residential solutions for historic homes
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“The Burra Charter advocates a cautious approach to change: do as much as necessary to care for the place and to make it useable, but otherwise change it as little as possible so that its cultural significance is retained.”

Introduction

Owning, maintaining and sympathetically adapting a historic home can be personally rewarding. It can also be the most direct way you can engage with, and contribute to, the protection of Tasmania’s unique historic heritage.

Undertaking works to any home, regardless of its age, can be a major undertaking. There is a lot to think about—plumbing, wiring, new kitchens, bathrooms, floor coverings and paint colours. There could be structural issues with the house and it may need work such as underpinning, re-stumping or re-roofing. These works require planning, money and time, as well as getting the right advice.

Undertaking works to a historic home can have all these considerations, and sometimes more. You may need to engage specialist tradespeople who understand the cause and cure for problems unique to historic properties, and who are familiar with working with traditional building materials, such as lime mortars, lath and plaster, or sandstock (handmade) bricks.

If you want to extend your historic home, or change the use of a building like an oast house, church or outbuildings to a home, you will need to think carefully and ensure that the change of use or addition is consistent with the heritage values of the existing structure.

Residential Solutions seeks to provide owners and prospective owners of historic homes with inspiration and basic advice, and to point you in the right direction to get the help you need. It won’t give you all the answers but it will highlight some examples of what others have done and the things you need to think about. It will assist you on your journey to the right answer for you.

This booklet contains 12 case studies. Each focuses on a place which is on the Tasmanian Heritage Register. The Tasmanian Heritage Council and Heritage Tasmania selected these case studies as they provide examples of good practice in the management of a historic home while also covering a range of common issues and useful solutions.

The problems and solutions raised are applicable to all historic homes, so this booklet has been designed to assist owners of historic houses not officially on a heritage list as much as those who do own a heritage-listed home.

Many people have been involved in restoring and sympathetically adapting the homes in this booklet. They are too numerous to mention individually but their work, attention to detail and their application of the principles of good heritage practice are very much appreciated.


The Burra Charter contains 34 articles, covering topics such as conservation and management, restoration, reconstruction, maintenance and adaptation. It is a useful document to refer to as you maintain, restore and sympathetically adapt your home.

The Burra Charter can be downloaded from http://australia.icomos.org/
Case study

A restoration and new family space

The conservation and construction of a contemporary addition to a 1920s vertical board home on the Cadbury Estate in Hobart has provided a sympathetic design solution and the creation of a new open plan living space.

This Arts and Crafts style house was one of around 30 built by the nearby Cadbury factory to house its workforce early in the 20th century.

Until owners Sarah and Adam Christopher purchased the place in 2005, it had been home to three generations of one family for 80 years. The original occupants had been tenants of Cadbury's and they went on to purchase the home from the company.

Sarah and Adam are mindful of the place's history and have carefully restored the original bungalow using information from neighbours and previous occupants about how it looked. They have also constructed an addition which is sympathetic to the original structure.

"Almost as soon as we moved in we ripped up the carpet, polished the floorboards, removed the 1970s pine panelling which lined the walls and discovered the original internal vertical boards, which we painted," Sarah says.

When you start thinking about making changes to your home, it’s a good idea to plan carefully, ask lots of questions, confirm costs and ensure there’s a bit extra in the budget in case there are unexpected bills. Staging the works over months or years as budget and circumstances allow is often a good idea.
In 2008 we removed the brickboard cladding from the exterior. These works were done by exemption. This means there was no need to seek approval from the Tasmanian Heritage Council as the solutions offered had no impact on the heritage values of the bungalow or the streetscape.

However, the construction of the addition in 2010 did require Tasmanian Heritage Council approval. When the preliminary architectural sketches were prepared, the owners organised a meeting with their architect, Heritage Tasmania works adviser Deirdre MacDonald, and the Glenorchy City Council heritage officer before finalising the plans. This provided Sarah and Adam with an opportunity to work their concept through, and address any issues, before seeking Heritage Council approval.

Their contemporary style extension has a skillion roof and uses modern materials. An important aspect of the design achieved by their architect was the appropriate transition between the old and the new.

“We like the idea of combining materials externally so we used modern cement sheeting and vertical boards like in the original part of the house,” Sarah says.

“The new space works well for the family. Our use of the house has completely changed. We live in the extension which is the family space.”

“... matters to consider include siting, bulk, form, scale, character, colour, texture and material.”

*The Illustrated Burra Charter* (2004), commentary on Article 22.1 p 66.
Case study

A Georgian cottage, extension and conservatory

Sea changers from Western Australia, Alan Brooks and David Gliddon, have injected new life into an 1830s Georgian cottage in Tasmania’s south-east, while also constructing a new and sympathetic extension and conservatory.

When Alan and David bought this cottage it was a tiny abode with two rooms at the front and a dilapidated skillion at the rear. Over the years the cottage had several purposes, including school, private home and honeymooners’ accommodation—from where it derived its name, Bridal Cottage. But it had been vacant for around 20 years and was in urgent need of works.

Alan said that he and David weren’t looking for a heritage project exactly, but stumbled across the cottage.

“We were literally sitting in a tearoom across the road from the cottage. We looked around it, discovered it was for sale, and bought it.”

The owners have undertaken a great deal of work to convert the rundown cottage to a beautiful home and have also added an airy and spacious extension. Original features in the two rooms at the front have been sensitively restored.

