

Escape

SOUTHERN HIGHLANDS *June/July 2020*



BEST OF
Escape SH
ISSUE!



MILTON PARK COUNTRY HOUSE & SPA, BOWRAL

The five star Milton Park Country House Hotel & Spa (left) is set in one of the oldest, most precious cool climate gardens in the Southern Highlands. Designed with a nod to the 18th century English School of Landscape, the gardens are home to 10,000 trees including octogenarian elms and weeping beeches as well as 400 rose bushes, 2000 metres of hedges and a bluebell wood. The original grand mansion, now the hotel, was built by the retailing and pastoral Horderns for their third son, Anthony. He lived here with his first wife Viola Bingham until her death in 1929, and in 1932 he married Mary Bullmore, the great aunt of casino magnate James Packer. Milton Park is the kind of place where money and breeding talks, with its ballroom, cocktail and champagne bar, billiards room, private dining room and three restaurants.

Staying: 36 Deluxe Rooms and 8 Suites including the Forest Suite, one of four with a four poster bed, spa, fireplace and a private terrace overlooking the gardens. Take an evening stroll through sumptuous grounds, which are on occasion open to the public for garden tours. Awake feeling like royalty.

Eating: Book in for an a la carte meal at fine dining Horderns Restaurant and enjoy a decadent breakfast served with charming attention in the Orangerie, with continental and any cooked additions your heart could desire.

Added Extras: Go for a swim in the indoor swimming pool, housed in a vine laced stone building with arched windows; book in for a treatment at Milton Park's Wellness Spa.

Suits: Brides and their bridal parties in need of pre-marital pampering; garden lovers and architectural buffs. Frazzled couples looking to kick back and relax in luxe.

Milton Park Country House & Spa, 200 Horderns Road, Bowral
miltonpark.com.au Read the full story in ESH Winter 2018

Best of Accommodation

Romantic cottages, grand sweeping mansions, rustic country pubs, historical architectural treasures The Southern Highlands has a getaway option for everyone and here are just a few of our accommodation gems. As we all bunker down at home for the moment, who isn't dreaming and planning a fabulous country escape in the future?

WORDS ALEX SPEED & JANE O'CONNELL
IMAGES & COVER ELISE HASSEY

BURRAWANG VILLAGE HOTEL

Located in the historic town of Burrawang, the Burrawang Village Hotel (right) is one of the few surviving pubs in the Southern Highlands that hasn't been totally gentrified. Its first incarnation, the Prince Alfred, was built in 1866 just down Hoddle Street, and this newer version, an imposing two storey brick building, was built in the 1920s. New operators Peter and Kate Dean, also lessees of the Royal Hotel, Bowral and the Bundanoon Hotel, Bundanoon have spent the past few years renovating and adding some 21st century charm to this pub with good cheer.

Staying: Upstairs there are eight rooms, all with queen beds. Rooms are cosy with white linen and bath towels, and electric blankets perfect for those misty Burrawang mornings. Prepare to say a friendly 'hi' to fellow guests on the short trip to the two shared bathrooms along the landing. Each has showers, basins and loos. **Eating:** A new kitchen and renovated restaurant seating up to 40. Like the pub, the kitchen is open seven days for lunch and dinner. Good pub grub with locally grown produce, and one of the best beer gardens in the Highlands. Catch up with friendly potato and cattle farmers and other local characters inside at the pub's bar. **Added Extras:** A continental breakfast at the Burrawang General Store & Cafe just across the road is included in a night's stay. **Suits:** Prospective treechangers wanting to sample village life; city friends down for a Highlands wedding; nostalgic lovers of country pubs who don't mind a night time dash to the loo.

Burrawang Village Hotel, 14-16 Hoddle Street, Burrawang
burrawangvillagehotel.com.au Read the full story in ESH Spring 2018



THE LOCH, BERRIMA

A unique bed and breakfast operated by chef Brigid Kennedy and her husband Kevin Nott with four charming self contained suites, extensive chef's gardens providing fresh farm food (along with a clutch of hens called Helen) and one of the most popular long lunch venues in the Southern Highlands. Suites, Aberdeen, Arran, Ayr and Argyle are all named after a Scottish town beginning with 'A', reflecting Kevin's lineage and the Scottish friend who introduced them to the property in 2011. The chef appointed kitchen is separated from the guest rooms by a mezzanine bridge and has been set up for guests to cook to their heart's content. A long timber dining table transitions to the lounge area where a selection of seating options are centred around a large fireplace. Stables have been beautifully converted and filled with antique furniture and bric-a-brac for guests to browse and buy, along with a market stall with baskets of fruit and vegetables picked from the surrounding fields. Guests are encouraged to explore the many different chef's gardens, planted by Brigid to rotate through the seasons and take advantage of the cool climate that first drew her to the Highlands.

