

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](#).



You might also enjoy...

[T-shirt captures the infamous 'Cri'](#)

[Who is the Granny behind Granny's Grave?](#)

[Who will step up for Fletcher Jones?](#)

[Art is the heart of old Hawkesdale home](#)

[Behold this bluestone beauty: Fennessy's at Rosebrook](#)

[Colonial oven still makes a crust, Dunkeld](#)

[Secrets of an old shoe](#)

Who is the 'Granny' behind Granny's Grave?



The mystery behind “Granny” of Granny’s Grave has finally been unravelled.

By Carol Altmann

One of Warrnambool’s most enduring mysteries has been the identity of the “Granny” buried at Granny’s Grave high in the sand hills of Lady Bay and now, more than 165 years after her death, she is to finally have due recognition.

The Warrnambool City Council will add a plaque to the grave site by the end of June that will correct a long-standing error that named “Granny” as **Mrs James Raddleston** – the name inscribed on the headstone – and confirm that she was in fact **Agnes Ruttleton**.

Very little was known about Agnes Ruttleton beyond the perfunctory details etched into her headstone that told us she died in 1848 and was the “first white woman buried in Warrnambool” which at that time was still part of NSW.

Bluestone, however, has pulled together the threads uncovered by various researchers to tell her full story.

We began with a bunch of history books and a visit to the [Warrnambool & District Historical Society](#) that holds a thin manila folder on Granny’s Grave which contains the bare bones of her life and identity.



The Granny’s Grave band in the 1980s: Teejay Netherway, (left) Peter ‘Prof’ Walters, Eric ‘Coogee’ Read (drums) and John ‘Marra’ Maroniti (image: South-West TAFE archive).

The books and clippings reveal that Agnes and her husband – who was incorrectly named as a **James Raddleston** – lived in a tent somewhere near Flagstaff Hill in 1847-48 and eked out an existence through odd jobs and selling crayfish. At that time,

Warrnambool was just a speck, with the first land sales having been held in 1847 and its population at around 100.

Among the first people to buy land was **Richard Osburne**, the newspaper publisher and historian, who at the age of 22 bought a block on the corner of Kelp and Merri streets not far from where Agnes and James were living. Richard knew Agnes as “Granny”, probably because of her age (more on that later) and, it appears, became quite emotionally attached to the “old” woman.

When Agnes died in 1848, Osburne is named among a group of men who organised for a coffin and a funeral service to be held at a burial spot in the isolated dunes, as Warrnambool did not yet have a cemetery. A fence was built around her grave but years of scarifying wind, rain and shifting sands saw the fence – and entire gravesite – eventually disappear from view.

Indeed Osburne was mortified when he returned to Warrnambool in 1886 and despite “walking and walking” he was unable to find Granny Raddleston’s final resting place.

“I tired myself from the search,” he wrote in a letter to the local paper.



Granny's bluestone headstone was finally erected in 1904 – more than 50 years after her death.

Osburne used his letter to implore the council to erect a proper headstone in honour of one of Warrnambool's pioneering women, but nothing was done for almost another 20 years when, in 1904, a group of citizens raised funds for the bluestone headstone that stands today.

(In the intervening years, an anonymous resident used a piece from the 1888 wreck of the *Edinburgh* to mark Granny's Grave – perhaps as a subtle hint for the council to hurry up.)

When the headstone was finally unveiled, it had Agnes reduced to "Mrs James Raddleston", a person who did not technically exist, although it was not uncommon for name spellings to be mangled through either mis-spellings, poor handwriting or mispronunciation. Raddleston had been recorded as Rittleton, Ruttleton and Raddlestone.

And this is where **Jenny Fawcett**, from Warrnambool, comes in.



Researcher Jenny Fawcett in her library: she has devoted more than 20 years to uncovering the stories and mysteries of the south-west coast, including that of Granny's Grave.

To call Jenny an amateur historian is a gross understatement: she is researcher unlike any other we have met before. Jenny has devoted hours of her time, driven by personal passion rather than profit, researching the history and characters of the south-west Victorian coast.

