

A fence full of happy soles at Tyrendarra



Katrina Maybery with the ‘shoe fence’ that started by tying just four pairs of shoes to her front fence in Tyrendarra. Image: Bluestone Magazine.

Words and photos: Carol Altmann

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[/dropcap]he most famous “online” shoe display in south-west Victoria is [strung out along a farm fence](#) in Tyrendarra – but how did it start?

Bluestone decided to take a detour while returning from the [gannet gawk-and-talk](#) in Portland to find out and, despite turning up unannounced, was given a cheerful welcome and the full rundown by owner **Katrina Maybery**.

Katrina and her husband **Heath** live on the Princes Highway property with their two daughters **Tahlia** and **Madeleine**, and it

is with Tahlia and Madeleine that the story begins.

“We were travelling in New Zealand and saw a fence like this, with shoes tied right along it, and I thought it would be a fun thing to do,” Katrina says.

“So we started it about four years ago, by tying four pairs of worn out shoes owned by our girls.”

The four pairs of shoes became a sort of Pied Piper for passers-by, silently urging them to follow suite and tie up one of their own pieces of footwear.

And they did: by the hundreds.

“I think we would have at least a couple of thousand,” Katrina says with a laugh as she surveys the layers of dangling shoes.

“I know that we have to keep mowing the lawn further and further along!”



Many of the shoes have been decorated or carry messages for those passing by. Image: Bluestone Magazine.

[dropcap style="font-size: 60px; color: #ABCCAB;"] I
[/dropcap]n only the way that shoes can, the fence captures a thousand stories behind the boots and heels, thongs and sneakers, slippers and gumboots. They are in all shapes and sizes – from steel capped work boots to a child’s slipper – and together form a piece of art that is always changing.

“Some people have decorated theirs before hanging it, others leave messages on them for someone they know will be passing by,” Katrina says.

Even as we talk, a man pulls over to take a snap of the fence before waving a cheerful “hello” and driving on.

From the hundreds of shoes that have been donated, there have been some standouts.

“We had a pair of cowboy boots once. They were beautiful, but somebody stole them off the fence,” Katrina says.

“And there was fellow who was closing his shoe store in Port Fairy and he bought out boxes of shoes and boots that he couldn’t sell because they were a bit dated, but he also didn’t want to throw them out – that’s some of them over there,” she says, pointing to a pair of women’s boots with pristine soles.



Soles and tongues and laces for as far as the eye can see. The fence now holds several thousand pieces of footwear. Image: Bluestone Magazine.

[dropcap style="font-size: 60px; color: #ABCCAB;"] I
[/dropcap]n a lovely twist, Katrina once ran a home-based, online shoe store specialising in children's shoes but life became too busy to keep it operating. The sign for her business now hangs on the fence as quirky joke.

The shoe fence, which is directly opposite the turn-off to the road that leads to the Fitzroy River campground, is part of Katrina's push to better promote Portland to tourists.

Just recently, a huge promotional road sign for Portland has been erected on the Maybury property, with their blessing.

"I think the Portland area has so much going for it and I am doing what I can to promote it to visitors," Katrina says.

There is no doubt that the shoe fence is doing its bit to get tongues wagging.

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