

Starting a new life, right off the bat

Most people know him for his cricket or his cooking, but the story behind Jayaweera “Bundy” Bandara is also one of starting over to build a new life in Warrnambool...

Behold this bluestone beauty



A labour of love: Ben and Helen Fennessy spent a year measuring up what lay ahead before deciding to take on the restoration of a rundown Rosebrook property that is now their home.

[dropcap style="font-size: 60px; color: #A5CECD;"]T[/dropcap]aking on the restoration of a bluestone

cottage in a rugged coastal landscape may sound romantic, but it is not a task to be taken lightly.

Artist **Ben Fennessy** and his wife **Helen**, who writes, spent a year deciding whether or not to buy a ramshackle, rundown dump on five acres that overlooked the Belfast Lough at Rosebrook, near Port Fairy, and turning it into a home.

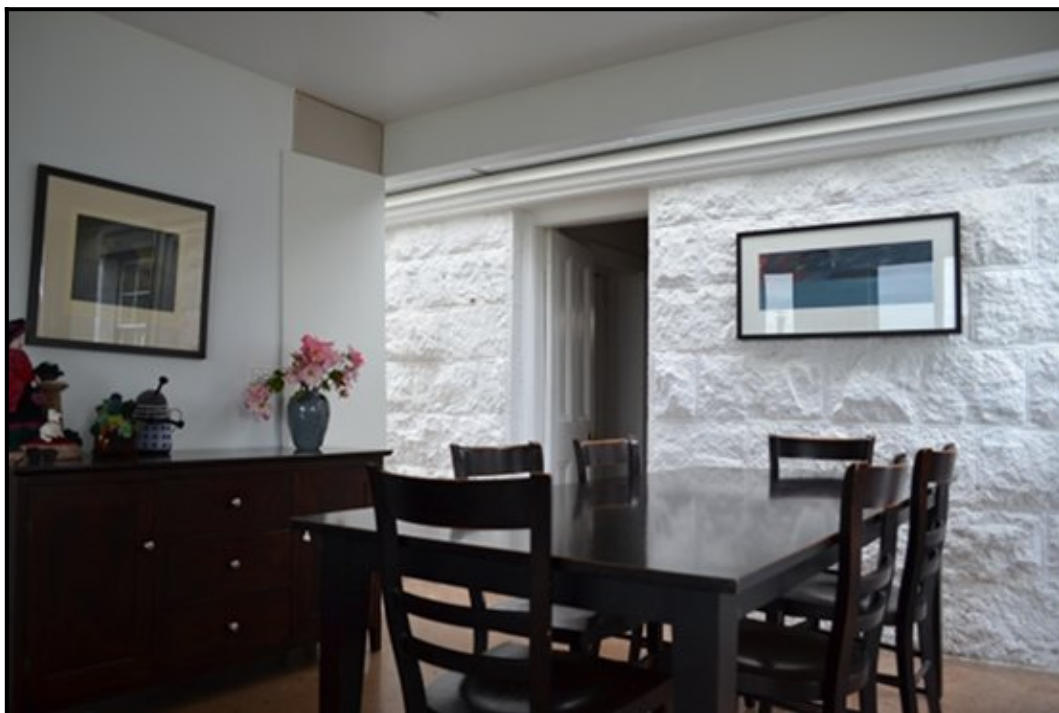
The historic bluestone cottage and assorted add ons and out-buildings had been on the market for five years – five years! – when the Fennessy's happened upon it during one of their visits to Port Fairy from their former home in the Otways.



The house sat unloved for years before the Fennessy's took over.



The original kitchen ...



The same space as it looks today.

[dropcap style="font-size: 60px; color: #A5CECD;"] I
[dropcap]t took a special vision to see the beauty beneath
the ugliness of the place, which had suffered from a
combination of poor building extensions, a lack of maintenance
and a series of tenants that showed little respect for the
property, if not outright neglect.

(The state of the house was summed up when the Fennessy's later removed boards covering the fireplaces and found piles of dirty nappies).

"It was very, very rundown and fairly hideous when we first saw it six years ago," Ben said.

"We walked away for a year, but we kept coming back to it in our minds, thinking that it had really great potential, but that it would take a lot of work."

The extent of the task ahead was laid bare in an Archicentre report that, Helen said, "ran to several pages".

