

Restoring a treasure back to life



Behind the renovation of 222 Timor St, Warrnambool: Luke and Nat Taylor, with their son Lucas. They have since had another child, Penny.

After years of decay, the old piano shop opposite Swintons, in Warrnambool, is being brought back to life by a young lawyer who has taken on a restoration project of monumental proportions.

Luke Taylor, and his wife Nat, bought the double-storey, derelict building at 222 Timor St more than 12 months ago with the intention of turning it into an investment, but what they didn't count on was just *how* much hard work would be involved, or how much they would come to love the old place.

“At first it was very much about building an investment for the future, rather than being passionate about restoring an

old building, but that has completely changed,” Luke said.



BEFORE: The front left room was restored from top to bottom, including the ceiling, floorboards and walls.



AFTER...

[dropcap style="font-size: 60px; color: #A02F2F;"] A
[/dropcap] turning point was when architect Peter Brooks, from Heritage Victoria, visited for an on-site assessment of the

property, which is listed with the National Trust and Heritage Victoria as a significant building. Where most saw a decaying hulk that had to be restored from the ground-up, Peter saw an historic and precious gem.

“He was blown away by it,” Luke explained. “There are basically so few properties like this that are still in their original condition and have not been modified or altered in any significant way. Peter’s enthusiasm and excitement about that was infectious.”

The sandstone building is the oldest, intact commercial building in Warrnambool and dates back to around 1850. It has had many lives since then, including as a piano repair shop owned by my grandfather, Bill Goodall, who bought it in 1932. It was largely because Bill never had an spare money for renovations that the building has remained unchanged, perhaps apart from the wallpaper: Luke removed nine layers from each of the rooms.



BEFORE: Layers of wallpaper and plaster had to be removed and damp walls dried out as part of the renovation.



AFTER...the 'lounge room' has been given a new lease of life.

[dropcap style="font-size: 60px; color: #A02F2F;"]L[/dropcap>uke and a group of skilled, local tradesmen have spent countless hours since February slowly bringing the place back to life, and it has been backbreaking work. Floorboards have been lifted, replaced and then the old ones recycled. Barrow loads of dirt and dust and debris have been removed. Leaks have been plugged, walls re-plastered, windows replaced...and on it goes. And then some.

"The tradesmen have been amazing, because everything was crooked and had to be made square again," Luke said.

Luke has taken only two weekends off since taking on the project, including one weekend when his second child, Penny, was born.

"I have spent so many hours in the building, and because I have spent so much time there, on my own, I have really come to appreciate it and feel the emotion of it," he said.



BEFORE: The 1850s building was rundown, but still in much of its original condition when the Taylors bought it last year.



AFTER: Hours of back-breaking work have seen the shop

slowly restored to how it would have looked in the mid 1800s, right down to the colour scheme.

[dropcap style="font-size: 60px; color: #A02F2F;"] I [dropcap]t is this emotional connection that has pushed Luke through what he calls the "dark times," when the job ahead seemed overwhelming. He has also applied the same disciplined approach that he uses for his triathlons – one step at a time.

"It has been a huge challenge, a huge amount of work, but we are breathing new life into the building. It may look plain, but it represents an era and reflects that time," Luke said.

The bottom storey of the building will have a tenant by the end of this month, but it will be another year before a residence and a serviced apartment upstairs are complete. Luke is determined to see it through.

"The way I see it is that if Nat and I can do this, what can't we do?"

[box] 222 Timor St, Warrnambool had been painted cream for many years, but this was not its original colour. The new salmon-pink and burgundy facade reflects the original colour scheme that was uncovered by peeling back layers of paint. Pig's blood was often used to tint paint in the 1800s, reflecting a step-up from the whitewash used on working class cottages.[/box]



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