Staying: Suites are decorated in antique furniture and furnishings; several en suites have freestanding bath as well as spacious shower recess and views over the paddocks. **Eating:** Accommodation includes a delicious home cooked breakfast and a hearty self serve breakfast buffet. **Added Extras:** Every Sunday, Brigid opens the doors to her Tasting Room and cooks for up to 60 diners with garden produce and local beverages. On warmer days, lunch is served on the charming back verandah (right).

Suits: Couples, small groups or multiple generations of family wanting intimate weekend getaway or celebration location.

The Loch, 581 Greenhills Road, Berrima
theloch.net.au *Read the full story ESH Summer 2018/2019*



BOOK BARN COTTAGE, BENDOOLEY ESTATE, BERRIMA

In this age of technology there is something endearing about staying at a place called Book Barn Cottage (left) on Bendooley Estate near Berrima. This place was built on the sixth inter-generational success of buying, sourcing, preserving and selling books. Bendooley Estate is the home of the famed Berkelouw dynasty. Isidoor Berkelouw, a fourth generation book dealer and seller from Rotterdam, The Netherlands, came to Australia in 1948 to escape the horrors of World War II. He opened his first bookstore in Sydney in 1950 and became a pre-eminent dealer in rare, antiquarian and second-hand books. His son Leo began operating the family business from the historic 1839 Highlands estate Bendooley in 1977. He still lives there today alongside son Paul and his wife Katja, who continue the family affair. Formerly the gatekeeper's cottage, inside Book Barn Cottage, the smell of wooden floor polish sits nicely alongside the aroma bibliophiles love: the waft of words captured forever on ageing paper.

Staying: A large master bedroom with designer bathroom en suite looks through French windows over green gardens. The twin bedroom has two king twins and a trundle, and its own bathroom with shower and bath. There is a compactly designed kitchen opening onto a verandah for a pre-dinner drink. **Eating:** Skip up Bendooley's poplar lined driveway to its excellent Book Barn and restaurant. Coffee and cake is served from 10am and lunch 12pm weekdays and 11.30am weekends. For dinner and breakfast shoot into nearby Berrima and choose from a myriad of excellent eatery choices. **Added Extras:** Forgot vino? Bendooley's Cellar Door is open for wine tastings 10am-5pm and for lunch 12 weekdays and 11.30am weekends. **Suits:** Guests from Sydney and Canberra attending a wedding at Bendooley Estate, bibliophiles, romantic trysts.

Old Book Barn, Bendooley Estate, 3020 Old Hume Highway, Berrima
bendooleyestate.com.au *Read the full story ESH Autumn 2017*



ROBERTSON HOTEL, ROBERTSON

When Hotel Robertson (left) opened in 1924 on six hectares of land looking over the Jamberoo Escarpment, the press deemed it 'one of the most luxurious in the Commonwealth'. It was the time of the Charleston, women in flapper dresses, champagne cocktails, art deco design and decadence. Days when the well-heeled Sydney crowd escaped to the Highlands to partake of the fresh air and let their hair down. The hotel's golf course swept all the way to where the Robertson Pie Shop stands today. Golfers were issued with a whistle when venturing out to play, so a rescue team could locate them when the famous Robbo mists rolled in. Still operating 75 years later, and now called The Robertson Hotel, owners of this Gatsby-esque establishment, hoteliers Con and Lisa Kotis are committed to an ongoing multimillion-dollar renovation of the hotel, which will see 40 rooms become 60 guestrooms and suites.

Staying: A huge central staircase leads to the hotel's rooms. The Grand Manor Suite is the bridal suite and overlooks the main lawn, where marriage ceremonies often occur. It has two luxurious bedrooms, a large designer bathroom, a sitting room and importantly a bird's-eye view of arriving guests. **Eating:** Enjoy a pre-dinner drink in the handsome art deco bar then eat in the dining room, dressed in ceiling to floor drapery and white linen. A lavish continental and hot breakfast is served in the grand ballroom. **Added Extras:** The grand ballroom can hold 100 dancing guests with a DJ or band. Or the Australian World Orchestra, who played here in 2015 and again in 2017. **Suits:** Brides and grooms looking for a one stop wedding able to accommodate the entire; Great Gatsby fans.

