

home



Bench mark

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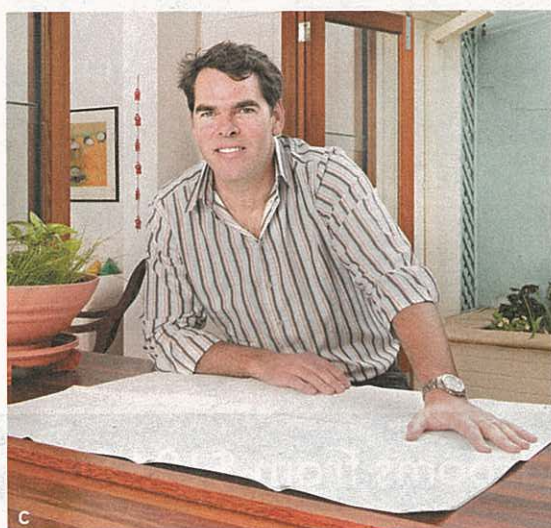
A duplex with minimal impact on the environment



BEFORE



AFTER



Sweeping changes

A stroke of genius, which called for substantial timber reconstruction and detailing, has captured the potential of this once-decrepit worker's cottage

FACT FILE

THE BRIEF

To restore and renovate an 1890s worker's cottage in the heart of the city

THE ARCHITECT

McNally Architects

THE BUILDER

Geoff Docker from GBD Constructions

Have you renovated your house?
home@dailytelegraph.com.au

Sometimes a little knowledge can be a dangerous thing. When the owner of this house found it in a quiet street in North Sydney five years ago, she says it was virtually 'uninhabitable'.

Dark with four original rooms plus a series of add ons, the plumbing was shot and it needed complete rewiring.

It was positioned in a heritage conservation area, so there was also a limit on what could be done with it – especially when it came to the front of the house.

Without a builder's professional eye, the owner fell in love with it and signed on the dotted line. Once she took possession, however, the scale of the work required to breathe new life into this little gem dawned on her. So on recommendation from friends, she called in architects James and John McNally of McNally Architects.

Small wonder

Despite its condition, James says the house had some natural advantages that he could work with.

"It had potential and there was always going to be a solution, but finding it would be a challenge," he says.

The residence was one of only a few detached houses in the area and it had been added on to over the years, with a lean-to kitchen and shed at the rear.

Strict planning controls would not allow the house to substantially increase its size, but the existing poorly built additions gave James and John something to play with.

"The area is all single storey so there was not really an opportunity to go up, but we could do what we wanted with the space," James says.

"But without the shed we could not have done the new extension, because it was part of the existing footprint."

Returning to the original four-room configuration,

BUDGET

Kitchen and laundry joinery (kitchen cupboards including integrated end wall of pantry and laundry full-height cupboards)	\$22,000
CaesarStone benchtops and splashback	\$2,500
Appliances for kitchen and laundry	\$8,500
TOTAL	\$33,000

* Total cost of renovation is not included

James and John redesigned it with a similar footprint using quality materials and building techniques.

With the front of the house facing north, the former front bedroom became a generous home office where the owners could make the most of the natural light.

Given the room had to be rebuilt anyway, traditional casement windows replaced the old louvres, which were drafty and obscured the leafy view of the street. But it is at the rear that this home really comes into its own.

Light-catcher

Using the back shed as part of the footprint of the home, James and John convinced council that this part of the house could be pulled down and rebuilt as the main bedroom suite. With a courtyard in the middle to provide an outdoor area as well as plenty of natural light, the two spaces were then linked by a galley kitchen.

Full-length doors open from the living area and bedroom on to the courtyard while a large, timber cafe window links the kitchen to the outdoors. →

A The old kitchen B Blackbutt flooring was used throughout C James McNally considered the natural advantages of the original building D Laminated spotted gum was chosen for the indoor/outdoor, cafe-style timber benchtop that extends into the courtyard E and F The new design met with council's stringent building regulations



GET THE LOOK

BALI HIGH

In keeping with the light and spacious feel of this house, the owners have chosen one-off pieces from Bali to create talking points. Chairs similar to that in the living area are available from Bali Fling. Imported directly from this popular holiday spot, the chair is made from timber and rattan and costs \$650. Bali Fling receives regular shipments but will also have items made to order.



