



HAY NSW HOME

The Victorian double-brick building was erected in 1891. **FACING PAGE** Sheila with her husband, Grant Volz, their son, Oscar, and Jack Russell terriers Dottie and Roy.

THE PASSAGE OF TIME

WHEN AN OPPORTUNITY TO BUY THE STATELY FAMILY HOME CAME KNOCKING, HAY-BASED INTERIOR DESIGNER SHEILA SMITH COULD HARDLY WAIT TO MAKE IT HER OWN.

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WALK DOWN ANY main street in rural Australia and you'll see they have one thing in common: the most beautiful building is an old bank. The main street of Hay, in the New South Wales western Riverina – traditionally Wiradjuri and Nari Nari land – is no exception.

The town's three-storey, double-brick Victorian bank was built in 1891 to house the London Chartered Bank of Australia, which later became the English, Scottish and Australia Bank Company. In 1973, 30 years after the company left town, the building was sold to Noreen Smith and her sister, Marjorie Houston. It was Noreen and Marjorie who lovingly redesigned and renovated it, making it into a home for the first time in its history.

Three generations later, it's the much-loved home of Noreen's granddaughter, interior designer Sheila Smith, her husband, Grant Volz, their 10-month-old son, Oscar, and their two Jack Russell terriers, Dottie and Roy.

It's a beautiful story, but it almost didn't happen. Years earlier, Sheila's parents wanted to downsize, so put the place up for sale. Despite plenty of interest, no-one signed on the dotted line, so it remained in the family. In 2020, to Sheila's surprise and delight, her husband suggested moving back to Hay to make the bank their home. Sheila jumped at the chance.

"I adored growing up in this house and have always had a soft spot for old buildings," she explains. "The original details are so inspiring: high ceilings, large skirting boards, the craftsmanship of the handmade panelling and the cedar balustrade."

After almost a decade of experience in the interior design sector, working with clients all over the world, Sheila got the chance to test her skills by converting the historic bones of The Bank into a contemporary and comfortable home. "It was important to us to make the house feel like ours and not the house I grew up in," Sheila, 37, explains. "Now, it's a jolly coexistence of new furnishings, antiques and us."

Adding to the challenge was the bed and breakfast operation on the top floor of the building, which Sheila's mother, Sally, began while the children were away at boarding school. The couple was keen to reignite the business, but it meant more design decisions.

First on the list of jobs after moving into The Bank in August 2020 was roof maintenance and exterior painting. Next, they restored the exquisite front doors by hand and replaced the original balcony floor, which Grant, 33, painstakingly stained. Then they moved inside to >



CLOCKWISE, FROM ABOVE The panelled cedar staircase; baskets from Botswana, Zambia and Namibia draw the eye in the kitchen; Roy relaxes in the conservatory; original art by Sarah Cannon; 'Smiths Spring' on the original bank doors; an Illawarra flame tree at the entrance.

FACING PAGE, FROM TOP Artworks from Russia and a woodblock print of the Uji Riverside in Kyoto hang above an antique Victorian nursing chair; the ground floor features GP & J Baker Hydrangea Bird wallpaper and an heirloom games table.



HOME HAY NSW

A grisaille wallpaper mural creates a botanical feel in the dining room. Glossy cabbageware and chairs upholstered in Fermeie's Botany fabric complement the theme. **FACING PAGE** The living room – painted a custom shade, Porter's Paints Duchess Satin, by Brent Seach, an accredited member of the Porter's Applicator's Guild – holds artwork by Sheila's great-great-aunt, Letisha Bradshaw, a custom Missmith Interiors sofa with Elliott Clarke linen, and a rug by Silk Road Handmade Rugs.



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HOME HAY NSW

A restful tone is achieved in the master bedroom through muted grasscloth wallpaper, a Manuel Canovas Bengale bedhead and cushions, a Nina Campbell Bagatelle weave cushion, and Amalfi Natural linen curtains from The Textile Company. The gemsbok artwork was bought in Namibia. **FACING PAGE, CLOCKWISE, FROM TOP LEFT** Lewis & Wood Beech wallpaper in Document Green; flowers by Snowbloom are displayed in a Cromwell vase. Sheila's great-great-aunt Letisha's artworks adorn the walls; for Oscar's nursery, Sheila chose an Incy Interiors cot, custom Soane blinds, and a Boyd Blue mirror.



repaint, recarpet, reupholster, wallpaper, refresh the window furnishings and add new furniture and art.

"The dining room is one of my favourite rooms as it's quite unexpected and not too serious," says Sheila. A grisaille wallpaper mural set above a panelled wall in Porter's Paints Evergreen Gloss is the backdrop to a large Victorian dining table with seats upholstered in Fermoie's Botany fabric. "It immediately lifts our guests' mood," says Sheila. "We also love that we can have 'dinner in the forest' in the middle of the Hay Plains!"

Sheila's interior design mantra is that each room should have character and show a little personality. Wallpapers sourced from all over the world are instrumental in achieving this effect. She chose a William Turner design in a contemporary colour scheme for the main entrance to give a fresh take on a timeless look. Upstairs in the mid-level hallway, Lewis & Wood's Beech wallpaper brings the light of the outside in. One of Sheila's favourite pieces of furniture is the antique chaise longue her godmother trucked down from Gravesend in the north-west of NSW for her. "We had it restored and reupholstered in a vibrant Anna Spiro fabric and now it reminds me of my godmother - how fabulous!" says Sheila with a smile.

Most family time is spent in the airy, conservatory-style living room and kitchen. In sharp contrast to the rest of the house, the contemporary space was added onto >





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CLOCKWISE, FROM TOP LEFT A Paddy Fordham Wainburranga artwork sits above the mantelpiece in Grant's office; family time; the original bank vault; the charming guest bedroom; the doors to Sheila's Missmith Interiors studio office feature leadlights and original brass pulls. **FACING PAGE, CLOCKWISE, FROM TOP LEFT** The chaise longue was reupholstered in Anna Spiro Textiles; Sheila's studio; Tigger Hall Design fabrics hang on a rack by The Jardin Room.

The Bank in the '90s and looks over the garden, a beautiful micro-climate cleverly created by Sheila's mother. Sheila loves this view: "It's a wonderful mixture of a classic English garden and a trial and error of what will actually grow in the western Riverina's arid climate."

On weekends, when not tending to guests at their B&B (which is separate from the main house), Grant and Sheila love to entertain friends in the house and garden, or share a drink on the bluestone floor of the original bank vault, which now houses their wine cellar. They also enjoy spending time along the Murrumbidgee River - before Oscar was born, they'd often paddleboard down the river with Dottie and Roy to watch the sun rise.

During the week, Sheila runs her business, Missmith Interiors, from the old banking chamber, which has its own entrance and enough room for all her fabric samples, products and her working studio. The grand double doors leading into the studio, with their arched opening and beautiful coloured leadlights, are a piece of history in their own right.

The Bank is written into history in more ways than one: an article in *The Riverine Grazier* in 1891 described it as "an edifice and the most pretentious piece of architecture in the town, reflecting a visible sign of progress". These days, The Bank beams out a gracious blend of old and new that perfectly fits the life of its loving owners. *CS* Visit missmith.com.au and bankbedandbreakfast.com.au, or follow @m_i_s_s_m_i_t_h on Instagram.