“The floor had collapsed into the ground but there were enough original timbers from both the front rooms to re-lay the floor in one of the larger of the front rooms. Recycled floorboards from a sale at Oatlands were used in the second room, and they have provided an excellent match,” Alan says.
Renovating a home can be a stressful experience for many people. Not being able to use the bathroom or kitchen, and coping with noise and dust can be trying. It’s a good idea to have plans in place to manage the disruption, and take care of yourself and other household members while renovations are underway.

The transom window and front door are original, although the door frame had to be replaced. The original rooms retain their traditional ambience. The fire surround is in a classical Georgian design.

The Tasmanian Heritage Council approved the demolition of the old skillion as not much of the original heritage materials remained. The owners installed a new kitchen which interpreted but respected the former skillion, and the original Victorian fireplace and chimney were retained.

The new kitchen provides a link-way between the old and the new. The kitchen opens onto the new extension which has two bedrooms, a bathroom and living space. The kitchen and living spaces create a U-shaped courtyard which the owners have transformed into a pleasant conservatory.

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The new sections of the home are sympathetic to the style of the original cottage and do not impose on the original dwelling or the surrounding historic buildings.

Recently Alan and David sought like-for-like replacement of the existing galvanised iron roof sheeting on the cottage. Heritage Tasmania was able to issue the owners with an exemption from seeking Tasmanian Heritage Council approval for the works, as the works did not adversely affect the historic cultural heritage significance of the cottage.

“We were literally sitting in a tearoom across the road from the cottage. We looked around it, discovered it was for sale, and bought it.”
“The approach with new work is to ensure that it is recognisable as a new, continuing part of the story of the place.”

Heritage lists
Before you purchase a property you should find out if a place is on a heritage list, such as the Tasmanian Heritage Register or named in your local council’s planning scheme. If the house appears on a list, it is a good idea to find out why.

You may need approval from the Tasmanian Heritage Council or the relevant local council to undertake works to a historic home. If you have an idea of the type of alterations and additions you’d like to make before you buy the house, give the relevant authority a call and find out what is possible.

If you are in doubt, it may be worth negotiating conditions in the purchase contract which include obtaining Tasmanian Heritage Council approval for proposed works.

Not just the facade
Entry of a house in the Tasmanian Heritage Register protects all heritage fabric within the listed area (usually the title area), not just the facade. This may include internal features such as internal walls and external features such as outbuildings and historic plantings. What the listing protects is usually shown in the detail of the datasheet. The datasheet supports a place’s inclusion in the Tasmanian Heritage Register, and is available from Heritage Tasmania.

If a house is included in a local planning scheme, the reasons may be different from why it is included in the Tasmanian Heritage Register. It is advisable to contact the relevant local council to find out what the listing protects.

Regardless of whether a house is included or not included in a heritage list, it is preferable to retain important heritage features. In this way you are contributing to the protection of Tasmania’s historic heritage, and you may also be adding character and value to your property.

Get the experts in
Before you purchase a historic home it is a good idea to get expert advice. It’s important you understand any issues the house may present, how much desired repairs and alterations are likely to cost, and what you might need to do to undertake any necessary work.

Get a report from a builder experienced in dealing with historic homes about the condition of the property. If there are obvious structural problems, getting a report from a structural engineer is advisable.

Make sure that the house meets your needs. It may be that a small cottage with two bedrooms will not convert to a large family home without severely compromising its heritage values. Seek advice from an architect to see if your vision is possible and if it will deliver the lifestyle you are seeking.

Putting your stamp on a place
Owning a historic house or one on a heritage list does not prevent you from personalising it and making it your home. There are many ways you can express your individuality and style. This can still be achieved by working with the significant historic material of the house and not concealing or diminishing its heritage values.

The case studies in the following pages highlight a variety of approaches to restoring historic houses which reflect the tastes of the owners but which also retain the heritage values of their home.

Planning approval
Substantial changes to a house will generally require planning approval, so a development application will need to be lodged with the relevant local council. If a house is on a heritage list, the development application will also be assessed for the impact of the proposed works on the heritage values of the house.

If it is on the Tasmanian Heritage Register, the application will be forwarded by the local council to the Tasmanian Heritage Council for assessment. Once the application is approved, it may still be necessary to obtain building and plumbing permits from your local council.
Retaining as much as possible of a historic building and using salvaged materials creates a great look, supports the sustainability agenda and can save money.

Having new timbers finished in a lighter shade than original woodwork provides an effective highlight between old and new.

Case study

Warehouses convert to inner city housing

Two late 19th century heritage-listed former warehouses have been recycled into a funky inner city Hobart home, thanks to the hard work and imagination of its owners.

Architect and lecturer Peter Booth and his partner Bridgette, an artist, found the barely-standing former warehouses and instantly knew they could transform them into an innovative home.

“We wanted to repurpose an old building. We wanted to reuse existing fabric without having to build afresh,” Peter says.

“The smaller of the buildings (which measures 2.3 x 10.5 metres) was so deteriorated you could crawl through the wall. There had been a fire at some point, and a section of the rear had collapsed—probably as a result of a vehicle driving into it.

“The larger building (which measures only 4.5 x 16 metres over two storeys) had lots of rot, 20 cm of dirt in the gutters and mould and lichen covering the wall because of the water that cascaded down it.”

Peter and Bridgette restored the smaller building first. The conversion of such a small space into a tiny dwelling which includes living space and kitchen, bedroom (with storage/washing machine under the bed), and bathroom shows clever design. They lived in this space while the larger warehouse was converted into their home.

