

# A renovation on a grand scale: 222 Timor

Step inside: The Taylor family has restored and renovated an 1850s building with incredible results...

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**Oh Biba, look at you now!**



The transformation of 222 Timor St, Warrnambool continues, with a new hairdressing salon filling the bottom floor. Image courtesy of [Sinead Murphy](#).



As it was before the transformation by Luke and Nat Taylor began early last year.

[dropcap style="font-size: 60px; color: #A02F2F;"] L  
[ /dropcap]ate last year, Bluestone Magazine [captured the transformation](#) of 222 Timor St, Warrnambool, from a derelict heritage-listed building to a wonderful, character-filled space that was ripe for a new tenant.

And while the building is still not completely finished – owners **Luke and Nat Taylor** have plans for an apartment and residence on the top floor – it has started a new chapter in its 164-year history with the arrival of the upmarket hairdressing salon, [Biba](#).

It is the first Biba to be opened outside of metropolitan Melbourne and marks a return to Warrnambool for owner, **Mia Nicolson**, who had previously worked at [Paris Hair and Beauty](#) in East Warrnambool.



Mia Nicolson, left, has made a conscious decision to keep the character of the building...while adding some quirky and funky touches. Image courtesy [Sinead Murphy](http://www.sinead-murphy.com/) (<http://www.sinead-murphy.com/>)

[dropcap style="font-size: 60px; color: #A02F2F;"] M  
[dropcap]ia has made a conscious effort to capture the character of the old building, while adding some very modern and funky touches.

There is a vintage barber's chair (picked up from the Mailors Flat secondhand store), a heavy work bench from Melbourne, and old wooden boxes from Ponting Bros that Mia found in her grandmother's stables, but also an eye-catching, off-beat mural by local artist [Felix Pilling](#) that dominates one wall of the colour bar. Recycled leadlight glass enhances an antique window in the same room.

"Biba salons have an industrial look, so I have added some of those industrial features while also linking in to the heritage aspects of the building," Mia explains.



The series of photos below capture the full transformation. The Biba images were taken by talented graphic designer and photographer **Sinead Murphy** who has kindly given us permission to reproduce them here. (You can find Sinead's [website here](#).)



Nat and Luke Taylor, with son Lewis, in the front room of the building early last year.



The same space today is almost unrecognisable and forms the main entrance to the salon. The vintage barber's chair is to the left and the old workbench doubles as a reception desk.



As it was: the back room behind the main salon space.



The same space converted into a 'colour room', complete with the leadlight-enhanced antique window.



One long wall of the colour room now features a mural by local artist, [Felix Pilling](#).



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# Secrets of an old shoe



[box] Bluestone Magazine recently brought you the story of [the rejuvenation of 222 Timor St, Warrnambool](#). This week, we tell the story of one fascinating find during its restoration.[/box]

[dropcap style="font-size: 60px; color: #A99E90;"] 0  
[/dropcap]ld shoes, perhaps more than any other item of clothing, have the power to tell stories.

What is the story behind a single shoe discarded by the roadside? Did it land there by accident, through misfortune, or part of prank?

We throw old shoes over powerlines and tie them to wedding



cars, and we refer to shoes in our folklore and our fairytales: “if the shoe fits, wear it”; Cinderella and the famous glass slipper.

Old shoes are personal. They hold an imprint – a literal *footprint* – of their owner that cannot be replicated and makes them so hard to throw away, especially when they were once worn by a loved one who has also gone.

Some shoes can outlive us, surviving for centuries beneath the dirt and rubble of demolished homes and ruined cities until they are at last unearthed by new activity.



How 222 Timor St, Warrnambool, used to look in 1968.  
(Image: J.T. Collins Collection, La Trobe Picture Collection, State Library of Victoria.)

[dropcap style="font-size: 60px; color: #A99E90;"] A [dropcap] shoe that had been hidden for possibly more than 70 years was recently found at my grandmother's former property at 222 Timor St, Warrnambool, opposite Swinton's supermarket. It was the house in which my mother spent a large part of her childhood.

It is also one of the oldest commercial buildings in Warrnambool and is believed to have been built around 1850.

As we wrote about [earlier this month](#), the building recently passed into new hands and its long-hidden secrets are being slowly uncovered: a hidden doorway down to the cellar, shoebox-size windows that had been boarded up and wallpapered over, and a child's single leather boot that had been placed under the floorboards.

The boot is about 18cm long, with tacks around its sole and seven pairs of metal eyelets securing a cloth shoelace.



The old floorboards in 222 Timor have revealed their own secrets. Image courtesy Luke Taylor.

[dropcap style="font-size: 60px; color: #A99E90;"] I [/dropcap] thought it might have belonged to my now 89-year-old mother, but when I showed her the boot, she suggested it had most likely been hidden under the floorboards by a boot repairer – a Mr Long – who had rented part of the property from her father in the 1930s.