The Robertson Hotel, 1 Fountaindale Road, Robertson
therobertsonhotel.com *Read the full story ESH Winter 2017*

BIBURY, BOWRAL

Bibury (below) is one historic property to stay at that impresses immediately. Architect and Brit Leslie Wilkinson was one of the first in Australia to depart from Anglo-Saxon architectural traditions, instead combining Georgian and Mediterranean influences in his practice. He was responsible for the Main Quadrangle, Physics Building and Medical School at the University of Sydney. Wilkinson knew and loved the Highlands, having visited with his own young family in the 1920s, and designed Bibury in 1929 for local lawyer Alexander Robert Macgregor. Bibury's current owners undertook a far-reaching and sensitive restoration that included replacing entire sections of floor, total replumbing, and electrical and heating rewiring. The family also did as much research as possible and reused every piece of original furniture or fitting they could throughout the property. The gardens have also been restored.

Staying: With five sumptuous bedrooms, Bibury can sleep up to 10 people in elegant luxury. There is also additional accommodation for two in the self-contained Chauffeur's Quarters across the courtyard.

Eating: For the home cook, a luxurious open plan kitchen overlooks the splendid gardens with huge doors leading to a travertine patio. The fridge is full of breakfast delicacies and eats. Bowral is minutes' walk away for dining out or takeaway options.

Added Extras: This house and its gardens are glorious. Sit on deckchairs on the colonnaded verandah (one of Wilkinson's design loves, along with the vine covered loggia, arches, stuccoed brickwork, exquisite parquet floors and high timber ceilings), and happily drink it all in.

Suits: architecture buffs, corporate getaways, intergenerational celebrations, doyens of relaxed luxury, attention to detail and elegance.

29/31 Burradoo Road, Bowral
bibury.com.au *Read the full story ESH Winter 2019*



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Joadja Distillery, Joadja

Tucked away in a valley at the end of Joadja Road, the former mining town of Joadja has a long history of innovation, entrepreneurship and a splash of spirited misadventure. Valero and Elisa Jimenez camped here more than a decade ago and fell in love. When the historic town was up for sale in 2011, Valero attended the auction, although he had no intention of buying. 'The auction stalled,' he says, 'I looked over at Elisa, and the next thing I know I've got my hand up and I'm signing a contract.'

Along with the land and the historic ruins came the Scottish heritage of the workers who moved to the Southern Highlands in the 1870s to mine and refine shale for the Australian Kerosene Oil and Mineral Company. Legend has it they also set up a sly grog operation on the side, and more than a century later, that hobby is being legally revived.

A nine acre crop of barley the couple grow, coupled with the spring water collected from their nearby reservoir, provides two of the base ingredients of a unique local brew. After securing an excise licence in 2014, Joadja Distillery now offers paddock to bottle Australian whisky. Inside a cavernous shed is a collection of copper pot stills and fermenters, and an alcove crammed with old oak barrels. In a past life the barrels stored Spanish sherry and the sticky residue is the magic ingredient for ageing whisky, a technique the Scots have used for generations.

The most sought after barrels are ex Oloroso and ex Pedro Ximénez from the Andalusia region of southern Spain, where both Valero and Elisa were born.

Visitors may be lucky enough to see a kangaroo poke its head through the shed door when Valero is mashing the barley with an oversized paddle – some, yes, are so drawn to the smell they'll even venture inside. During the distilling process, Valero tinkers constantly, controlling energy levels to optimise flavours.

The spirit is aged in barrels for a minimum of two years before it can officially be called whisky. Joadja's first batch, released in 2018, sold out within hours, fuelled by word of mouth and a few popular whisky blogs.

Later they launched Joadja Dry Gin, with its shorter production process, as a stop gap product in between batches of whisky and it's now a big seller. The aroma of juniper berries and botanicals, including cardamom, angelica root and anise, is delicate and delicious. The Joadja Distillery also produces Anise liqueur, Outlaw malted grain spirit and Crossbones Freebooter cane spirit, all available to buy online or at the distillery.

joadjadistillery.com.au

LI-SUN EXOTIC MUSHROOMS

Microbiologist Dr Noel Arroll is a mushroom expert and is a leading world authority on the spawning, growing and picking of gourmet and exotic fungi. Noel's workplace is a subterranean tunnel where for the past 30 years he has grown exotic and gourmet mushrooms. The 650 metre long tunnel runs under the hill from Bowral to Mittagong. Built in 1865 as part of the original single lane track from Sydney to Canberra, the tunnel, carved from limestone, became obsolete when a new double line track opened in 1919. During World War II it was used to hide munitions and, when hostilities ended, it lay dormant for years before its consistent humidity and temperature of 15-16°C were identified as perfect to replicate nature's requirements for mushroom growing. A friend sold the business to Noel in the 1970s.

