

## Award Winning Country Homestead

2013



The renovation and extension of the Homestead at 'Rose Valley' has been an outstanding example of a complete transformation of an existing building that no longer met the Owner's needs. This was acknowledged at the **2013 Master Builders Regional Awards – North East** where this project received the award for **Best Renovation/Addition \$300,000-\$500,000**.

'Rose Valley' is a large grazing property comprising 2000 acres of farmland and 2000 acres of native forest in the sub alpine range of the Australian Alps South of Cheshunt. Whilst the property Owners live overseas, long term Farm managers reside in the Homestead. The Owners visit frequently and reside in another house on the property previously renovated by Ovens & King Builders.

In effect the Farm Managers acted as our Clients for this project. They had very specific requirements regarding the design for the building. The Homestead is the heart of the property and as well as being the primary residence it is also the social centre for the many overseas and local visitors that come to enjoy the magnificent landscapes of the Upper Rose River. Formal and informal entertaining areas were important as was a relaxed and easy lifestyle for a young family residing in a remote mountain valley.

Creating a comfortable and thermally efficient home was a significant consideration as the Clients developed the design with Tracey Toohey Design. Incorporating increased insulation levels to walls, floors and ceilings with a very significant wood fired Hydronic heating system, the extremes of the long Winters are now mitigated.

The end result has been a dwelling with a level of functionality, country style and thermal efficiency that means the families at Rose Valley have their comfort and lifestyle catered for in a home that graces the property with a certain grandeur.

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## Quality of Construction

- There is a significant amount of feature detail internally and externally that has been successfully executed to a very high standard. The Clients had a very clear vision of the style and interior decoration of the House. We worked determinedly with them to fashion a blend of rustic features against a backdrop of highly finished surfaces.
- Extensive Timber floor framing that extends the existing floor levels and elevates the Outdoor living areas allowing passage to freely flow from inside to outside. Marrying in the multiple existing floor heights to a new single level deck took some thought to bring about in a seamless way.
- Outdoor living area framed with exposed hardwood rafters and a feature post of recycled hardwood.
- Spotted Gum decking for durability and fire resistance, extending all around the house.
- Tasmanian oak feature flooring for a light, warm surface and durability. The feature floor was laid over a sheet floor for improved thermal benefit and construction efficiency.
- The scale of the roof reconstruction was significant. The complexity of the framing, even with pre fab trusses, was challenging in the time frame we had to achieve it.
- Extending the existing chimney structure was necessary. The chimney, corbelled out below the roof line, remains a central functional element from the previous structure. Timing of the bricklaying was problematic as the remoteness of the site made it hard to attract trades. Thought and care went into the scaffolding of the roof over the fitted roof sheets to prevent damage.
- Recycled red bricks were sourced for aesthetic feature in the Mudroom and the extension of the Chimney flue.
- The external timber cladding used fire resistant species (Messmate), kiln dried and hand painted on both sides. Existing weather boards were recycled in specific panels of wall providing an ongoing link to the original construction. Shaped backing blocks provide a fine detail to the light fittings.
- Double glazing of Kiln dried Hardwood Windows for cost effective thermal performance with a focus on sympathetic styling to match the existing windows.
- Cabinets made from low VOC materials and made from natural timbers or plys. No melamine, chipboards or MDF products were used.
- Galvanised corrugated iron for the aesthetic effect.
- Extensive use of plantation grown timber in the wall frames.
- Concrete Stumps for longevity and sound structure.

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## Client Relationship

This is another project where the Clients have invited us to return after having successfully undertaken previous projects for them. It's actually the third time around that we've worked with these particular clients to build a custom designed renovation of a building on this same property. Working at 'Rose Valley' has always been a pleasure for us.

We've previously worked on the 'Brown House' and the Bungalow at 'Rose Valley', the former being a complete transformation of a building that was near the end of its usable life. The Homestead has been the home of the farm managers for more than a decade and we were pleased to be invited to be part of their next adventure, an invitation that reflects the quality of our relationship forged all those years ago. Together we formed a formidable combination, possessing practical skills, a great sense of style and indefatigable drive. The challenges the project threw up were always resolved through a collaborative partnership between Client and Builder.

The relative isolation of the property meant co-ordination of labour, sub-contractors and deliveries of building materials was inherently difficult. Communication to the site was limited to a single landline and email access was not available. The Clients had an inherent understanding of these factors and were supportive in every way as we grappled with delivery and scheduling issues. Our crew stayed on site overnight in the initial stages, making use of the Bungalow kindly provided by our Clients. This helped manage fatigue of our crews undertaking a relatively long project.

The family in residence in the Homestead stayed in place for much of the build period, ultimately shifting to the adjacent Bungalow in the latter stages of the project. Maintaining their comfort and safety was a major priority for us.

Maintaining constant and transparent communication with our Clients is a key strength of our business. That is reflected in many ways, not least of which is the volume of returning clients we have. In this case the long relationship we have shared made it possible to approach the major reconstruction of the main residence on the property with confidence that we could navigate the inevitable dilemmas and challenges a project of this scale would present.

We felt we understood the Clients concept of the end result comprehensively and made every effort to execute that vision without compromise. At times the work was challenging, particularly with the reframing and cladding of the entire roof area, including the existing structure. We were able to work together to build the high standard we were all committed to whilst reducing the inconvenience to the Clients caused by the works as much as we could.

Our approach to customer relationship management is vital to maintaining a successful relationship during and beyond the construction period. With Clients as valued as everyone at 'Rose Valley' are to us, it's our pleasure to continue to make the trip to their spectacular property. We greatly appreciate their ongoing support for our business in allowing us to submit their house in the MBAV Regional awards.