● **MORE INFORMATION** Bali Fling
9660 0058, balifling.com.au

COLOURED GLASSES

This house has a predominately white palette but colour has been added in imaginative ways. A wall of glass bricks backlit by natural light in the kitchen makes the perfect backdrop for a collection of coloured glass pieces. While some people are serious collectors of designer glassware, you can achieve the same effect at minimum cost. Ikea has a wide range of glassware such as the Blomster vase, \$12.95, which is handmade and available in a variety of colours. They work just as well on their own or with a few flowers casually arranged.



● **MORE INFORMATION** Ikea ikea.com.au

FLOOR SHOW

While the new benchtop, which extends through to the courtyard, is made from spotted gum, the floors are made from blackbutt. A hardwood with natural resistance to some species of borers, it is suited for flooring and decking. It is usually cream to pale brown in colour and works well in contemporary and heritage home designs. Sydney Flooring has a wide range of Australian hardwood timbers.



● **MORE INFORMATION** Sydney Flooring
9755 1899 sydneyflooring.com



A The old shed was demolished and replaced with the main bedroom, which has full-length timber doors that open on to the courtyard **B** The new bathroom



Given there was so much timber detailing required for this job, James says Geoff Docker from GBD Constructions was just the builder they needed.

"Geoff is a bit of a craftsman. He has built boats over the years and has a good crew who work with him. Ninety per cent of this house was carpentry work," James says.

"We tried to keep the original features but still have a modern contemporary feel.

After considering the local Development Control Plan, John and James also ensured the roofline of the new work was lower than that at the front. And North Sydney Council took just six weeks to approve the plans.

"There was nothing they could fault us on. The building looks on to the courtyard and it does not interfere with anyone's views or privacy," James says.

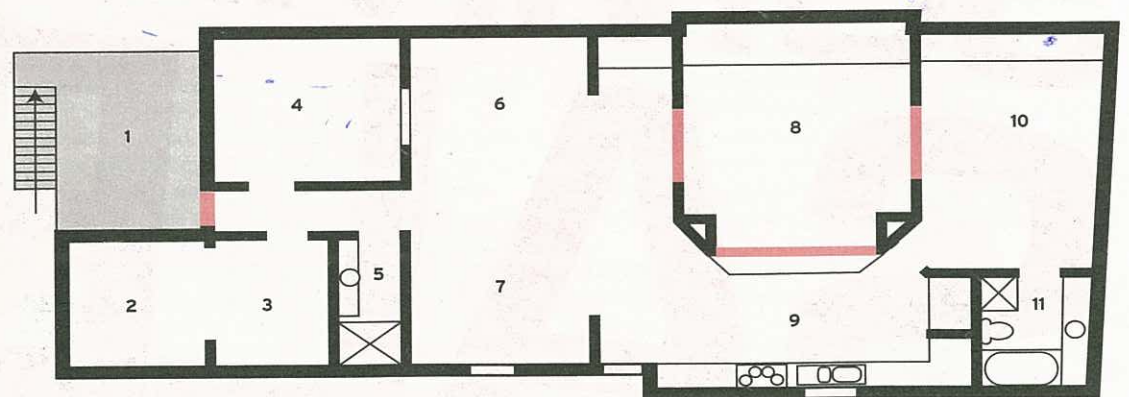
Nine months later, the owner moved into her newly restored home. It is now four years on, and the result has exceeded the owner's expectations.

While the owner says she would definitely get some professional advice before she buys in future, James is a little more philosophical.

"Everything has a solution, whether that meets the client's needs is another thing." ■

Robyn Willis

● **MORE INFORMATION** GBD Constructions
9997 1823 McNally Architects 9319 6600,
mcnallyarchitects.com.au



SINGLE FLOOR 1 Deck 2 Bedroom 3 Bedroom 4 Study 5 Bathroom 6 Living 7 Dining 8 Courtyard 9 Kitchen 10 Main bedroom 11 Ensuite