'In the wild in Asia, where many exotic mushrooms originate, mushrooms grow in woods and within forest floor litter,' says Noel, whose tunnel is unique to Australia and famed within mushroom knowing circles. 'They like damp, cool conditions to grow and flourish, which is why the tunnel is perfect.'

Noel studied science at Sydney University and had plans to become a teacher. He was persuaded otherwise when a professor casually mentioned grants were available for students following more research based work. He went on to write his PhD on diseases in mushrooms, and later studied at Penn State University's world renowned Faculty of Microbiology and Immunology, and

The Glasshouse Crops Research Institute in Southampton, UK.

Noel replicates the conditions of nature in his unique mushroom farm. The inoculation of the species of mushrooms he grows takes place in his Mittagong laboratory. Mushroom spawn is any substance that has been inoculated with mycelium, the vegetative growth of a fungus, and is the base for producing mushrooms.

Noel uses two techniques for growing his mushrooms in the tunnel. Biodegradable spool shaped sacks filled with inoculated straw are spiked on every spare inch of space, like a giant wall of sewing bobbins, only these ones grow things. On the other side, logs fashioned from sawdust have the slower growing, prized shiitake. As well as the shiitake, Noel grows enoki, wood ear, shimeji, nameko and oyster varieties, as well as your more household types such as king brown, chestnut and button mushrooms. After the mushroom spawn is transported to the tunnel, it will lay dormant in the inoculated logs Noel has fashioned from eucalypt sawdust before it begins fruiting.

'Mushrooms in the wild have a unique and vital role in our ecosystem,' says Noel. 'They grow on dead trees and dead wood and use the carbon as a food source. Because of carbon in trees, the lignin can't decompose without fungi. The organic matter in the fungi decomposes and degrades the organic matter, returning the carbon back into the earth. Mushrooms are the earth's great degrader.' li-sunexoticmushrooms.com.au



Sam Costello & Elisabeth Crawford, Brillig Farm, Exeter

Many of us dream of buying some land and reconnecting with the earth. Market gardeners and partners in life Sam Costello and Elisabeth Crawford did just that.

How did you happen upon Brillig Farm? Elisabeth: Living in the Southern Highlands was a long held fantasy and we'd been looking for a while.

We loved Exeter and started looking there specifically. The plan was to move here and develop some income streams, then transition out of the workforce in Sydney. Growing things was definitely part of the plan, and we found a 20 acre block with great soil and dams, paddocks and trees. We wanted to have windows that looked out onto something green and far away.

Was market gardening always the long held dream? Sam: Not at all! We did a market gardening course a couple of years before making the move and decided it was too much hard work! Not long after moving here I took a redundancy and I was sitting in the Exeter General Store when I got an email offering a discount on an online urban farming course. Intensive farming in a small space seemed much more interesting than what I'd been planning. So I signed up and within two months we were selling produce at the Moss Vale farmers market.

What do you grow? Sam: Thirteen varieties of leafy greens, including microgreens, and many different varieties of radishes, beetroot, potatoes, turnips, tomatoes, carrots, pumpkins, herbs, edible flowers and garnishes. **Some of your vegetables are pretty exotic. How did that eventuate?** Sam: Living in the city I'd never thought about how limited the produce selection is in supermarkets.

When we started farming I did a lot of research into what we would grow, and it didn't take me long to realise there is a cornucopia of food plants out there. So, we started looking at plants that looked and tasted exciting and experimented. I love the idea of plants that were used historically as well as plants used by non western cultures. There is such a huge range of delicious edible plants out there used by millions of people over thousands of years and we're missing out. **It sounds like a lot of hard work...** Elisabeth: Our day really depends on the weather and time of year. In summer we work about 10 hours a day; we get up before dawn and work until it gets too hot then go back out until dusk. In winter it's kind of the opposite. We wait till the sun's up and the frost clears and then get to it.

brilligfarm.com.au



EDEN BREWERY, MITTAGONG

It is often said that necessity is the mother of invention, so when Jacob Newman was too young to buy beer in his home state of Texas, he simply created his own brew. Years later, that teenage entrepreneurial spirit travelled across the Pacific Ocean and emerged as Eden Brewery.

Despite an early start in the beer trade, Jacob worked as a paramedic in Dallas before moving to Townsville, then Papua New Guinea (where he met Eden co-founder and now wife, Deb) as a missionary and medic for local communities. After seven years of volunteer work around the world, the couple returned to Australia. Beer was their next calling. The couple chose the Highlands for its strong match to their criteria, plus the likelihood of customers with 'an expendable income looking for a better tasting, better quality beer.'