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## Design

The design process was a lengthy one and engaged the Clients, the Designer and the Builder. Several concept versions were developed and discarded before the final vision for the project was resolved.

The final result has made the most of the existing spaces whilst enhancing those same areas. The extended floor and deck areas transform what was a humble home into a spacious and welcoming Homestead, a place that fits the Clients aspirations for the property.

- Completely new roof design that has extended the floor space significantly.
- The provision of an undercover Outdoor living space adjacent to the main entry provides a facility that was noticeably missing before, particularly in context of the busy social life at Rose Valley.
- The new kitchen, complete with a preparation area in the Pantry provides for greater flexibility in catering for family, friends and guests. The window over the sink easily folds away to provide a servery directly outside.
- The recladding of the entire house has done away with the patchwork effect of asbestos sheet and weatherboard that existed. The new façade is in keeping with the traditional country homestead that reflects the role of the house to a great extent.
- Double glazed Timber Windows custom made to match the existing Windows that were retained.
- Extensive access through French Doors from Living and Bedrooms onto the Veranda.
- Expanded and refurbished Bathroom.
- New Farm office large enough to cope with the business of the property.
- Dedicated space for a wood boiler for the Hydronic heating.
- The added floor space has effectively created a second Living room, retaining the existing Living area as the formal Dining area.
- A new En suite to Master Bedroom that provides ease and privacy that was not present with the previous single Bathroom.
- Polished Hardwood floor to Main living area.
- Formal Dining room and Lounge.
- Built in robes to the Bedrooms, including a Walk in Robe to the Master Bedroom, provide functionality and economy of space that has been a real improvement on the original house.

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- The Hydronic heating system provides central heating in a now insulated house. The inclusion of the wood fired boiler has been done to continue the heating of the house using locally harvested timber off the property. It is a significant investment in the long term sustainability of the property.
- Toilet access for Farm workers is easily accessed via the large Mudroom. This also provides an airlock that helps maintain the heating and cooling of the House.
- A roof ladder provides simple and safe access to the large attic space.

## Execution of Design

Undertaking a project like Rose Valley has significant challenges. The remoteness of the site, the emotional investment of the Clients developed over a long design process, the strong vision for the interior design of the finished product are some of the factors that need to be taken into account and given the respect those issues deserve.

Situated in an isolated valley, 75kms from the nearest regional centre, the co-ordination of tradesmen and supplies was a significant test of our organisational skills. Mobile phone coverage is non-existent and Internet access, via satellite, was an early casualty of the roof remodelling.

The work schedule was specifically thought through to minimise the impact of the construction works on the Clients. The large new deck areas and the floor frame extensions were tackled first, leaving the Clients in place in their house over the industry Christmas shut down. Creating the decked verandas around the House, prior to significant demolition, helped reduce the risk of falls and created a great work platform.

The enhanced roof area of the design meant the existing roof line was effectively replaced. In doing this we decided to retain the existing structure and build around it. This meant we were able to;

- Retain and protect the existing plaster ceilings.
- Source roof trusses in a cost effective way, reducing their overall size and minimising cartage issues.

We also retained an existing masonry wall that previously acted as a cool room and store. This became the Toilet off the Mudroom, a location for the HWS and boot storage as well as retaining thermal mass.

Existing ceilings, some with ornate cornice were also retained, affecting options for the roof construction to some extent.

Site safety was a major factor throughout the project, particularly with the family remaining in residence. Additional care was taken to maintain a tidy and ordered work site in order to mitigate risk.

A dedicated materials area was established, temporary ramps put in place and attention to site barriers had a great focus. Much care was taken to minimise the site impacts of the construction process and maintain the existing gardens around the House as much as possible.



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As a Master Builders accredited 'Green Living' Builder we actively pursue waste management issues on building sites, including the sorting and recycling of hard waste with a view to reducing landfill use and maximizing recycling opportunities. Control of waste on site is also an OH&S issue that we address by maintaining the highest standards of tidiness on site. This approach has had a significant effect on reducing the number of general waste skips taken to landfill.

The completed house was handed over in August 2012 and the Clients have continued to progress the landscaping of the site.

## Sustainability/Innovation

We pride ourselves in our expertise and background in building thermally efficient and sustainable homes. Every project we're involved in benefits from this knowledge and commitment in some way. At Rose Valley we undertook;

- Insulation of all external walls to minimise heat gain in Summer and heat loss in Winter.
- Air lock door to the Mudroom for ease of ventilation, air conditioning and functionality.
- Provision of Aircell Permifloor insulation to all new floors.
- Additional levels of insulation to existing ceilings.
- Sealing of vapour barriers to windows and door frames to reduce uncontrolled air flow.
- Sealing of openings between Door and Window joinery and timber frames with expanding foam.
- Retention of Masonry walls behind the Wood Heater and the Office/ Mudroom for thermal mass.
- Cross flow ventilation – windows and doors on north and south faces allow cross-flow ventilation for cooling.
- Double glazing of Kiln dried Hardwood Windows for cost effective thermal performance.

Hot Water for general use as well as for the Hydronic panel radiators distributed through the House is provided by a large wood fired boiler. The Thermalux Belvedere 5000 is the largest in the manufacturers range and can create in excess of 50 kilowatts of heat per hour. A kilowatt is sufficient to heat 1 square of floor area so this unit has the capacity to heat 50 squares.

The completed renovation and addition to 'Rose Valley' has very successfully met all our Clients needs. The Homestead now possesses the facilities that provide very well for the lifestyle of its inhabitants. At the same time displaying an elegant country styling that lends a sense of grandeur to this High Country Homestead.



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