This home has been about salvaging, adaptation, recycling and clever design.

“We’ve used as many salvaged and recycled materials as possible. We’ve reused floorboards from the upstairs of the larger building and repurposed them as cladding on the rear of the smaller building.
Old buildings of various forms and levels of condition are essential to create diversity of activity and visual experience within a city or town.

“We’ve also kept as many of the original timbers as possible. In the larger building the exposed joists are original. We took them down, cleaned them up and put them back in their original position. We’ve retained the half-and-half stable door and the doorframes are recycled joists. The original garage door has been broken down and reused as internal doors, complete with graffiti.”

The difference between the old and the new is carefully highlighted. “Wherever we’ve kept original materials, we’ve retained their original state as much as possible. Anything introduced we’ve maintained as a contrasting material or colour, highlighting the difference between new and old.”

Peter and Bridgette began the project in February 2009. Peter says it was important that there was plenty of time to work up his design for the larger building which includes a garage and laundry and kitchen/dining area downstairs, with a staircase leading to a mezzanine bedroom, which has a narrow corridor that leads to two more bedrooms and a bathroom.

As an owner builder, as well as the architect, he had time to work on the site and make adjustments as required.

The building is well insulated, has ducted heating and double glazed windows. A canopy of vines has been planted in the space between the two buildings. This will provide shade and greenery in the summer months, but allow the sunshine through in winter. A small courtyard with garden beds made from original sandstone and protected by an old eight-metre high sandstone and red brick wall on two sides provides privacy.

The buildings are on the Tasmanian Heritage Register, so approval from the Heritage Council was required.

“We were quick to buy. We looked at it one day and that afternoon contacted Heritage Tasmania to discuss our concept. It was critical that we knew what we could potentially achieve prior to making an offer for the property.”

The owners lodged their application with the local council who forwarded it to the Heritage Council.

“The Heritage Council was good to deal with. The only conditions placed on us was that we had to use lime-based mortar, and galvanised roof and gutters with a heritage profile,” Peter says.

The adaptive reuse of this former warehouse has produced a creative inner-city residence.
Case study

An apartment once more

The old and the modern have come together with the restoration of this circa 1860s former bank in Burnie. Originally, the bank chamber was downstairs and the manager occupied the apartment above.

The building lost its grandeur when banking operations ceased on the site. As the years went by, it became commercial premises. Office partitions cluttered the downstairs space while the upstairs area became a doctor’s surgery and storage space.

When the current owners Chris and Rachael Anderson saw the property for sale they could see its potential.

“We had a single focus when we bought the building—to accentuate the features that only a heritage property offers, while modernising the space to allow for current day use,” Chris says.

“By talking upfront with Heritage Tasmania we discovered the key features that had to be retained and what could be removed.”

Chris and Rachael restored the commercial downstairs space first before returning the upstairs space into the luxury apartment it is today.

The Tasmanian Heritage Services Directory will help you find the heritage experts you need. The directory includes builders, carpenters, plumbers, historians, engineers, architects and more. Go to www.heritage.tas.gov.au and search for ‘Heritage Services Directory’.
If your home is on the Tasmanian Heritage Register call Heritage Tasmania for advice before getting too far into planning major changes or additions.

The goal upstairs was to restore the bank manager’s residence even though some of the original features had been damaged or compromised. “All the floors were damaged so we put a plywood overlay over them and put carpet down, retaining the original floorboards underneath.

“We kept the original fire surrounds and restored them, and retained the architraves. We needed more architraves so we used the original as a template and had the rest re-machined so that we had the same profile throughout. The windows are all original, but have been restored and reglazed to reduce noise and improve environmental efficiency.”

The original staircase has been restored and leads up to the apartment as it always did.

The owners took great care to protect the heritage values of the place as they created their luxury apartment. “We took the view that you only do things once, and do it well. There’s no point not doing things properly the first time round.”

The interior style of the apartment is modern while retaining the historic fabric.

“We knew the building was heritage-listed when we bought it. Most people know there is a heritage register and therefore we knew there would be special considerations.”

“We got Chris Bonner from Heritage Tasmania in at the outset and asked, ’we have a vision, is it OK?’ because there’s no point getting work done if it’s going to ruin the heritage values of the property. We found there was always common ground on which to negotiate,” Chris says.

“We had a single focus when we bought the building—to accentuate the features that only a heritage property offers, while modernising the space to allow for current day use.”
There are often many different solutions to a single problem. Try to look for the least harmful solution when you undertake work to your home.

Case study

From derelict to a great family home

Owners of a Victorian house and barn in South Hobart have turned once derelict buildings into a family home and artists’ studios.

When Nic and Madeleine Goodwolf purchased this place the structures were quite deteriorated, with no power or modern plumbing. But despite suffering years of neglect, they were a surprisingly intact pair of heritage buildings.

Part of the site originates from the early 19th century and, as it is located along the Hobart Rivulet in one of Hobart’s early industrial areas, it is quite likely that the barn had an industrial use.

The oldest section of the house may go back as early as the 1830s. The house has been altered and new sections have been added periodically throughout its life, making it an intriguingly complex place.

The Goodwolfs are very aware of, and enjoy, the different layers of history present on their property. “It’s fantastic to juxtapose the layers of history. It’s really important to look at these buildings as living creatures. We see ourselves as another part of this place’s history.