Eden Brewery opened for business in January 2017, in a well-chosen and easy to spot location just off Bowral Road. Each of the home-crafted beers is named after a tree, and customers who are interested can learn the story behind the names. One popular tale belongs to Eden's best-selling Phoenix D Kottbusser, a German-style beer that came close to extinction when illegal ingredients forced it to be shelved in the

sixteenth Century. The Phoenix D part of the name pays tribute to the Judean Date Palm (Phoenix dactylifera), extinct for centuries and resurrected after a 2000-year-old seed was discovered in the tomb of Herod the Great and successfully cultivated. Both the beer and the tree were brought back to life.

The beer-tasting approach at Eden Brewery is similar to a Cellar Door experience. Visitors can choose a 'taster' for five dollars, or a paddle of five smaller beers for twenty dollars. The 150ml samplers are a whistle stop-tour of Eden's brews, from the unexpected Peach Sour Berliner Weisse (yes, it's really a beer) to the popular and very drinkable Palm Pale, made from Australian hops with a hit of passionfruit. If you're looking to pair it with food, the tasting notes suggest snags on the barbie. Birch Wit, another Eden favourite, was Jacob's first hand-crafted brew and is inspired by the sunflower fields near his Texan home. Along with sunflower seeds, beer connoisseurs might also pick up the traditional Belgian wheat beer flavours of orange peel and coriander seed.

The Newmans' charitable ethos continues with Eden Brewery donating ten percent of its profits to Oxfam. Having seen first-hand the impact of unclean drinking water on developing communities, the couple continues to support humanitarian programs that drive positive change. edenbrewery.beer

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Gai Waterhouse

@gai_waterhouse

Gai Waterhouse was born into a life of horse racing. Her father, TJ Smith, was one of the country's best loved and most successful trainers, and since taking the reins at Tulloch Lodge 26 years ago, his only child Gai has gone on to emulate his success with more than 138 Group 1 Winners under her belt. When not trackside, training champion thoroughbreds with racing manager Adrian Bott or spending time with her children and grandchildren, Gai retires to her Highlands hideaway with husband Robbie.

I spend my time between Sydney and the Southern Highlands because...

We have a small homestead and farm here and our family loves to share it with us. **When in the Highlands I always take visitors to...** the Shaggy Cow, the Station Coffee House, Toshi's Japanese Restaurant in Mittagong, and Eccetera Trattoria Pizzeria for great pizza in Bowral. **In terms of racehorses, the Highlands is...** a leading breeding group of mostly boutique studs. A great climate for horses' development. **The most precious piece of advice Dad gave me was...** when you go to the sales, look for a champion, don't just buy a horse. **My sweetest tasting career victory came...** when I won the Melbourne Cup in 2013 with Fiorente. One day I hope to win at Ascot with the girls only syndicate Global Glamour. And I'd love to win the Breeders' Cup in America. **When it comes to horses, this is one truth I know...** They need lots of attention.

BEST OF Instagram

Famous faces and their favourite Highlands home places ... some of our favourite local Instagram stars share their worlds up close, and the Highlands places they are looking forward to visiting again in the future.

Leona Edmiston

@leonaedmiston

Fashion doyen Leona Edmiston is the Australian 'Queen of the frock'. The celebrated designer, known for her flattering feminine garments and her signature hair up-do, first came into our public consciousness in the 1980s. Then followed her eponymous label and boutique stores across Australia. Today, Leona and husband and business partner Jeremy Ducker spend their free time in the Highlands with twin daughters Dusty and Dylan.

Our home here holds a special place in my heart because ... I have been coming to the Highlands for more than 20 years, and we have put so much love and effort into creating a beautiful environment.

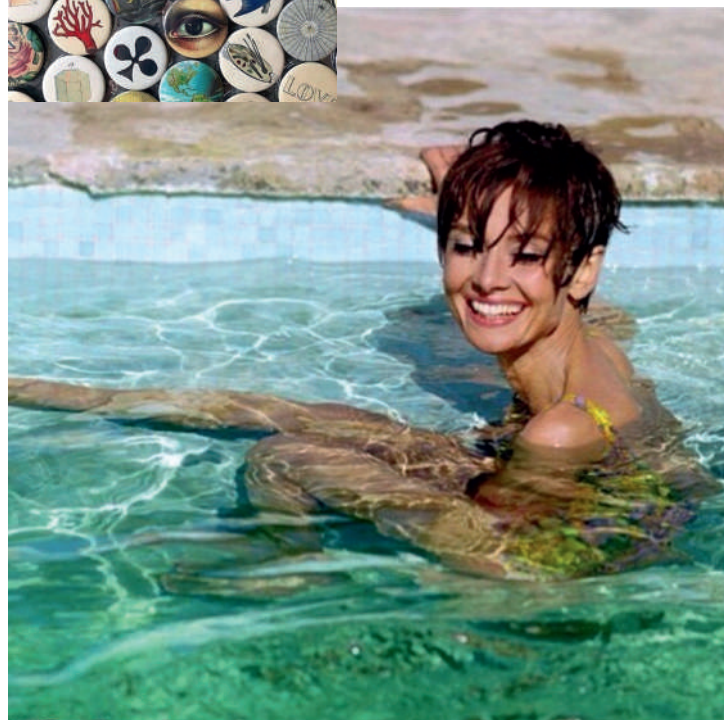
When in the Highlands I always take visitors to... The Burrawang Village Pub, Bendooley Estate and Mount Ashby, but there are so many other great places too. Our home is my special place. It's a constant source of delight.

