



Rich history

NESTLED IN THE VALLEY OVERLOOKING PEPPERS CREEK AND ROCKLEY WEIR LIES THE OLD BANK BUILDING IN THE QUIANT HISTORIC VILLAGE OF ROCKLEY, BETWEEN OBERON AND BATHURST.



Coaches carrying bags of gold from Burruga to Bathurst used the building as a changeover, as did relieved Cobb and Co passengers. The stable block and coach house that once accommodated the horses stands as a silent reminder to Budden's glorious past.

Transforming these charming Georgian buildings and gardens into Buddens B&B has now made the building a perfect retreat to escape, relax and rejuvenate. The main house, built in 1872, boasts five charming and cosy bedrooms for up to 10 guests, each with delightful bathrooms, decor and cosy sitting rooms. The guesthouse exudes warmth and charm and has an impressive array of artworks and artefacts.

At Buddens you can enjoy gourmet breakfasts or candlelit dinners in the dining room. On the verandah or in the garden you can curl up with a good book or enjoy a BYO port or wine in front of the log fires. Gourmet picnics can be arranged.

"Most of our guests are from Sydney and they enjoy reading and relaxing," charming hostess Deidre Robertson says. "Professionals, with high-pressure jobs, come here to put their feet up and chill out. Peter Brock has stayed here, along with plenty of characters from the car racing fraternity."

By her side is husband Tony, who has the energy of a bull elephant and clearly enjoys the refined art of conversation. He's packed more than most into his 83 years and shows no signs of slackening the pace despite some recent health scares.

Born in 1932 in Manly, Tony left school at 15, keen to make a name for himself. One of his first jobs was selling the famous Arnott's biscuits at David Jones. He was a natural salesman and by the early 1950s was upgraded to the ladies shoe department, one of the big money-making operations of the iconic store.

It was the rag trade, however, not shoes, that proved to be his calling. Over many years he built up a network of stores he'd supply outfits to from various clothing manufacturers. Eventually he worked his way to the top of Byrne & Co, the biggest fashion agency in the Southern Hemisphere, where he plied his trade for 14 years.

In the mid 1980s Tony changed course, selling opals at one of Sydney's oldest tourist businesses, the Koala Bear Shop in the Queen Victoria Building. Later he moved to the shop next door and became, for a while at least, the biggest seller of Driza-Bones in NSW.



From an early age Deidre, like her husband, was determined to make a success of her life and worked as a file clerk in a George Street insurance office before dabbling as a fashion model for various agencies. She found the work tedious and sought further administrative work until she studied interior design, a move that changed her fortunes.


After scoring a job with the giant Lend Lease corporation, Deidre found herself designing projects like the Argyle Arts Centre, Thredbo Alpine Hotel, Australia Square and St Vincent's Private Hospital. Fueled with confidence and a desire to make a difference, she started her own interior design business and spent five of those years working all over the globe, including stints in west Africa, the Pacific Islands, Paris and London before teaching design at TAFE and the Design Centre in Enmore.

In the meantime, Tony's strong connection with the equine industry saw him running the Pindari boarding stables at Terrey Hills, looking after 23 top equestrian horses, seven days a week. It was an exhausting schedule but he took to it like a duck to water.

When Tony and Deidre's paths finally crossed, there was no turning back. They searched for a place outside of Sydney to accommodate Tony's own horses before finally settling on the rundown old bank building in Rockley. Unfortunately by then his favourite four-legged friends had all departed for horse heaven. Although he no longer rides, Tony still broadcasts at the Bathurst and Sofala shows and is a popular MC at special functions at Miss Traill's House in Bathurst.

"We bought this place in 1996 and spent three years restoring and upgrading the building," Tony says. "In the year 2000 we were rewarded with a National Trust award for our efforts. By that stage our B&B was operating and we've been going strong ever since."

It's a delightful building in every way. Air-conditioning in summer isn't warranted and the Robertsons do their own catering, utilising local wines and fresh produce.

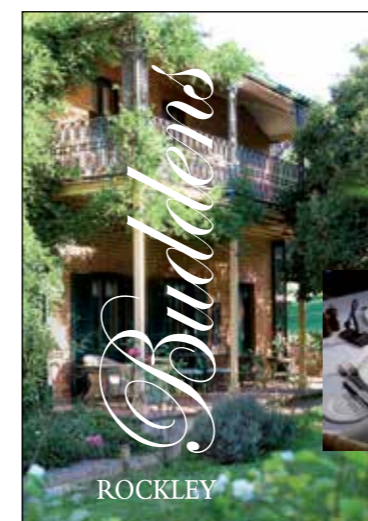
At the end of the day, they love their historic home and enjoy meeting their guests, who visit from all parts of the country. Tony knows it's a world away from his two children – Ian is an audio director at Channel 9, and Kim produces sports programs for Sky Television in England – but with his beloved Deidre by his side, he is optimistic that the best is yet to come. 

Meanwhile Deidre, born in Sydney, was the eldest child of a plumber/minstrel and gymnast, was making her own tentative moves.

Growing up, she had heard many harrowing tales from her father, who met her mother, a member of Bathurst's pioneering Fulton family, during the dark days of the Great Depression.

"Dad rode his motorbike to Native Dog (near Oberon) to create a camp. He and a couple of mates were too proud to stand in the dole queue and came here to strike a fortune in gold. But it didn't pan out and father started making dunny tins in lieu of the long drop, which was often a long way from the house," Deidre says.

He played the mouth organ, banjo-mandolin and swanee whistle and was always invited to social events in and around the Rockley district. In his spare time he taught boxing to the local lads on the top floor of the old flour mill next door (now a museum), helped build the Rockley Weir as a swimming hole and was involved in Rockley's first swimming carnival in 1932.



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