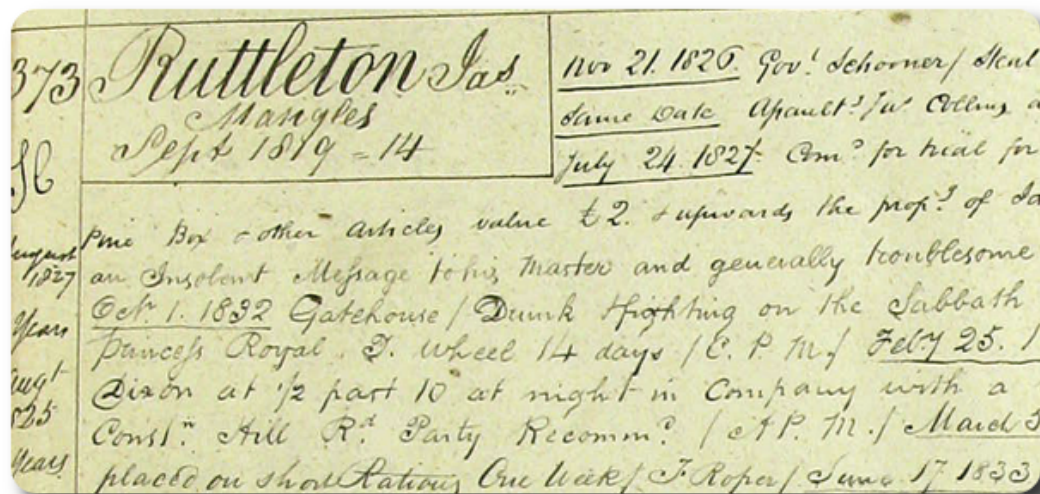
Her files are extraordinary, and her recall of individual details and events is mind-boggling.

It is Jenny who has reached back through time to find that Agnes Raddleston is Agnes Ruttleton and, in so doing, uncovered how James and Agnes came to be in Warrnambool.

"I like unravelling the mystery behind an individual, and Granny's Grave is one of those stories that just had to be

unravelling," she said.

Through meticulous searching of convict records, Jenny traced **James Ruttleton** as an English boatman who was sentenced to 14 years for stealing and transported to Australia in 1820 – first to NSW, and later, after escaping, to Hobart Town. He was 31 years old.



Tasmanian convict records track the story of James Ruttleton, who was sentenced to 14 years for stealing.

After a variety of indiscretions, James was finally granted his Certificate of Freedom in 1834 and settled into a life in Tasmania.

Somewhere along the way, he met Agnes. Jenny has not been able to uncover her maiden name, or whether she was a convict too, but there is no record of James ever marrying.

"Maybe they were already married when he was sentenced and she joined him in Australia later, which could happen, or perhaps they were never married at all," Jenny said.

What we do know, thanks to Jenny's research, is that the pair sailed from Tasmania to Port Fairy on board the *Essington* in November 1846 and are listed as James and Agnes Ruttleton.

Both were then aged in their late 50s, but Jenny believes James may have been lured by the opportunity of better work. The Geelong and Portland Bay Immigration Society – which included Port Fairy – was keen to bring in labour.

Ruttleton	Agnes	Passenger	Essington	9 November 1846	George Town	Port Fairy	CSO95/1/1 p364
Ruttleton	James	Passenger	Essington	9 November 1846	George Town	Port Fairy	CSO95/1/1 p364
Scanlon	Bryan	Passenger	Essington	9 November 1846	George Town	Port Fairy	CSO95/1/1 p364

Shipping records show the Ruttleton's among the passengers on board the *Essington* bound for Port Fairy in 1846.

It appears the new opportunity didn't quite work out, however, with James and Agnes living in virtual poverty for their final years.

Agnes died only 12 months after they arrived, at the age of 60, on December 13, 1848.

Agnes was also not the first white woman to die in the area.