The most precious piece of life advice I have ever received was... Honey is more powerful than vinegar.

The one piece of advice I give women when it comes to buying a dress is... Confidence is the best accessory, so if it feels great, buy it!

My all time style icons are... Audrey Hepburn and Jane Birkin. Polar opposites but both exemplary in their own way.

When it comes to fashion, this is one truth I know... Fashion is fleeting but style remains.





Zoe Young

@zoeyoung.artist

Zoe Young is an artist and painter. Represented by Olsen Gallery, she is a winner of the Portia Geach Memorial Award; a two times Archibald finalist and a recent finalist in the inaugural Darling Portrait Prize for her portrait of famed film director Bruce Beresford. Zoe lives in the Highlands with her partner Reg and their children Wilbur and Lucy. She paints in a home studio and in another studio in an old orchard overlooking the Highlands.

We moved to the Highlands because... It sits between the surf and the snow. I grew up in Crackenback in the Snowy mountains.

My favourite things in the Highlands are... Harry's on Green Lane and Dirty Janes in Bowral and Highlands Merchant in Moss Vale. And the seasons. I don't often admit this, but I do just get in the car and drive around for the sake of it. There are so many wonderful landscapes and they vary so much depending on the weather. I never tire of driving up Oxley Hill to Berrima. **When it comes to style...** Mine is in the tradition of the modernists with an infusion of contemporary life. **I often get asked...** If I realise I have paint on my face.

People who come to my exhibitions see... A complete body of work. The paintings bounce off one another and form some sort of narrative. **I paint...** Everything that I love about the world, including the drama of it. Life is brief. I'm going to paint what I love, and I'm going to paint it the best I can. I've got to leave a memory before I die. That I was here, and I adored this time.

Jimmy Barnes

@jimmybarnesofficial

Jimmy Barnes is the original Working Class Man. The Glaswegian, who came to Australia from Scotland as a five year old in 1962, smashed into national consciousness with Cold Chisel in the 1970s and has stayed there, beloved, ever since. In 2016, Jimmy, who has more hit albums than any Australian artist, also revealed he can write when his poignant autobiography, *Working Class Boy* was published. Home in Berrima with wife Jane after a recent sell-out Cold Chisel 'Shutting Down Your Town' tour, Jimmy's current album, *My Criminal Record*, is now out.

We moved to the Southern Highlands in1984 because I wanted to have some sanity in my life as Jane and I had a young family. The music business is a hectic place and in the city, we were surrounded by it 24-7. So we both thought a little place within striking distance of Sydney would allow us some peace. We were right and have loved living there ever since. **When we have friends staying, we always take them** on walks along the river and sometimes we visit the Buddhist monastery in Bundanoon. But my special place is home. My house, my bed, my family **I've been in the business of** touring, writing, singing and playing professionally for 46 years but music has always been in my life. **The things I hope I can give to people who listen to my music is** lift their spirits and forget about their troubles for a while. Music can transport you if you let it. **Writing the story of my life has been** painful but liberating. **When it comes music, there is one truth I know** you can feel it if it is real. ■



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LOCAL chat

The Southern Highlands is home to many fascinating people, all bringing their unique talents and commitment to our backyard. Here are just a couple adding to our region's uniqueness and sangfroid.

LEO BERKELOUW BENDOOLEY ESTATE, BERRIMA

Leo Berkelouw is the erudite patriarch of the Berkelouw book dynasty, an inter-generational lineage which goes back more than 200 years to 1812 in Holland.