“By the time we bought it, work had not been done on the house and barn for many years. The house was very dark. The challenge was to hollow the space out and let the light and air in.

“We are a modern family and have altered the building accordingly, adding a new dimension to its history,” Nic says.
The Goodwolfs consulted Heritage Tasmania about the possibilities for the place. “Deirdre MacDonald and Ian Boersma [from Heritage Tasmania] came at the beginning of this project and talked about the fundamentals. They provided advice on renders, paints and the structural issues.”

Hard decisions had to be made about removing some old but less significant structures within the house to bring light and air into the building.

Following their consultation with Heritage Tasmania staff, the Goodwolfs made a development application for the proposed works. The proposal included partial demolition of rear infill areas to the house, creating new openings, modifications and alterations to existing space and a redesign of some of the internal space to accommodate a new kitchen and dining room, and a bathroom. Works also involved selective maintenance to the exterior including replacement of roof sheeting, repair of floors and joinery, and re-plastering of the walls and ceilings.

Some of the most interesting interior spaces were left in an ‘as found’ condition. This provides a really stark contrast to the new areas.

“I wanted to preserve and protect the building, but it needed to be fit for modern family life. I renovated this place in the way I thought it should unfold. The heart of the home is the new kitchen and dining area in what was the old laundry. We have installed double glazing, and photovoltaic and evacuated solar panels,” Nic says.

The Goodwolfs now have a home which meets the needs of a modern family while preserving the key elements of heritage significance in their home. They also have studios that are genuinely creative spaces, closely linked to the house.
Case study

Restored to its former glory

In June 1880 the Cornwall Chronicle described this circa 1879 residence in Launceston as “… a handsome two-storey building with Italian balconies in front … and all the most recent appliances”.

By 2004 the house had lost some of its former grandeur and was being used as recreational and office space for a community organisation and accommodation for students. Bathrooms and kitchenettes had been installed and the grand verandah had been enclosed to create extra bedrooms.

New owners Suzanne and Ralph Norton removed these installations and have restored the home to its former 19th century glory.

Suzanne and Ralph’s enthusiasm for their home when they first bought it was not shared by the whole family. Suzanne said her family was concerned about how dark the house was. “The kids hated the house. They kept saying ‘why have you bought that smelly, old, dark house’. To convince them to move in here we had to make it very light and airy.”

The solution involved removing partition walls which had been constructed within the verandahs, and reinstating the original step-through windows onto the verandah.

The removal of a door and some of the wall between the lounge and hall and the installation of modern glass bi-fold doors brought in much needed light, and also framed the ornate wrought iron staircase, which connects the ground and first floors.

“Removing the original door and inserting glass bi-fold doors has worked well at increasing the light into the hallway—it also opened the space up,” Suzanne says.

Suzanne and Ralph were committed to restoring as many original features as possible such as the ceiling roses and fire surrounds.
The removal of part of the lounge wall meant that the highly decorative section of dado could be reused to repair other sections of dado in the hallway. A highly skilled plasterer undertook a flawless repair of the anaglypta paper dado. This type of paper is a highly textured wallpaper made of cotton and paper pulp.

A specialist tradesperson recast 45 panels of wrought iron work on the verandahs, and repaired the detailing at the top corner in the internal wrought iron staircase.

There were unexpected finds as the restoration progressed. “The painters discovered interesting markings on the ceiling in the lounge room when they removed the wallpaper. It was in fact the glue pattern from the original wallpaper. Also many pencil markings from the early tradespeople were still visible.”

“They were about to paint it when I said no, don’t paint over it, I want to make a feature of it,” Suzanne says.

Careful consideration was required when ensuites were installed in each of the five bedrooms to ensure the original cornices were not damaged. In three of the bedrooms glass panelled ensuites which fall 600mm short of the ceiling, were installed, thereby protecting the cornices. The results are very effective.

The Nortons say that being confident and having a good team of people to help was very important in restoring this property. “We’ve renovated hotels so we had the confidence to work with this place and see past the additions into the original house. We also have a good team of tradespeople around us who have helped us on many of our projects,” Suzanne says.

The Nortons have also added an indoor lap pool, converted a former shed to a cellar and created a light breezeway between the original residence and new garage, which provides a seamless transition between the old and the new.

“We’ve restored a prominent Launceston building,” Suzanne says proudly.
“It is good practice, for asset management and for conservation, to schedule maintenance in an ongoing cyclical program.”

The information below addresses common problems that owners of historic homes may encounter. It provides guidance only. Seek professional advice about the best way to tackle a repair.

If your home is on the Tasmanian Heritage Register, you may need the approval of the Heritage Council for bigger jobs, such as replacing roof cladding.

### Keep water and damp out

Leaks and damp conditions are major contributors to building deterioration. Traditional building materials are more susceptible to damage from water than their modern counterparts, and many 19th century houses have no damp-proof course.

To avoid deterioration from damp or water damage to your home, keep an eye out for leaks, overflowing drains and water spilling from gutters. Ensure that roofs, guttering and drainage are in good condition, keep gutters free draining and clear of litter, and make sure that roof sheeting is secure and flashings are in good repair.

Good ventilation is important. Allow floors and walls to breathe. Ensure that earth and vegetation don’t bank up against walls. Don’t lay concrete or bitumen pavements against old masonry or wooden walls. Avoid sealing up rooms as this can cause moisture to build-up and contribute to condensation, mould, rot or rising damp.

