

kids on the website

The Sydney Morning Herald

FEBRUARY 4-5, 2012

Domain

HOUSES

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Happy new year?

Cautious optimism from buyers and sellers, p8

NEW FEATURE
See a video of Margie Blok's House of the Week by waving the QR reader in your smartphone over this code.*



* Get your QR reader from app store



Three of the Best in Ryde, p6

Dream Home in Paddington, p10

Title Deeds with Margie Blok, p4

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Dream Home

Kids in the kitchen

Childhood memories of shared meals in the country inspire a terrace revamp, writes **Jane Burton Taylor**.



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Woodford

Woodford Country Estate

For Definite Sale - owner committed elsewhere. Move in on exchange, with the option to purchase furniture & machinery (can be used as a B&B). Owner may consider CBD/liner west property part-trade. Reminiscent of an old English estate, this stunning property is set just 1 hour's drive from Sydney CBD in the middle of the World Heritage National Park that is the Blue Mountains. Privately nestled on 13.7 acres of land comprising of grassy fields, amazing gardens & westerly bush walks, this home has been renovated to a very high standard & is ready for the next owner to simply enjoy the lifestyle it has to offer. Entry is via a set of imposing electric gates giving way to the privately owned road leading to the home. On the way you will pass the cricket pitch & field & the "Gatehouse" (a 3 bedroom residence built in 1911 & lovely in its own right). Further in & hidden from street view is the residence which comprises of around a million bricks, 10 bedrooms, 6 bathrooms & expansive living spaces totalling almost a quarter acre of floor space!

Inspect

By appointment
 Go to www.century21.com.au/hazelbrook to see video information & floor plan.
Price
 Negotiable
Contact
 Chris Delfsma
 0416 010 987

It took James Mould years to find an architect he liked and finally commit to renovating. He had bought his three-storey Paddington terrace 15 years earlier but says he had been procrastinating for about half that time. The final impetus came, he says, when the house just got too tired.

"It was long overdue. I had been putting it off for six years," he says. "It had been a great home but it was quite dysfunctional in... positioning of the rooms and facilities. It was built in the 1880s and over 90 years it had had three different renovations: one was an extension of the back half of the property - it was traditionally two rooms deep - and this [addition] had bad weather issues!"

"You enter from the street into the middle floor of the terrace. It was this floor that had had the most recent addition of a kitchen and small balcony at the north-facing back. It was a dated '80s addition and, even worse than its aesthetics, when it rained it leaked like a slow-running shower. Both the upper-floor bedrooms and the lower level had problems, too. The bedrooms upstairs had low ceilings sloping down to under two metres, barely allowing Mould to stand upright. Downstairs was cave-like, particularly the room facing back to the street."

A bit of serendipity helped Mould find his architects Huw Turner and Penny Collins. He saw a house in Bellevue Hill that he described as contemporary but without the "look-at-me" syndrome.

In their early conversations about the glaring challenges of the renovation, the

owner told the architects how he loved and hoped to re-create, in some form, the country kitchen of his childhood where family and friends had gathered and shared meals.

THE NEW CENTURY

In their reinvention of the terrace, Turner explains how they started by knocking out all the walls, reinforcing the 130-year-old building with a partially exposed steel structure. The entry floor is now one space with a fully open back wall, with balustrade, to the north and a view of trees. "Rather than having a balcony on the middle level," Mould says, "we chose to take the room right to the edge and then open it up."

Turner says they did discuss the possibility of incorporating a third bedroom into that level but opted to make it one spacious sitting room instead. However, he says they have designed it so they can convert if they ever need to. "We had to decide between lifestyle or real estate value," Mould says.

"We went for lifestyle."

A NEW LIGHT

Turner revamped upstairs, too. The new stairs are light weight steel and recycled timber, with open treads to let in as much light as possible. The ceiling levels have been tweaked to give a more generous height and the main back bedroom has been stretched to incorporate a new balcony. Existing skylights have been tidied up and overlaid with timber batons to create a whimsical play of light and shadow. Turner points out how the sunlight is filtered down from the upper-floor bathroom

AIM

To create liveable, child-friendly spaces throughout the house that can be used for entertaining.

TIME FRAME

Fourteen months.

FAVOURITE FEATURE

Downstairs.

GREEN POINTS

- ▶ Reuse of original house.
- ▶ Recycled timber.
- ▶ Stone floor on the ground level for thermal mass.
- ▶ Cross-ventilation.

- ▶ Introduction of natural light, so don't need artificial lighting during day.
- ▶ Low-VOC paints.
- ▶ LED lights.

INSIDER'S TIP

Let your builder and architect's ideas run, rather than becoming fixated on your plan.

ARCHITECT

Huw Turner and Penny Collins of Collins and Turner Architects, 9356 3217.

BUILDER

Elvis Mardini of Mardini Constructions, who won a Master Builders Association award for the house last year, 9568 3201.



OPEN HOME PLANNER

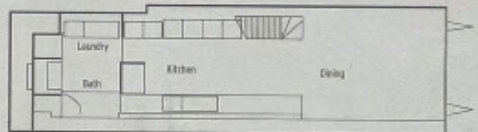
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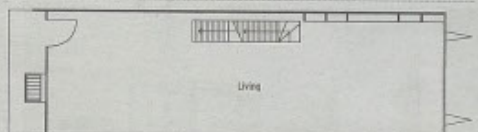
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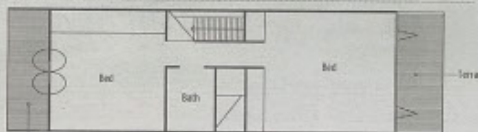
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LOWER LEVEL



ENTRY LEVEL



UPPER LEVEL

Moveable feast ... (clockwise from far left) the open kitchen is part of a huge dining area; the barbecue nook and outdoor area; the stairs filter in light from the upper levels; the outdoor water feature; light play in one of the bathrooms. Photos: Richard Glover Photography

skylight, for example, and how at a certain time of day it creates an almost surreal effect by bouncing in the mirror.