"The roof was being held up by tomato stakes," she said, laughing at the memory.



Out with the Besser block extension: Helen Fennessy hard at work during the renovations...



And in with a light-filled, bluestone extension designed by Tim McLeod and that overlooks the Belfast Lough.

[dropcap style="font-size: 60px; color: #A5CECD;"] U
[/dropcap]nderneath all of the half-baked renovations, however, sat a sweet, four-room bluestone cottage that, despite all of its terrible makeovers, was as solid as the day it was built some time in 1856 as the engineer's house for the local mill at Rosebrook.

"The original bluestone was actually in good nick, so we brought it back to that original footprint," Ben said.

Over a two-year period, the Fennessy's tore down a parasitic, 1970s extension at the rear of the cottage, restored the original cottage and added a magnificent big-windowed, light-filled space – designed by Warrnambool architect **Tim McLeod** – that overlooks the lough.

The result is a character-filled blend of the very old and the ultra modern – but the story doesn't end there.



Clare meet Rosie, Rosie meet Clare: an old railway building and carriage have been converted into a self-contained living space.

[dropcap style="font-size: 60px; color: #A5CECD;"] B
[/dropcap]en's eye for the quirky has seen two more fascinating additions that, together, form a separate, self-contained living space for their daughter and ceramic artist, [Clare Fennessy](#).

Clare's lounge room, small kitchen and bathroom is housed in a pre-fab railway building originally from the Warrnambool Railway Station that, when Ben found it, was being used as a hayshed out in a paddock.

"Rosie", as the railway shed is now known, snuggles neatly against an antique railway carriage that dates back to 1911 and was once used to transport refrigerated goods. It is now Clare's bedroom, complete with a roof insulated by horse hair.

"I'd seen it sitting in a paddock at Illowa and so I approached the owners and asked if they wanted to sell it," Ben explained.

“It was being used as a fertiliser shed at the time.”

With the property finished, and two alpacas installed in the surrounding paddocks to keep the grass down, the Fenessys need only enjoy the inspiring space: perfect for such creative souls.



After many years of hard work, the renovation and restoration is complete.



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It started with two eggs: the story of Pip



By Carol Altmann

[dropcap style="font-size: 60px; color: #DDCE8D;"] T
[/dropcap]o some people, the destiny of a sand plover sitting on a nest probably doesn't mean all that much, but *Bluestone* supporters are different to most people.

We know this because of how they – perhaps including you – responded to our efforts to protect one small plover that had made the decision to nest in dry sand about 150 metres from the Hopkins River bridge, right where fishermen, walkers and plenty of energetic, beach-excited dogs like to roam.

In fact I was roaming when my big clodhopper shoe nearly wiped

out the two speckled eggs that were so well camouflaged as to be almost invisible. (Mama bird was nowhere to be seen at the time: she had probably popped to the shops).

Thinking the eggs were abandoned, I admired them and moved on.



[dropcap style="font-size: 60px; color: #DDCE8D;"] T
[/dropcap]he next day, however, I was roaming again (I do that a lot, in the mornings) and Mama bird was draped over the eggs like a woman wearing a feathery ball gown: and so the quest to protect "Pip" and her eggs began.

We thought this would involve no more than a visit to Parks Victoria who would be able to protect the nest by roping off the area and banging a few signs into the sand, just as we had seen at other coastal nesting sites around Victoria.

But unfortunately Pip's GPS was off.

If she had nested on the actual foreshore, another 750 metres away, she would have been in the domain of Parks Victoria. Instead, she was in a sort of no-birds-land that, upon

investigation, was found to be managed by the local council.

The council, unfortunately, was up to its neck with other things – things obviously much bigger than Pip – and was unable to respond with the haste that we had hoped.



[dropcap style="font-size: 60px; color: #DDCE8D;"] W
[/dropcap]hile we waited for the cavalry to arrive, we made our own signs – from whatever we could find – and rigged up a very non-convincing fence using bits of old rope.

Days ticked by, during which *Bluestone* began to post “Pip” updates on its [Facebook](#) page and hundreds of people began to follow our progress, or lack thereof.

As the days turned into more than a week, we checked our fence and our signs and were constantly amazed that, despite some horrendous weather, both continued to hold.