Landholder John Allan (from Allansford fame), lost his first wife Jemima in 1842 and buried her on an island in the Hopkins River. There were most likely other deaths among the original sealers and settlers.

Agnes was, however, perhaps the first white woman to be buried in the newly proclaimed area of Warrnambool.

James Ruttleton died three years after Agnes, on June 15, 1851, and is buried in the Port Fairy cemetery...his death

certificate incorrectly names him as John.

While Warrnambool's infamous "Pioneers Board" (now housed in the library) doesn't include any female pioneers among its faces, the Granny's Grave plaque will recognise at least one of the many brave women who ventured to what was then nothing more than a tiny settlement behind the sand dunes.

The Grave by the Sea, Warrnambool

(called Granny's Grave)

Le vent se lève! . . . il faut tenter de vivre

Valery

Mrs James Raddlestone, forgotten by her age
plays hostess to our love of memories
under her basalt headstone.

The huge dune slanting toward the sea
hunches each winter further under the grave
the district council erected to mark her death
in 1848 — 'the first white woman
to die in Warrnambool'.

Wind teases the strands of marram grass
sand sifts through its roots, trickled in a fine
winnowing comb of almost invisible dust.
The grave is lifting bodily with the dune.
From here the curve of the bay seems as remote
as 1848 — the breakwater
a pencil stroke across sunset, and the black
verticals of surfers, lost between land and sea
are figures almost vanishing on a mirror.

In 1848 Europe was on fire
barricades manned, revolution raised its brief
but determined flag. How Mrs Raddlestone died
or even when she was born, nobody seems to
know—

but whether she died in childbirth or disease,
was drowned, fell from a horse, or passed away
surrounded by praying grandchildren, one thing is
clear—

coming here was rebellion and not kind.
Whether she came as a convict or came free
she quit the hulk of Europe as it drove
irreversibly on to 1848 and she
came finally aground on this vast wave of sand
deaf to the rattle of rifles and the tramp
of cavalry on the cobbles she had quit.

Her freedom here was to live a life of the sea
where the land's edge rises in great waves
in the punishing wind. I can hear it tonight
the wind in the trees crashing down like surf
and even the campground rises every year
on a tide of sand blown in by the winter gales.
To leave some village in Devon dense with elms
or a cramped alley like a mouthful of bad teeth
to die here was rebellion. The black headstone
poised like a solitary surfer rides the wave
of approaching winter. A fine drift of sand
is blowing and the marram inscribes inane
circles of grief and panic about her grave
where the wind is rising, and she tried to live.

Andrew Taylor

In researching this story, we uncovered a rare and beautiful poem about Granny's Grave by Professor Andrew Taylor, who was born in Warrnambool. *The Grave by the Sea, Warrnambool* was first published in Quadrant Magazine in March 1981. Prof Taylor has kindly granted us permission to reprint his poem in full here. We would also like to thank Dr Simon Cooper for his efforts in finding a copy of the poem that, being written pre-computers, Prof Taylor did not even have. He does now!

Close Flagstaff Hill; save Fletcher Jones

If there is one thing Warrnambool needs to get right, it is the preservation of Pleasant Hill and the Fletcher Jones site...so why are we spending so much time, money and effort on Flagstaff Hill instead?

Keeping the spirit of Fletcher Jones alive



Pleasant Hill in its prime in the 1970s. Image: Corangamite Regional Library Corporation. Copyright 2004.

It says a lot about the importance of the **Fletcher Jones gardens** to Warrnambool that even though the Raglan Parade factory has fallen silent and into disrepair, the gardens continue to hold on.

“Pleasant Hill” was once a major tourist attraction for the city, with busloads of visitors pulling up to the kerb and pouring out to take photographs, while locals all have their favourite memories of the beautifully landscaped gardens: the fish pond, the stepping stones, the wishing well, the sun-warmed cement turtle, the archways, the mosaic ‘basket’ garden bed, the tall man in the white trousers who advertised Fletcher Jones menswear.