THE HEART OF THE HOUSE

The lowest floor of the house has been transformed as well. The space is mainly dedicated to a long L-shaped kitchen, with wall and under-stair built-ins concealing the usual practical trappings at one end and a dining room (with table designed by Turner), opening to the garden at the other. "He is a very good cook," Turner says looking at the stone-topped kitchen bench that runs almost the full length of one wall.

"I need the long bench," Mould says. "I'll cook for up to 26 people, so I get frustrated with a small bench space."

This central cooking and eating part of this lower level has been designed with adaptable walls at either end. At the southern street end, Turner has designed a concealed door into a second bathroom. At a superficial glance, it looks as if the room ends there but the door folds open. In this open position, you have an even longer view, all the way through to the far wall of the bathroom.

"This back wall of the bathroom is also a retaining wall," Turner says. "We redesigned the room to get this idea of the stone wall [at the very end of the house]. We wanted a sense of the living room extending."

Similarly at the northern end of the terrace, the space now runs out into the garden and steps down to a perfect north-facing barbecue nook, with a new garage forming a screen wall at the far end of the garden. While the whole house now seems to fit the owner like a glove, it is in this lower floor and its stepped garden that he spends most of his time. He explains how he grew up on a farm in the southern tablelands and how the kitchen opened to a built-in verandah, which in turn overlooked the garden. "That was the communal area for our family, so I had some amazing memories of that."

By linking the kitchen and dining space in his inner-city terrace to the backyard, it has given him a similar link to an outdoor area and plenty of spillover space for entertaining all ages. It is where he lives and where he cooks for and entertains friends and family, just as he hoped and envisaged he would.

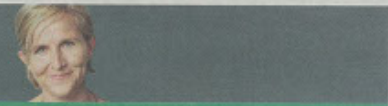


COSTS

Demolition	\$6,000
Preliminaries	\$52,000
Groundworks	\$55,000
Plumbing & drainage	\$20,000
Electrics	\$15,000
Formwork	\$9,000
Reinforcement	\$6,500
Concrete	\$10,000
Steel	\$35,000
Masonry	\$15,000
Timber	\$40,000
Stairs and flooring	\$35,000
Balustrades	\$20,000
Waterproofing	\$5,000
Insulation	\$5,000
Windows and doors	\$22,500
Plasterboard	\$20,000
Tiling	\$10,000
Render	\$10,000
Painting	\$15,000
Joinery	\$65,250
Stone supply	\$20,000
Landscape	\$8,000
Pond	\$4,000
Screen	\$15,500
Subtotal	\$517,750

Architects' fee	\$48,264
Subtotal	\$566,014
GST	\$56,601
TOTAL	\$622,615

Q & A
Lucy Macken



Fenced in, but check your options

A neighbour has taken down their front fence, exposing their garden and spoiling the streetscape. Is the council able to force them to erect a new fence?

Mark, Naremburn

This sort of thing is big in Canberra, as well as in parts of the upper north shore and farther reaches of the shire. It's about sharing the garden with the community, blending the boundaries between the private and public areas. When everyone has more space than they care to mow and the postman is the only regular foot traffic, what does it matter if a few square metres are sacrificed to show off the gardenias? But that's not Naremburn.

Assuming your street is lined with 1.2-metre-high fences, the open garden can look either out of place or inspiring, depending. Unfortunately for you, the council won't act as your boomer boy on this. On your standard residential street that is not heritage listed, the front fence is optional (as opposed to a boundary fence with the neighbour, which is a different story). As always, there are exceptions so check. See housingcode.planning.nsw.gov.au.

I recently inspected a couple of worrying properties. One has been builder-occupied, yet is still not approved for habitation and is incomplete. The other is a two-storey house converted into a duplex. When I inquired about reverting it to its original design, I was told that would be "no trouble since council doesn't know it's been used as a duplex

anyway". Is it legal to offer such properties for sale?

John, Coogee

It doesn't matter if a property is half-finished or in such a derelict state that it's unfit to allow open inspections, it is legal to sell it as long as the agent is clear about just what is for sale. (Indeed, what builder-occupied property is not half-finished?) Likewise, a property doesn't need an occupation certificate to be sold, just to be occupied. It's worth noting that a good selling agent will suggest the vendor include it because even though buyers might not think to ask for it, many a conveyancer or solicitor will insist that the sale contract include it.

When we make an offer on a house, do we just call to tell the agent to secure it, or should we put it in writing?

Rae, Dawes Point

How much do you want it? If the answer is "A lot", then ask for a copy of the contract, get it checked, sign it, attach a bank cheque for the asking price and hand it to the agent. That should do it. If the answer is "Yes, but not for the full asking price", then call the agent and tell them your offer; if it's accepted, then repeat the last five steps in the above answer. Making a verbal offer is way cool and will often be enough when there's little or no competition but is open to too many ifs, buts and counter-offers to close the deal quickly.

Send your questions to Lucy at macken.lucy@gmail.com.

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