### Repair rather than replace

Owners are encouraged to repair rather than replace heritage material such as brickwork and timber wherever possible, as heritage material is becoming rare. Replacing heritage materials with a modern substitute usually diminishes the look and heritage value of a historic home.

Repairs should be undertaken using traditional techniques and materials to ensure they pass the test of time and don’t create problems in the future. For example, use lime-based mortars rather than cement to avoid further faults over time.

Sometimes modern techniques and building materials provide good outcomes but it is important to exercise care and get the right advice, as many modern materials can damage heritage material and ultimately harm your historic home. Be careful of modern ‘wonder products’ claiming to provide a cure-all solution. Rely instead on expert advice.

### Avoid over-restoration

Part of the charm of a historic home comes from the traditional building materials and techniques used in its construction, and the look that comes as a home ages. The authenticity of a home is preserved by minimising intervention and overlays of new things.

### Don’t overreact to cracking

Most old homes have some cracking due to seasonal movement. Superficial damage to plasterwork can be managed by filling cracks with a flexible filler when redecorating. Most cracks in historic buildings are caused by movement in the foundation or roof, or from inherent weaknesses in the wall. If cracking in walls is severe, you should seek specialist advice.

### Keep vermin out

Bird nesting material in roof spaces can be a fire hazard. Rodents can gnaw on wires which can also be a fire hazard. Defecation from possums and rodents can stain ceilings and cause a lingering stench. If vermin are making their presence felt in your home, call the pest controllers.

### Updating services

Old wiring can be dangerous and cause electrocution or a house fire. Old water pipes, both fresh water and sewage, can leak. When you update these services try to avoid irreversible damage to heritage material, such as architraves and skirting boards. Locate plumbing, meter boxes or other equipment so they do not intrude visually on your historic home.

### Get a second opinion

For complex problems it can be a good idea to get a second opinion. Not all professionals will have the same expertise, so a second opinion could identify issues and solutions not previously raised.
Case study

Doing as little as possible, with lots of hard work

Recycling, research, hard work and a commitment to doing as little as possible but as much as necessary has saved this 1836 cottage in Tasmania’s south-east from collapse.

When the current owners, Oliver and Jess Strutt, bought this brick cottage with its timber lean-to in 2010, it had stood vacant for a quarter of a century. Its last occupant had lived in the home very simply.

“There was no bathroom, kitchen or wiring,” Oliver says. “The only water to the house had gone to an old laundry trough.”

Time and neglect had taken a significant toll on the place. “There was lots of flaking paint, plaster was falling off the walls, two windows were rotten and boarded up and there were places where you could see the sky through the walls. The weatherboard section was very rotten. The gutters were long gone.”

This didn’t deter the new owners from wishing to make it their home. “We’re so glad this house wasn’t renovated previously, as we have original fireplaces, skirting boards and architraves. The fact it was empty for so long and lived in before that by someone who didn’t make any alterations has been a blessing,” Jess says.

The Tasmanian Heritage Council granted permission to knock down a tacked-on rear lean-to as it was so rotten and evidently built much later than most of the cottage.

The new lean-to extension replicates the footprint of the one that was removed, and is made from recycled materials sourced
from house and farm clearance sales where Jess and Oliver have made some terrific finds.

“We got all the windows in the new extension from a farm clearance sale for $5. When I stripped them back I realised they were King Billy pine,” Oliver says.

“The kitchen bench tops are new Huon pine sourced from Queenstown, but the old cupboards, complete with Huon pine flour hoppers are from a guy in Westbury who just had them lying around outside. We got the framing timber, weatherboards, Baltic pine lining and sandstone for the foundations of the new addition from a house sale at Mt Seymour.”

A beam from a bridge provides the support between the kitchen and dining area where a wall once stood.

Oliver has undertaken most of the work himself with assistance from his father and father-in-law. “I’ve learnt as I’ve gone along. I’ve undertaken lots of research on traditional methods for lime plaster, lime mortars and repointing,” he says.

Heritage Tasmania provided technical advice about the best way to undertake the conservation works.

“I got advice from Ian Boersma [works manager at Heritage Tasmania] about solid plastering and painting the exterior weatherboards. I was going to use acrylic paint on the exterior but Ian advised that this would damage the boards in the long term. He recommended using oil with oxide pigment mixed into it, which is what we’ve done.”

The finish on the bricks on the interior wall in the new lean-to extension is a limewash with a bit of iron oxide to make it pink.

“We needed permission to demolish the old lean-to and build a new extension, and found the Heritage Council’s processes to be straightforward,” Jess says.

“We’ve taken the approach of doing as little as possible to this place in making it our home. We want to live here forever. The house will evolve over time.”
Case study

Light, airy and with a new life

Incorporating air and light has extended the life of this tiny 1840s Hobart cottage while also providing a delightful home for its owners.

Bob and Barbara Ritchie bought this house in 2007 and its dilapidated condition was part of the appeal.

“We bought it because of the feel of it. There hadn’t been too many horrible things done to it. The bare bones were there and it was quite sound, despite its poor condition,” Bob says.

Dampness in old buildings can be problem and it was certainly the case with this cottage. But Bob and Barbara have increased the natural ventilation by adding skylights and making the attic windows operational again. They also vented the floor behind the fridge so the updraft would create air movement under the floor in the kitchen, and added warmth by putting efficient woodheaters in all the fireplaces—further helping to keep the place dry.

“It was obvious this place needed to be dried out,” Bob says.

