

The pot, the shell dolly and the bower bird

Clinton Krause: visiting the amazing Drylie collection.

Tony's collection is top drawer

Former second-hand dealer **TONY DRYLIE** is a natural collector of unique and interesting objects, but when it comes to choosing a particularly special collection, he couldn't go past his set of small drawers:



Tony Drylie, of Warrnambool, has been collecting small

drawers for 30 years and loves the unique character of each piece.

[dropcap style="font-size: 60px; color: #ABCCAB;"] T
[/dropcap]hey say necessity is the mother of all invention and a collection of small drawers and cabinets demonstrates how “storage needs” were dealt with well before Bunnings or Mitre 10.

Former Warrnambool second-hand dealer **Tony Drylie** has been collecting unique miniature drawers and cabinets for about 30 years and has more than a dozen, one-off pieces that span more than a century.

“The first one I bought was a birthday present for my wife, Claire, and it went from there,” he said, pointing to the beautiful kauri pine miniature wardrobe that remains one of the most striking pieces in his collection.

The wardrobe is not a functional piece, but perhaps a practice item for an apprentice. Others in the collection, however, were built purely for utilitarian purposes.

A series of steel sardine cans (remember them?) have been recycled into a series of small drawers for nails and screws, another was built as a rustic first aid kit and medicine cabinet, while another, much more refined-looking cabinet was designed to contain smoking pipes and tobacco: it even comes with a lock and key.



A selection from Tony's collection, including the recycled sardine can drawers and the more upmarket pipe and tobacco storage cabinet.

[dropcap style="font-size: 60px; color: #ABCCAB;"] T
[dropcap]ony believes the oldest pieces date back to the late 1800s, while others reflect the Great Depression, when everything was re-used and recycled, including old industrial crates and boxes that were turned into furniture.

"I really like the fact that someone has sat down and gone to the effort of making it, usually out of second-hand timber, or whatever they had lying around, like the old steel sardine cans," Tony said.

The collection unites Tony's interest in the skill of fine woodcraft and his love of history.

"It would be really great to know the story behind each one: to know who built it and why," he said.



Tony with the kauri pine miniature wardrobe that he bought for his wife, Claire, and which started his collection.

[dropcap style="font-size: 60px; color: #ABCCAB;"] 0
[/dropcap]ne of his most precious pieces, however, is from his own family and is a wooden money box with moving parts that his grandfather made for Tony's late father, Bill. While it is showing signs of age, Tony intends to make only minor repairs, as he does with all of the pieces.

"Most of them are in original condition, which is how I like to keep them, rather than lose their authenticity," he said.

While Tony is no longer officially in the second-hand business, he hasn't given up scouring clearing sales, auctions and garage sales for the occasional treasure.

When asked if his collection of miniature drawers was complete, he gave the reply that any true collector will give: "Oh no! Not by a long shot!"

[box] **Do you have a treasure? It might be sentimental, it**

might be valuable, it might be part of a collection, or it might be something you just can't live without. If you have a treasure that we can feature here, let us know! Email us at editor@bluestonemagazine.com.au

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Our quiet heroes: the Drylies



Tony and Claire Drylie with some of the St Joseph's Primary School display boxes...and the huge display board!

[dropcap style="font-size: 60px; color: #A02F2F;"] W
[/dropcap]hat we love about our quiet hero section is that we get to celebrate people doing things that might not always make the news: the small things, the little things that often go unnoticed or happen without much fuss.

This week our quiet heroes are **Claire** and **Tony Drylie**, who are well-known around Warrnambool for their kindness, their cheerfulness and, in recent years, their involvement in the grassroots arts scene.

While Claire is an artist, Tony is usually not far from the action, helping keep track of the finances (as he did with the former Quarry studio), or carting some piece of equipment from here to there in his four-wheel drive.

In the past few days, the pair has been involved in putting the final touches to an art project Claire has developed with art teacher **Kathryn McMeel** at **St Joseph's Primary School**, where each of the 180 children in grades five and six have

created small 'portrait' boxes that they have fitted out with objects that they believe capture who they are.

Imagine a chocolate box, without the lid, and a tiny, individual world created inside: a child's world.



Capturing little lives: some of the children's work they have developed with Claire.

[dropcap style="font-size: 60px; color: #A02F2F;"] W
[dropcap]orking from an industrial shed at the back of a Warrnambool business, Tony has assembled and painted a 2-point-something metre display board in bright red, upon which Claire has been methodically gluing the boxes in preparation for their display at the school within the next fortnight.

(**Ryan's Removals** have kindly agreed to deliver the display board which simply won't fit in Tony's four-wheel drive, no matter how hard he tries).

The final display is going to look spectacular.

Artists working with children has to be one of the most mutually beneficial relationships in existence and that is why Claire and Tony, and those like them, are our quiet heroes for

this week.

[box] Our Quiet Hero will receive a coffee and cake voucher from this week's sponsor [Lozzar's Lounge Cafe](#), Warrnambool – thankyou Lozzar's. [/box]



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