[dropcap style="font-size: 60px; color: #DDCE8D;"] W
[/dropcap]e were also constantly amazed by how many of our readers wanted to know how Pip was faring – she was fast turning into a minor celebrity (although without an agent).

Last Wednesday – 13 days after Pip’s nest was first discovered – the council was finally able to stake out her nesting zone with string and wooden posts, and erect two serious-looking signs.

We have no doubt that the [Bluestone FB page](#) helped that to happen and just in time, as on Sunday (yesterday) the river was packed with people and dogs enjoying the first day of Summer.



[dropcap style="font-size: 60px; color: #DDCE8D;"]S[/dropcap]omething else happened over the weekend too.

Our first Pip-ette.

The second, we have no doubt, is not far behind and both Pip and her partner (Pat?) are sharing the nesting and chick-watching responsibilities.

Thankyou Bluestone supporters – we have made a small but important difference.



The 'Bluestone baby' – between Mum and Dad – shortly after hatching at the weekend.

[box] Unlike many young birds, sand plovers are self-sufficient from the moment they leave the egg. They are not fed directly by their parents, but collect their own food (under the protective eye of Mum or Dad) and spend most of their time hiding in the sand dunes until they are old enough to borrow the car keys.[/box]

Do you enjoy Bluestone? Please [subscribe](#) so we can continue to grow.



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[Windy? Let's make the most of it!](#)

On the road with the Schoolies

[dropcap style="font-size: 60px; color: #A5CECD;"] L
[/dropcap]ast week for our Quiet Hero we brought you [the inspiring story](#) of the Year 12 students from **Bayview College, in Portland**, who have chosen a fantastic way to celebrate the end of their secondary schooling.

Instead of spending "Schoolies" getting drunk and partying until their clothes start to shred, these Year 12 students have headed to Vietnam for "Schoolies with a Cause".

They are spending their time not only exploring another culture so different to their own, but are bending their backs helping on various work projects at the Thanh Loc School.

This week, for something a little different, we decided to share some images from the [Schoolies with a Cause Facebook page](#) so you can see the students in action.

[slideshow_deploy id='3096']

What a great addition to your resume as a graduating Year 12 student – choosing to spend Schoolies helping out people less

fortunate than yourself.

(And thankyou, again, to **Katy Sullivan** from the [Pickled Pelican in Portland](#) for providing us with our coffee and cake vouchers to give two of the key people involved in this project, **Rod Stone** and **Nicole Reefman**.)



Read about more of our Quiet Heroes...

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[Susie Alexander fights cancer...and aims for a fun run](#)

**Australian stories for
Australian kids**



[dropcap style="font-size: 60px; color: #A02F2F;"] D
[/dropcap]o you remember growing up and reading a pile of adventure books that, as wonderful as they were, all featured characters from places other than Australia?

The Secret Seven, Mr Biggles, Treasure Island, Peter Rabbit, Alice in Wonderland, The Diary of Adrian Mole and even *Harry Potter*...all classics, but all British.

Today, however, there are so many terrific Australian young children's authors and the personalities, history and culture of Australia are front and centre of the storyline.

For this week's Bookmarks, **Michaelie Clark**, from **Warrnambool Books**, has chosen the latest in a series of hugely popular books aimed at young Australian girls:

[dropcap style="font-size: 60px; color: #A02F2F;"] '
[/dropcap]The ***Our Australian Girl*** books have been hugely popular in the South West over the last year, and the newest collection is proving to be no exception.

With the fourth book in the 'Lina' set, *A Lesson for Lina*, recently released, the story of the young Italian-Australian girl who dreams of being a writer is now complete. As with the

other *Our Australian Girl* books, Lina's story is a fictional tale set in a real place and time in Australia's history, with this collection centred around mid-1950s Melbourne.

(*A Lesson for Lina* is set in 1956 – any idea what event in Melbourne it might feature?)

Each of the collections (there are six so far) in the *Our Australian Girl* series is penned by a different author. The 'Lina' collection has been written by much-loved Melbourne author **Sally Rippin**, making it a stand-out in a stellar series."

Ps. The *Our Australian Girl* series will have an equivalent series aimed at boys – *Do you Dare?* – that will be released early next year.



Author Sally Rippin has written more than 50 children's books, including the Lina series. Image:

www.sallyrippin.com

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