'I have books in my blood. I'm the fifth generation in our business. My boys Paul, Robert and David are the sixth. My great-great-grandfather Solomon started our business in Kipstraat, Rotterdam, where my family came from. He sold theology books to barge owners and skippers. He drowned one winter's day after slipping on the passerelle of a boat. 'So there is tragedy in our family. But also bravery. My father, Isidoor, was Jewish. He worked in the family business and was married to my mother, Francis, a Protestant Dutch English woman. As Jews, my father and his whole family were forced to wear the yellow star of David on their coats during the war. When my father was picked up by the authorities, they notified my mother he was to be deported but said she could go to the detention centre to say goodbye. My mother left my older brother, Henry, who was seven, at home with a friend and put me in the pram. I was the baby. Under the pram mattress she put a pile of women's clothing. She pushed me in, and two women and a baby came out of that detention centre. Afterwards, my father was hidden for the duration of the war. He lost his entire family to the Holocaust.

'My father was a good man. He never talked about the past very much. In March 1948 we left for Australia. All our book stock had been destroyed during the battle of Rotterdam in 1940, and there were just too many terrible memories in Europe.

My parents arrived with Henry, me, our younger sister Francis, a few suitcases and 30 pounds. I was nine. We lived in Roseville in Sydney.

It was a happy childhood. It was harder for my parents, who were very European. Books that weren't anglophile didn't exist in shops here then. But there were other books – French atlases, German natural history books with coloured plates – books people who had fled from other parts of the world, like us, had brought with them. My father started buying them from deceased estates and cataloguing them, and we developed into a mail order type of operation.

I went to university but dropped out when my father needed another pair of hands. I soon realised I had the capacity to buy well. Books are a passion, but also a trade.

Noelene, my late wife, and I bought Bendooley in 1975. We were renting in Sydney with our three little boys, and an uncle who lived in Moss Vale said, "There's a place you should look at." I had just returned from a buying trip to England and seen how booksellers dealing in old and rare books like us had moved from central London and its exorbitant rents to the countryside. I knew that was the way we should take our business. We loved it here. The land and the 1839 sandstone house. People thought we were mad, starting a book business in a paddock, but today we probably have nearly one million books, some very rare and collectable. My sons Robert and David look after the Sydney stores, and Paul looks after the hospitality side here. Today, Bendooley includes the Book Barn restaurant, cellar door, the weddings, and our six new accommodation cottages. To do hospitality alongside bookselling is unusual and a great point of difference.'

berkelouw.com.au bendooleyestate.com.au

WAYNE MORRISEY AND ALI MENTESH RED COW FARM, SUTTON FOREST

Wayne Morrissey and Ali Mentesh fell in love with Red Cow Farm at Sutton Forest 27 years ago when it was a rundown cottage surrounded by a few bare paddocks. Now their magic Highlands country garden attracts visitors from around the world. 'We moved here from Bronte in Sydney looking for somewhere to escape the city life,' remembers Wayne.

'We wanted to make a permanent move but we weren't sure what we wanted in that move and where we would go. We just happened to be travelling round here one day, and there was this little derelict cottage, which had been built around the 1820s, saying please do something with me!

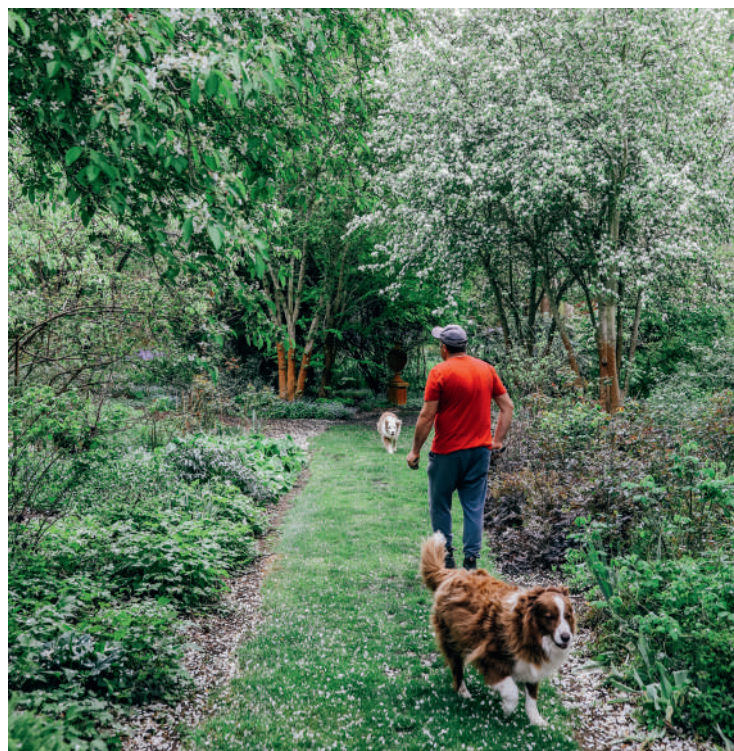
'Of course we never thought of having a garden on this scale, that sort of just happened. After we had moved in and spent a bit of money on the poor old cottage, we decided to plant different things around the front of it, and they just took. It sort of evolved from there into the six acres of different gardens we have today. Every winter we'd build another wall, or part thereof, and extend the garden, and once we really got into it we knew we had to form areas, or garden rooms, so to speak. Today we have 20 rooms, which include the monastery garden and the abbess's garden.

