

## Facelift for St. Marys Industrial Heritage Building

In 2004, Ian and Rita Summers purchased an old garage in St. Marys' Main Street and converted the front half into a gallery and studio, which is operated by Rita. The back half became Ian's domain, and houses a number of classic cars in various stages of restoration, as well as many other treasures.

Originally known as Brown's Garage, and later as Spilsbury's Garage, parts of the building date back to the 1920's. In fact, there are actually two buildings. The earlier structure, which is just behind what is now the gallery, was originally a blacksmith's shop. During the 1940's it was obscured by a new service station, built directly in front of it.

The ability of people to make do on a shoestring budget is evident everywhere. The iron on the roof still had the holes in it from wherever it had been used previously, and recycled mining pipe and track lines form posts and trusses in what is now the gallery interior and exterior.

Ian replaced the roof on the front building in 2004, and added a wall at the front where the cars used to drive in off the street.

He also converted the office and parts storeroom into one large space - this is now the studio area. The original hatchway in the parts storeroom was retained, as were the worn thresholds into the studio and the bathroom. The original doors are an additional feature, as well as two other restored doors which were added during the conversion.

The original timber office floor was also restored. It took Ian two days of work with a heat gun and scraper to remove the worn brown linoleum on what is a relatively small space. It had been stuck down with an adhesive that could rival any super glue! Rita asked him not to over-restore the floorboards, so that they would still retain the patina of years of use. The old storeroom, which had a concrete floor on a lower level, was raised and refloored with timber joists, compressed fibre board, and a slate-look vinyl.

Ian also meticulously sealed and painted the original concrete floor in the gallery, lying down for hours with a paintbrush to simulate lines of 'mortar' to make it look like terracotta tiles.

It is 7 years since this work was done, and it was time for a facelift!

The ceiling in the gallery has now been replastered, and a decision was made to repaint both the gallery and the studio.

Of course, everything had to be moved! It was a lot of work emptying everything out, but Rita and Ian had great fun re-organising and re-arranging everything to compliment the new decor.

Here are the results – the photos were taken by Rita just after reopening last week, and the afternoon light was magical!





Up next: exterior repaint (trims and doors) and professional hanging system for the gallery, depending on funds ...

Ian and Rita would especially like to thank *Rodney Bushing and the crew* for the new ceiling, and *All Home Services* for the repainting.