The attic was opened to create a study and bedroom.

“The previous owner had lived here for many decades and did not use the attic. We kept the old wall separating two rooms. We were able to save the attic walls and ceiling by repairing over the traditional lath and plaster. We remade the two windows in the original style as they were completely rotten, and put in skylights to further add air and light and give a magnificent view of the mountain.

“The skylights were essential for making the upstairs habitable. We had to be energy efficient. The Heritage Council gave

When you redecorate, it’s a good idea to keep a sample of the historic finishes, such as wallpaper, in-situ, as a window to the past.
permission to put in skylights [which are double glazed] at the back of the house because it didn’t affect the house’s presence in the street, which dormer windows or any front windows in the roof would have done.”

Bob and Barbara also found that part of the upstairs attic rooms was lined with newspaper dating from 1920. With advice from Heritage Tasmania, the newspaper was conserved by covering it with perspex. It now forms a display in one of the rooms.

Bob insulated the original iron roof, replaced the timber floors and sagging ceilings, and re-plastered throughout. They also had the house rewired and replumbed, and reinstated a traditional picket fence, also with advice from Heritage Tasmania.

Most of this work required approval from the Tasmanian Heritage Council and the application was supported as the works were considered to be a positive conservation outcome for the cottage.

Bob and Barbara were concerned with maintaining the traditional feel of the place and undertook repairs in a way that was sympathetic to the cottage’s historic origins.

They have since sold the cottage and the new owners, Luke and Sophie Hutchins are delighted with it. “This is the first house that we have owned together and the favourite place that we have lived in. It is quite a small space which might be a negative for some but we find the size makes it more comfortable and easier to maintain. We can’t imagine not living here,” Luke says.

“We have a keen interest in historic homes and local history, so now that we are settled in the next step will be to start learning more about the history of the house.”
“New work becomes part of the story of the place. Don’t confuse or falsify the story by disguising new work as old.”

Adapting and adding to a historic home

If you are thinking about adding to your home, making changes or installing modern services, the information below provides guidance about the kinds of things you need to think about. The main principle is to ensure that the heritage values of your home are retained.

Seek expert advice

As with most aspects of dealing with a historic home, it is wise to get expert advice. Make sure that the building professionals and tradespeople you engage are experienced in working with historic homes.

Extensions to historic houses

Both traditional and contemporary approaches to building an extension can look great. It is important that your historic home should remain the dominant feature after new work is completed. Be cautious that where you place an extension doesn’t erode the heritage values of your home—an extension should be sympathetic and understated. With a traditional-style extension, try to avoid mimicking the heritage values of your home.

Additions should be distinguishable as new, for example by using a subtle variation in detail, finish or colour. The junction between old and new can be made obvious, by stepping the new wall in from the corner of the house or by using an architectural feature such as a strip of glass.

Garages and carports

Many people wish to add a garage or carport to their historic home.

The location is important to minimise the impact on the streetscape character of your home. In most cases garages and carports should be set back from the front facade, should be sympathetic and secondary to your home and not overwhelm its historic features.

Staircases, internal walls and chimneys

The arrangement of rooms, staircases and fireplaces in a historic home contribute to its heritage values. It is important to keep these features because they show how a home has been used in the past and are generally features future owners may appreciate.

If you are considering the removal of an internal wall in your historic home, try to at least retain the bulkheads and nib walls so the historic layout of the room can still be seen.

Front fences

Original and early fences generally contribute to the heritage values of a house. If your home has an original fence, it is important that you repair and maintain it as required. Planting a dense hedge behind the fence often provides a sensible and attractive solution if you want extra privacy.

If you are replacing a non-original fence, it is best to choose a design that is appropriate to the period, style and materials of your home with a height of between 0.8 metres and 1.1 metres from footpath level.

Installing modern services

It is often possible to install modern services such as solar panels, wind turbines, water tanks, heating and gas installations, satellite dishes and antennae on historic homes. Guiding principles are that these services should not intrude or impact on your home’s heritage value or features, should not result in damage to heritage material and, where possible, should be fully reversible.

The Tasmanian Heritage Council has guidelines about installing modern services. Go to www.heritage.tas.gov.au and search for ‘Installing modern services on heritage buildings’.

Building extensions, garages, and carports generally requires planning permission. Installing or replacing fences, removing internal walls and installing modern services may require planning permission. Seek advice from your local council.
Case study

A cottage transformed

Small space, clever design, the installation of modern services and the construction of a curvaceous extension have all come together in two conjoined Georgian cottages in Launceston.

When owners Lez and Roz Penzes first laid eyes on these one-time 1840s army barracks with an 1850s weatherboard skillion, they immediately saw their potential.

“The two cottages were longstanding rental properties when we bought them in 2000. They were liveable, but pretty rustic,” Lez says.

Although Lez and Roz installed modern services, such as ceiling heating and solar panels in the cottages, it was important to them that the heritage values of the cottages were retained.

“Mixing the new with old is something we love to do. They highlight each other,” Lez says.

“The original two front rooms in each cottage were stripped back to reveal the original materials.

“Not all the material in the front two barrack rooms was original. The fireplace had been updated into a large 1960s style structure which we removed and restored to its original state.”

The adjoining kitchen skillion was stripped back to reveal its bare bones, then a new modern kitchen and dining area was built. This area has a skylight, heating that radiates from the ceiling, and a strip of tiles which provide under-floor heating which, according to the owners, keeps their feet warm while they’re eating.