'We didn't really take inspiration from any garden designers. It was just very organic, divine madness I guess you'd say, because turning a cow paddock into what we always thought we wanted, an English country garden, was incredibly hard work. I guess, if anything, it's a lesson for younger generations about what you can achieve with hard work.

'The cool climate of the Highlands lends itself beautifully to what we wanted to plant. We mostly have perennials, many rare and unusual plants, hundreds of roses, and lovely old plants like forget-me-nots, lovelies waiting and bleeding hearts. Romantic flowers.

'We also have a beech walk, hedges, woodlands, an orchard with heritage apples, pears and cherries, and a lake with a bridge. We've been told that bit looks a bit like Monet's garden and although I knew he was an artist, I'd never read much about his garden beforehand.

'As I say, we don't really buy gardening books because it's your soul, really, that should tell you what to do and what to plant. When we started off, we did have a little formality, but I don't think you can have a garden that is too controlled. I think



we've enjoyed what it's become ... controlled chaos in a very deceiving space. It doesn't look like a lot from the road but then you come inside and you'll see it's full of nooks and crannies.

'We have Sebastian who helps us one day a week but apart from that, Ali and I do it all. And of course we have our border collies Pascale, Renard and Paris, and they are generally a big hit with the visitors.

'We get many repeat visitors who seem to come then return with friends, and also lots of people from overseas. So for the moment we keep on going, planting and working in the garden. It's our home and it's been a great love of ours. It's also been bliss making that change here from the city.'

redcowfarm.com.au



PEGGY MCDONALD & HIGHER GROUND RAPTORS, FITZROY FALLS

It's a measure of Peggy McDonald's dedication to her life's work, Higher Ground Raptors, that when she started looking for a patron, she wrote to Sir David Attenborough.

'I'm not sure if I expected him to reply really but one day not long after, I received an airmail letter,' says Peggy from her Fitzroy Falls Higher Ground Raptor headquarters.

'He said that while he loved what we are doing and how important our work is, he sadly must decline given his many other commitments and the distance. He did however give me some very helpful pointers, so I am currently on the lookout. I'll find the right person in time.'


Anyone who knows Peg doesn't doubt that for a moment. A Churchill Fellow, she is a respected authority on the rehabilitation of raptors, our predators of the skies, and has nursed and rehabilitated more than 1000. Eagles, kestrels, falcons, kites, goshawks, owls, they come to her hit by cars, shot by farmers, injured by flying into windows or caught in barbed wire.

At home in the Highlands, Higher Ground Raptors, the rehabilitation and education campus of Australian Raptor Care and Conservation Inc,

sits at the end of a quiet country road. A research and training facility for vet students, it is also where hundreds of sick and injured raptors are bought each year.

In 2014 with the help of Wingecarribee Shire Council and donors, Peggy built the Peter Spitzer Aviary, the biggest raptor rehabilitation facility of its kind in the Southern Hemisphere. It was named after her friend and the late local doctor and founder of Clown Doctors. 'This aviary allows the bird to recover at their own pace. Once I can see them performing naturally and well, those birds are released with hopefully the best chance to survive back out in the wild again.'

Peggy's next task is fundraising for an education centre on site. She is also working with National Parks & Wildlife to implement her Churchill findings. 'It's time we embrace the knowledge we have and start doing the very best by these birds. Places like the Abu Dhabi Falcon Hospital and the Minnesota Raptor Centre at the University of Minnesota in the US is they have vets on board, it's a whole raptor rehab centre. My perfect dream would be that this would all turn into that one day.'

To donate or get in touch with Peggy
highergroundraptors.com 



Support our Southern Highlands... Help us by spoiling yourself!

Our Southern Highlands community has been greatly impacted by bushfires, floods and the pandemic. So now more than ever we'd love you to "Share the Love" in support of our region. Many of our businesses are still open and many have created fantastic survival packs for you to savour. Spoil yourself with a taste of the Southern Highlands.

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2 Buy a Survival Pack



visitsouthernhighlands.com.au/deals/survival-packs

3 #SharetheLove



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