

Dream Home

A classic baby grand

Stephen Crafti discovers a stylish less-is-more renovation on an old Victorian.



Counter evolution ... Maureen Diment shows the new wing of the house, which features a kitchen and dining area with pitched ceiling. Photos: Steven Siewert



The owners of this house in McMahons Point weren't exactly sure what they were looking for in their next home. While the family home was too large after their children left home, they weren't ready to move into an apartment. This Victorian cottage seemed to tick some of the boxes.

"We have a dog [named Bella], so we were really looking for a small house, just enough room in the garden for an outdoor setting and a place to hang a clothes line," says owner Maureen Diment, who lives in the house with her husband, Tony.

When the couple found the house, the first person they contacted was builder Matt Hagan, whom they had known for years and had worked on renovating their previous homes. "He came around and 'kicked the walls' before we proceeded," Maureen says. "Like him, we thought this place had potential."

The design firm twarchitects also realised the potential of the house, as well as some shortcomings. "This place certainly didn't have sufficient storage, particularly for a couple moving from a family home. But it did have a small back garden and was close to all the amenities," says the project's architect and director of twarchitects, Tom Wills.

In a narrow street, the house is surrounded by late-19th-century workers' cottages. It had been altered in the 1970s, with a fairly rudimentary extension at the back. At the time, a timber-louvred screen was also added to the facade. Twarchitects decided to retain the louvres, even though they are not strictly in keeping with the Victorian aesthetic. "They provide a breezeway effect, as well as additional security," Wills says.

He also retained the front three rooms of the original home. The front room continues

COSTS

| | |
|------------------------------|------------------|
| ▶ Preliminaries | \$40,000 |
| ▶ Authority and council fees | \$20,000 |
| ▶ Demolition | \$10,000 |
| ▶ Excavation | \$10,000 |
| ▶ Concrete floor | \$5,000 |
| ▶ Brick party wall | \$5,000 |
| ▶ Carpentry | \$40,000 |
| ▶ Wall linings | \$10,000 |
| ▶ Windows and doors | \$20,000 |
| ▶ Roofing | \$10,000 |
| ▶ Kitchen | \$30,000 |
| ▶ Bathroom | \$25,000 |
| ▶ Plumbing | \$15,000 |
| ▶ Electrical and lighting | \$10,000 |
| ▶ Landscaping | \$15,000 |
| ▶ Architect's fee | \$20,000 |
| TOTAL (including GST) | \$285,000 |

to be used as the formal living area, while the two other rooms are bedrooms, one the main.

And instead of the usual en suite to the main bedroom, twarchitects created a small courtyard. "We had an en suite in our previous house and I never really liked having a bathroom so close to the bedroom," Maureen says. Not having an en suite meant that this space could be designed as a courtyard, accessed from the main bedroom. "One of the main problems with the original house was insufficient light," Wills says. "It was important to get northern light into the house." And in keeping with the clients' brief for sufficient storage, the architects included generous built-in space in both bedrooms.

The courtyard provides a link to a new wing about the same size and form of the original cottage. "The new wing is almost identical in

ARCHITECT
twarchitects, 9555 8087.

BUILDER
Hagan Built, 9555 2218.

ENGINEER
Colin Stenning, 8212 5722.

GREEN POINTS
▶ Cross-ventilation.

- ▶ Use of concrete slab for thermal performance (below the new blackbutt timber floor).
- ▶ Use of plantation-grown timbers.
- ▶ Ceiling fan.
- ▶ Clothes line to minimise energy use.

FAVOURITE FEATURES

The sense of space in a relatively small house – in particular, the volume obtained by having the exposed timber beams.

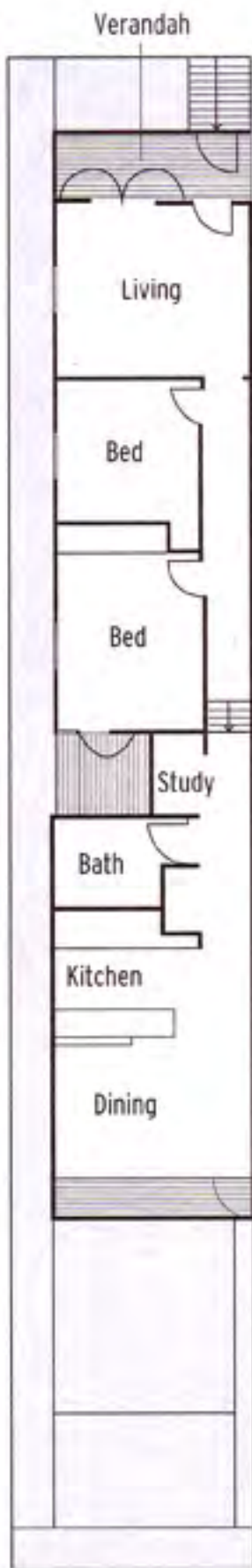


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Picture perfect ... outside the new section; (below) the house's louvred facade; (right) the floor plan.



proportion," says Wills, who was constrained in either extending the footprint or providing a second level.

"There are strict guidelines in this area. We weren't able to move beyond our current size." The house has only increased in area from 82 square metres to 86 square metres.

To create a sense of space, one of the greatest challenges in this renovation, twarchitects created a large singular volume, which includes an open-plan kitchen and dining area.

Featuring a pitched roof with exposed, white-painted timber rafters, the sight lines extend through bi-fold doors to the back fence. To further accentuate the pitched roof, the architects included a triangular highlight window above the back doors. As space is limited, it was suggested to the owners that the front room be retained for formal living.

"There just wouldn't have been sufficient room for a living area, as well as a dining area next to the kitchen," Wills says. Having the lounge at the front of the house, adjacent to the verandah, also allows the couple to enjoy the afternoon sunlight, particularly during the winter months. "The louvres act as a 'veil' to the street but they also allow the house to 'breathe'," Wills adds.

The kitchen and dining area feel considerably more spacious as a result of the decision to use the front room as a living area. It also means that the kitchen didn't have to be galley-style, squeezed into one corner. As

well as generous kitchen storage, there is built-in timber veneer joinery and open shelving in the dining area. "The structure is quite simple but this allows the space to feel considerably larger," Wills says. To further heighten a sense of space, Wills included wall lights that emphasise the roof beams and the height of the pitched ceiling. "Diffused light also makes a space feel larger," Wills says.

As space was limited, Wills incorporated a study nook in the hallway. And rather than providing two bathrooms, there's one large bathroom accessed directly from the main corridor.

"With renovations like this, it's important to keep things as simple and as open as possible. Sometimes less is considerably more," says Wills, who was also mindful of how the space was going to be used.

"Our clients still wanted to have their family over for lunch. But they only needed a small lounge for watching television. There's no rule that says a lounge and dining have to be connected."

For Maureen and Tony, living in the house is like going on vacation. Berry's Bay is only a short stroll away and the house has a distinctively coastal feel.

"It's a very informal house and we use the back garden like another room," adds Maureen, who has dubbed the renovation "Petite Designs" in contrast to the popular architecture-based television program *Grand Designs*.