners had also made use of the attic, adding two bedrooms upstairs without pushing out the roofline.

Calan and Sarah agreed they didn’t need a four or five bedroom house, but wanted to retain the two levels. Architect Shae Parker McCashen of Green Sheep Collective



① The original Baltic pine-floored hallway leads past the old rooms to the new addition at the back and the stairwell to the right. Nothing was wasted during the restoration and renovation of the period home; even the old plaster helped make the driveway. The original ceiling cornicing hadn't survived, so a replica was applied to the hallway and the rooms, which all grew by 50mm thanks to the much slimmer modern plasterboard.

② The first two bedrooms and living room of the original house were virtually unchanged, though the fireplaces were replaced with in-built wardrobes when Sarah and Calan discovered the chimneys could not be used.



suggested the void mezzanine above the dining room, overlooked by the loft workspace and bedroom. “I’m really glad we went with the void”, Calan says. “People ask what it’s for, but it really opens up the upstairs area and lets in a lot more light.” It also acts as a thermal chimney, combining with high level louvre windows to help expel hot air at night.

“We wanted to keep the structural integrity of the house and its original expression, while allowing for plenty of light and a play of volume,” Shae explains. The wide north-facing openings and passive solar features of the addition create a deliberate separation between the old and the new. “We wanted people to experience this difference as they move through the house, but to create a smooth transition that wasn’t jarring.”

Second-life materials fill the addition, many with a story. “We didn’t want a sparkly kitchen, we wanted it to look real,” Calan explains. The hardwood floorboards once lined the historic Kyneton Auction Rooms, while an ill-fated Port Melbourne pub’s toilet doors were repurposed for the shed and the laundry. The dining table and kitchen bench were handcrafted from recycled timber. “We wanted it to be as sustainable as possible and limiting the use of new materials to absolute essentials was a big part of that,” Sarah says.

For Shae, it’s fitting that the historic cottage should begin its new life refreshed with an eclectic mix of reclaimed materials. “It’s the ultimate in terms of reuse – to think that it all could have ended up in landfill, but instead 90 per cent of it is living on in Chewton. It’s pretty amazing.”

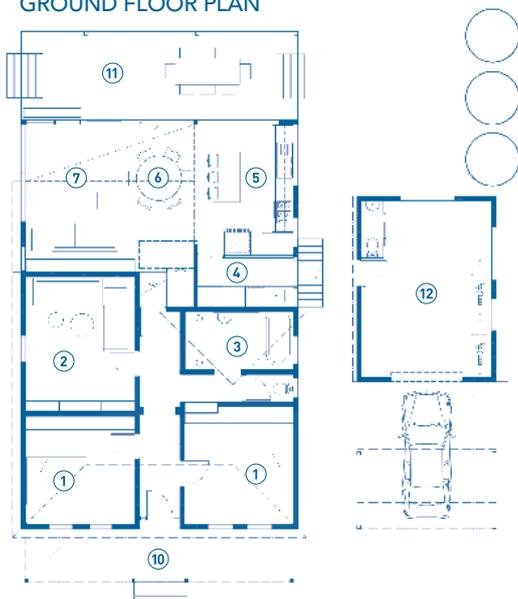
Materials are blended in the kitchen and dining room for a “real” finish. The bespoke plywood kitchen was created offsite to Calan’s detailed specifications after months of research, and the recycled timber table and kitchen benchtop were handcrafted by Calan’s father.



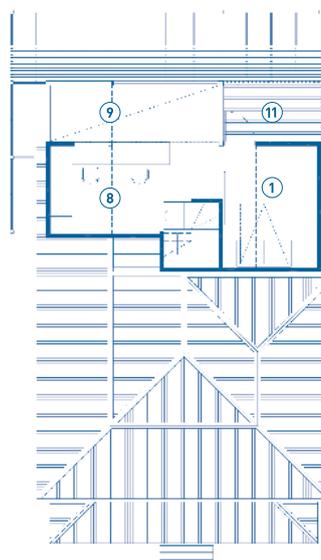


1 The modern northern addition and deck is clad in reclaimed blackbutt timber, and sits above recycled railway sleeper veggie planters. The mezzanine study and bedroom benefits from its own sunny balcony, a suggestion of Shae's. Temporary shading over the pergola will eventually be replaced by deciduous grapevines. The original bullnose iron roofing was used for wicking veggie beds.

GROUND FLOOR PLAN



FIRST FLOOR PLAN



LEGEND

- 1 Bedroom
- 2 Lounge
- 3 Bathroom
- 4 Laundry
- 5 Kitchen
- 6 Dining
- 7 Living
- 8 Mezzanine/study
- 9 Void
- 10 Veranda
- 11 Deck
- 12 Shed

Relocated house

—Specifications

Credits

DESIGN

Green Sheep Collective and owners

BUILDER

Owner builder

PROJECT TYPE

Relocation & renovation

PROJECT LOCATION

Chewton, VIC

COST

House transportation: \$80,000; renovation: \$200,000

SIZE

Land 1105 sqm, house 178 sqm

Sustainable Features

HOT WATER

– Rinnai Infinity efficient gas hot water system.

RENEWABLE ENERGY

– 3kW solar PV system with Enphase Energy M215 Micro Inverters, installed by EnviroShop.

WATER SAVING

– 3 x 7100L Polymaster tanks supply rainwater to entire house.

PASSIVE HEATING & COOLING

– North-facing double glazing to minimise heat loss through windows in winter
– Fixed shading over north and west windows designed to maximise winter and minimise summer solar gain
– Thermal chimney via louvre windows in mezzanine void
– Pergola with ornamental grapes over northern deck for summer shading.

ACTIVE HEATING & COOLING

– Thermarad classic hydronic panels throughout
– Ceiling fans in bedrooms and lounge and low energy Aeratron e503 ceiling fan in mezzanine
– External blinds provide shading to the north, east and west windows.

BUILDING MATERIALS

– Custom-made plantation hoop pine kitchen cabinets and doors by Plyboards
– Reclaimed timber used throughout including: blackbutt cladding, decking and kitchen benchtops from Urban Salvage and Timber Zoo; hardwood floorboards and jarrah front decking from Melbourne demolitions; original Oregon roof timbers were reused in the rear renovation walls
– Laundry and shed doors are reclaimed toilet doors from a demolished pub in Port Melbourne
– Knauf Earthwool insulation throughout: R2.5 in external walls, R2.1 underfloor and R4.0 in roof; Kingspan Aircell insulation in roof.

WINDOWS AND GLAZING

– Double-glazed doors and windows used on the renovated back half
– Custom-made louvre windows in void act as a thermal chimney.

LIGHTING

– LED lighting from Beacon used throughout.

PAINTS, FINISHES & FLOOR COVERINGS

– Wattyl Interior Design and Aqua Trim low-VOC paint used throughout
– Water-based floor varnish used throughout
– ‘Natural rustic’ sisal carpet from Floorspace used in upstairs rooms.

OTHER ESD FEATURES

– Recycled railway sleepers used in the native garden designed by Little Green Spaces
– Native plants sourced locally from Goldfields Revegetation
– Bricks from the three original chimneys reused for front and side paving
– Original bullnose roofing iron from rear deck used to make raised wicking vegetable beds
– Salvaged timber from Melbourne demolitions used for rear fence
– High energy rating appliances, including Miele induction cooktop.



Native landscaping, by Little Green Spaces, and reclaimed timber features surround the house on its western and northern sides.