A modern addition, carefully positioned so as not to intrude, can be a delightful contrast to a historic home.
The Tasmanian Heritage Council approved the demolition of a lean-to that had been modified, which was next to the kitchen. A fun, orange curved addition now stands in its footprint, and provides the owners with a stylish bathroom and laundry.

The new addition and updated skillion are quite distinct from the cottages and add a new and potentially removable layer to them.

The Heritage Council was keen to ensure that the heritage values were retained and made it a condition of approval that the brickwork below floor level of the original fireplace in the skillion was retained, as the fireplace itself was beyond repair.

“The new stove sits in the spot where the fireplace used to be and the tile strip which runs outward from the stove pays homage to the original fireplace,” Lez says.

The cottages had rising damp on the far west wall of the former barracks, which was a concern, but Lez found a solution.

“We built a retaining wall to release the ground pressure against the wall and to ventilate it, thereby stopping the damp.”

The owners have combined modern technology unobtrusively in the building. Photovoltaic solar panels sit inconspicuously on the roof and generate 1.2 kilowatts of power which heat the new skillion and return power to the electricity grid, partly offsetting some of the owners’ power costs. A heat-pump hot-water system provides hot water for both cottages and underfloor heating in the new bathrooms.

The clever use of small space and modern technology shines through in the cottages. Lez and Roz live in one cottage. The other is Lez’s architect office, and a studio apartment.

Although compact, the cottages are not cramped.

This clever blending of modern design and protection of heritage fabric has created a contemporary space. It has also won the owners the Launceston City Council Heritage Award in 2009 and a Master Builders Association Award for Vos Constructions.

“Mixing the new with old is something we love to do. They highlight each other.”

Rising damp occurs when porous walls are in contact with damp ground. Surface damage occurs when moisture evaporates, leaving behind salt crystals. Mould on interior walls is often a tell-tale sign of rising damp. Rising damp is treatable, but treatment should be based on expert advice.
Case study
Haggerston renewed

As you drive along the winding road to the farming estate of Haggerston, just south of Launceston, a bend in the road reveals the first glimpse of an unusual sight in Tasmania—a rubble ironstone home.

Originally rendered, the ironstone is now revealed and the home has a large but sympathetic addition. A substantial collection of outbuildings including stable, former mill, coach house and shearing shed constructed of the same materials is adjacent to the house, and drystone walls and historic hawthorn hedges abound.

But this spectacular heritage-listed property has undergone a metamorphosis from a near-derelict circa 1830s farmhouse to an exquisite home, thanks to its owner, Lydia Nettlefold.

Lydia saw the property’s potential and purchased Haggerston in 2007. She undertook the restoration with lots of experience in restoring historic properties behind her, a respect for the individuality of the places she restores, the assistance of specialist tradespeople and plenty of drive.

“I’ve done a few of these old places now, and all of them are different,” Lydia says.

Lydia’s experience has not only provided a strong aesthetic sense, but also know-how in undertaking such a challenging task. She’s used tradespeople with specialist skills, many of whom have been working on the property for months and even years.
“We’ve had the stonemason here for two years fixing the walls of the house, outbuildings and drystone wall fencing. The plasterer was here for six months and has completely re-plastered the house and repaired all the cornices.

“It’s been two years’ worth of work, and we’re not finished yet. At the moment we’re undertaking alterations and a new addition to our stone barn buildings for use as an accommodation unit.”

Lydia has retained and capitalised on the original fabric of the house. “Unusually, there were no windows in the original farmhouse; each room had French doors to the outside. We’ve managed to retain all these and the interior doors too.

“We’ve kept as much of the original flooring as we could. It’s Baltic pine which has been cleaned and oiled. Upstairs we used salvaged flooring. It is hard to get, but it’s worth it as it just looks so much better.”

Lydia has also used salvaged timber in the new addition. “The floorboards for the new part of the house came from four different Melbourne houses and the trusses came from the University of Tasmania in Launceston. Old timbers have so much more character, I just love them.”

The new addition contains a kitchen, dining and living area. Stylistically, the interior blends with the older part of the house, largely due to the use of recycled materials. The exterior is made of brick and hard render. The addition picks up on the vernacular roof of the cottage and its muted colour render does not overwhelm the original stone cottage.

“A frameless glass link between the old cottage and addition provides a separation between the old and the new.

The restoration of Haggerston was not for the faint-hearted or inexperienced but the end result is superb.”
Researching your home’s history can help you make the best decisions for protecting its heritage values.

Historical research assisted with the tasteful restoration of this well-known circa 1905 Federation weatherboard house located in the Hobart suburb of Bellerive.

The home is where former Prime Minister John Curtin’s wife, Elsie Curtin (formerly Needham), grew up. John Curtin is believed to have courted his wife here during a holiday.

The current owners, Alison and Peter Richardson, researched the property and were delighted with their home’s association with the former Prime Minister and his wife. “The house became more interesting because of the story behind it,” Peter says.

Its history proved to be a great resource when it came to restoring and choosing paint colours for the exterior.

“We found an early photo of the house in the John Curtin library. The photo revealed that the house originally had a bullnose verandah, so we removed the later skillion verandah and reinstated the original.

“The photo also helped us to work out what colours to paint the exterior, as it provided information about the original tones, so even though we couldn’t match the colour from the black and white photograph, we could see how it had been used.

“We could also see that the house originally had a picket fence in the front so we reinstated that too,” Peter says.