My mother told me she had read an article in the *Reader's Digest* about shoe superstitions, including the placing of a shoe under floorboards for good luck. I couldn't trace the *Reader's Digest* article, but an [online article](#) by British shoe historian June Swann confirmed that in Britain, in particular, it was not uncommon for a shoe to be hidden somewhere in a house to bring stability and good luck to the household.

Hiding a child's shoe – in either a wall, chimney or under the floorboards – was also believed to increase fertility.

Perhaps Mr Long, if he did hide the boot, hoped it would bring prosperity to his business. Or perhaps it wasn't Mr Long at all, but a previous owner of 222 Timor St who stowed the boot away for good luck.

The full story is yet to be revealed and the boot, of course, is holding its tongue.

[box] A version of this story first appeared in the Warrnambool & District Historical Society newsletter, *Warnimble*, April 2013. The new owners of 222 Timor St, Luke and Nat Taylor, plan to hide one of their children's shoes in the restored building...for good luck. [/box]

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# Restoring a treasure back to life



Behind the renovation of 222 Timor St, Warrnambool: Luke and Nat Taylor, with their son Lucas. They have since had another child, Penny.

**A**fter years of decay, the old piano shop opposite Swintons, in Warrnambool, is being brought back to life by a young lawyer who has taken on a restoration project of monumental proportions.

Luke Taylor, and his wife Nat, bought the double-storey, derelict building at 222 Timor St more than 12 months ago with the intention of turning it into an investment, but what they didn't count on was just *how* much hard work would be involved, or how much they would come to love the old place.

“At first it was very much about building an investment for the future, rather than being passionate about restoring an



old building, but that has completely changed,” Luke said.



BEFORE: The front left room was restored from top to bottom, including the ceiling, floorboards and walls.



AFTER...

[dropcap style="font-size: 60px; color: #A02F2F;"] A  
[/dropcap] turning point was when architect Peter Brooks, from Heritage Victoria, visited for an on-site assessment of the

property, which is listed with the National Trust and Heritage Victoria as a significant building. Where most saw a decaying hulk that had to be restored from the ground-up, Peter saw an historic and precious gem.

“He was blown away by it,” Luke explained. “There are basically so few properties like this that are still in their original condition and have not been modified or altered in any significant way. Peter’s enthusiasm and excitement about that was infectious.”

The sandstone building is the oldest, intact commercial building in Warrnambool and dates back to around 1850. It has had many lives since then, including as a piano repair shop owned by my grandfather, Bill Goodall, who bought it in 1932. It was largely because Bill never had an spare money for renovations that the building has remained unchanged, perhaps apart from the wallpaper: Luke removed nine layers from each of the rooms.



BEFORE: Layers of wallpaper and plaster had to be removed and damp walls dried out as part of the renovation.



AFTER...the 'lounge room' has been given a new lease of life.

[dropcap style="font-size: 60px; color: #A02F2F;"]L[/dropcap>uke and a group of skilled, local tradesmen have spent countless hours since February slowly bringing the place back to life, and it has been backbreaking work. Floorboards have been lifted, replaced and then the old ones recycled. Barrow loads of dirt and dust and debris have been removed. Leaks have been plugged, walls re-plastered, windows replaced...and on it goes. And then some.

"The tradesmen have been amazing, because everything was crooked and had to be made square again," Luke said.

Luke has taken only two weekends off since taking on the project, including one weekend when his second child, Penny, was born.

"I have spent so many hours in the building, and because I have spent so much time there, on my own, I have really come to appreciate it and feel the emotion of it," he said.





**BEFORE:** The 1850s building was rundown, but still in much of its original condition when the Taylors bought it last year.



**AFTER:** Hours of back-breaking work have seen the shop



slowly restored to how it would have looked in the mid 1800s, right down to the colour scheme.

[dropcap style="font-size: 60px; color: #A02F2F;"] I [[/dropcap]t is this emotional connection that has pushed Luke through what he calls the “dark times,” when the job ahead seemed overwhelming. He has also applied the same disciplined approach that he uses for his triathlons – one step at a time.

“It has been a huge challenge, a huge amount of work, but we are breathing new life into the building. It may look plain, but it represents an era and reflects that time,” Luke said.

The bottom storey of the building will have a tenant by the end of this month, but it will be another year before a residence and a serviced apartment upstairs are complete. Luke is determined to see it through.

“The way I see it is that if Nat and I can do this, what can’t we do?”

[box] 222 Timor St, Warrnambool had been painted cream for many years, but this was not its original colour. The new salmon-pink and burgundy facade reflects the original colour scheme that was uncovered by peeling back layers of paint. Pig’s blood was often used to tint paint in the 1800s, reflecting a step-up from the whitewash used on working class cottages.[/box]



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