The gardens were established over a period of years after Fletcher Jones first selected the site – a disused quarry – for his factory in 1948. And while they are a shadow of what they were in their prime, when up to eight full-time gardeners were employed, the fact they are maintained at all is quite incredible.



Fletcher Jones gardens volunteers: Lester Campbell (left), Philomena Headen, Don McLean and Lex Caldwell.

[dropcap style="font-size: 60px; color: #A02F2F;"] F
[/dropcap]or this we can thank our **Quiet Heroes** for the week: **Lex Caldwell**, who oversees the gardens in exchange for living in a cottage on site, and a small, rotating team of volunteers who turn up each Tuesday morning to weed, mulch, mow or do whatever else needs to be done.

When we visited, the volunteer crew included **Don McLean**, **Lester Campbell** and **Philomena Headen** who were hard at work weeding one of the garden beds and picking up bits of broken glass.

Imagine how the place would look without them?

[box]The FJ gardens crew will receive a coffee and cake voucher from [Lozzar's Lounge Cafe, 52a Kepler St Warrnambool](#). Thankyou to owners Loretta and Phil for supporting this week's Quiet Heroes.[/box]



Meet some of our other quiet heroes...

[Tackling a hidden terror: Pat McLaren](#)

[A life-changing adventure: Schoolies with a Cause](#)

[A winner for Woodford: Tania Ferris](#)

[United we stand – Wbool Uniting Church](#)

[Kylie Thulborn – pushing boundaries](#)

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](#).

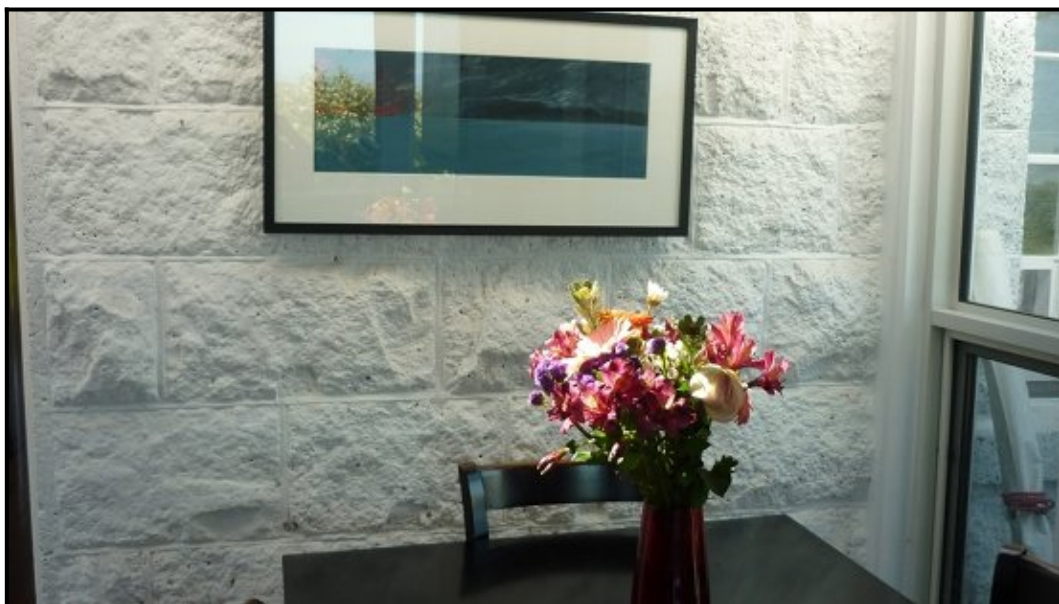
Clare's lounge room, small kitchen and bathroom is housed in a pre-fab railway building originally from the Warrnambool Railway Station that, when Ben found it, was being used as a hayshed out in a paddock.

"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 Fennessys need only enjoy the inspiring space: perfect for such creative souls.



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



If you enjoyed this story, you might enjoy...

[Colonial oven still makes a crust, Dunkeld](#)

[Secrets of an old shoe](#)

[Restoring a treasure back to life: 222 Timor St Warrnambool](#)

['Glass' house has a new beginning](#)