The Richardsons have been mindful of the traditional aesthetics of this property and when they planned their garage, they drew on the style of the house for design inspiration.

“The house has a pressed metal section in the front which we replicated in the garage. We landscaped to help screen the driveway as well as improve the front yard,” Alison says.

To undertake these works the owners needed approval from the Heritage Council, a process which the owners say ran very smoothly.

“A key aspect of this project was having Heritage Tasmania’s works adviser, Deirdre MacDonald, visit early on. By doing this we could explore the possibilities before becoming attached to a plan. Deirdre pointed out things about the house that were unique. She advised about where to position the garage and what features to replicate. She was absolutely spot-on,” Alison says.

“It was a really good process. When we engaged the architect, we knew what we wanted to do. And by the time we put in our application, we were comfortable we had explored the options.”

The final result is a great heritage outcome. The local community has taken a keen interest in the changes too, even noting it in a residents’ newsletter.

“People have been very complimentary and encouraging of the work we’ve done. They like the garage and the new colour scheme of the house,” Peter adds.
Case study

Solar panels on a historic cottage

The demise of an old hot water cylinder provided the impetus for the owner of this circa 1880s cottage in Hobart to install evacuated tube solar panels on the roof.

Cottage owner Erica Burgess said she had an old low pressure hot water cylinder that was probably 50-60 years old.

“The thermostat in the tank had died so the water would boil and be released from the overflow pipe onto the roof. The thermostat couldn't be replaced. I could still use the system, but would have to turn it on and off as required,” Erica says.

It was clear a new cylinder was needed which provided the opportunity to look at different hot water systems.

“I was hesitant when I first started looking at the solar options, as I thought we’d need to get planning permission and it would be difficult.” But after investigating the options, Erica decided this would be the way to go.

Consulting with Hobart City Council and Heritage Tasmania at the beginning of the process provided Erica with clarity about what was possible.

“I had discussions with Hobart City Council and works adviser Danielle Pacaud from Heritage Tasmania and it became clear from the beginning that the solar tubes needed to be on the back of the house. To have them on the front would impact poorly on the streetscape.

“The plumber had worked on heritage-listed buildings previously, and he gave consideration to the heritage values as well as the orientation and angle of the tubes to the sun to maximise efficiency.

“I originally thought the north-east side roof would work best. But after discussions with the plumber I discovered it is not necessarily the best thing to have them as high as possible. Orientation and angle are just as important,” Erica says.

The final solution was to locate them on the skillion, at the back of the house, facing north. This provided the best orientation. The panels were placed on a frame to give them a good angle.

The installation of the solar panels was done by exemption. Heritage Tasmania provided advice that there was no need to go through the Tasmanian Heritage Council as the solution offered had no impact on the heritage values of the heritage-listed cottage or the streetscape.

“My hot water is now heated by sunshine. Through the summer months I don’t need to draw on the electricity grid at all for hot water and I’m looking forward to the coming winter to see how they perform.”

This is not the first time Erica has done works to her house. As well as installing solar hot water and some internal renovations, Erica had an extension added to the side of her home about six years ago, with approval from the Heritage Council.

“Passersby and friends don’t realise this part of the house is new. They often say ‘wasn’t that always there?’” Closer inspection does reveal that it is in fact a new addition.

A thoughtful approach to the heritage values of this cottage is preserving its heritage values.
The following resources may be of assistance to you as you purchase, maintain and adapt your historic home.

The following publications can be found on our website at www.heritage.tas.gov.au by searching on the title.

**Brochures**
- Information for Property Owners
- Understanding Historic Heritage
- Researching Historic Places
- Buying a Heritage Property
- Selling a Heritage Property
- Insuring a Heritage Property

**Booklets**
- Heritage Solutions
- Practice Notes

**Guidelines for Works to the Roofs of Heritage Places**
- Installing Modern Services on Heritage Buildings

**Other resources**
- The following is not an exhaustive list, but all these publications are available from your local LINC Tasmania (unless otherwise indicated).

If you have discovered resources you have found particularly useful, please let us know so we can share the information in future publications with other owners.
Likewise, if you have had trouble finding information, let us know so we can try to fill the gap.
Who are we?

The Tasmanian Heritage Council is the statutory body responsible for implementing the Historic Cultural Heritage Act 1995, including making decisions about which places to enter on the Tasmanian Heritage Register and determining works applications for those places.

Heritage Tasmania, in the Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment co-ordinates historic heritage strategy, policy and activity for the State Government, supports the work of the Tasmanian Heritage Council, helps to facilitate the development of the sector and runs a community education program.

For further information visit www.heritage.tas.gov.au

To keep up-to-date about heritage events, funding opportunities or historic heritage places, subscribe to the free Heritage e-News. Simply email us on enquiries@heritage.tas.gov.au and type ‘subscribe e-News’ in the subject line or phone 1300 850 332.
Tasmania’s historic heritage is one of its most charming characteristics.

Our cities, towns and farmlands are dotted with historic dwellings and are a constant reminder of our past.

The owners of these places are very important people, as they maintain and contribute to this historic landscape, helping it evolve and adapt to changing needs.

This booklet shares the efforts, achievements and insights of 12 Tasmanian owners of historic homes, with a few useful tips thrown in for good measure, to help inspire and guide others.

Residential Solutions is dedicated to all the owners of historic homes. These people are the custodians of Tasmania’s historic heritage for current and future generations.

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