



Green renovation

Part 7: The extension is finished!

Plus... a new kitchen and laundry, bamboo floors and water tanks, as well as a ramp and more gabions – the renovation is coming on nicely.

Our last update in *TOB 169 Feb/Mar 2012* was about building our decking and creating some gabions for fencing. Since then we've worked on other parts of the house as well as *really* finishing the extension.

The extension is finished

A week after New Year 2012 and one year and one week after reaching lockup stage, the studio extension is finally finished. I mean *really* finished.

**BY SEAN & MANDY MANNERS
AND JADE**

We had finished the cupboards and knew that there was a lot of trim to be put up; between the windows, above the windows, around the cupboards, skirting board. The list went on and on. After much thinking about what sort of trim and realising that there were small discrepancies that needed ironing out, it appeared that a painted plywood trim might work. It could be planed here and there where necessary and be cut to suit easily.

Much thought went into colour for the trim. Around the cupboards was easy – white, the same as the cupboards. Around the windows was not as easy to decide but eventually a little trickery was decided upon. As our internal doors had been tricked up with copper paint we thought that it would be fun to have the effect of rusting metal. We used a Haymes paint – *Designer Finishes Real Iron Paint*.

You paint on two coats of this dark grey paint and then paint an oxidising patina onto it. With some experimentation we learnt how much to paint on. Nothing seems to happen and then after a few days you can see surface rust starting to appear.



The room looked great after I added the dark grey rusted trim. A 5mm shadow gap was left at each join.

Kitchen next

Once the extension was finished, the plan was to finish the laundry, paint the east wall of the house, maybe start on the kitchen, and get lots of odd jobs done. HMMMMM!

While I was painting, we got an offer from a fantastic woodworker, Michael Thomson of Tasmanian Sculptural Furniture, to build our kitchen at a reasonable cost using the carcasses of the existing kitchen and timber slabs that we had bought three years ago.

It was decided that the kitchen could be made in two stages. Michael came and measured up and produced some designs. The cupboard above the fridge space has a false back so that hot air from the fridge can be vented up through the ceiling. It was constructed from plantation hoop pine plywood made in Queensland by Austral Ply. It has a fine finish and is approx \$180 a sheet. The edging is blackwood from the stash we had and the doors and sides are New Zealand kauri. We decided to use Zinalume *Mini Orb* for the door infills.

Michael said that it would be about three weeks before he would be ready to fit the kitchen. This was great timing because it took me that long to re-plaster all the edges and faces, sand it off, re-apply, sand it off, re-apply, under coat and paint the kitchen. This was a job



Above left: Brooms and mops are stored in a wasted space using a slide out panel.

Above: A slide out shelf makes life easier.

Above right: Existing cupboards rejuvenated with timber slabs and Mini Orb infill doors.

I had been putting off because I am not practised at plastering and basically did not want to do it!

Michael came and installed the first half of the kitchen in a day. It is finished with *Organoil*, an Australian manufactured natural oil finish, and then waxed.

Kitchen stage two

A few weeks after having the first part of the kitchen installed it was time for stage two. As ever, we had to do some finishing off in the wall remodelling department. The west wall (behind the sink and stove) was a mix of materials. At the top it was plasterboard glued to the lath and plaster. Below this it was plasterboard glued to 3mm random groove plywood. We decided it should all come off, we would move some power points and re-plasterboard. This of course led to more plastering of joints, more sanding, more dust, shifting the sink etc. Once all this was done Michael came back and measured up.

There was still quite a lot of timber left from the initial build; small slabs of blackwood, myrtle, huon pine and kauri pine. However, there weren't any long lengths needed for the sink bench. My



mate Lee came to the rescue with some assorted lengths of hardwood including some red gum. All were grey and weathered but under Michael's tender care came up a treat.

The doors were given the same treatment as the other half of the kitchen using Zinalume *Mini Orb* for the infill.

It has now been fitted into the kitchen and looks great. The bench has been treated with *Livos* countertop oil; a natural finish that withstands heat up to 50 degrees. We got the door handles from a wholesaler.

We have had sliding shelves and panels put in to make life a little easier. One carries the kettle and toaster. Slide it out, use it, slide it out of sight. We also did this with the narrow cupboard alongside; it houses brooms and mops etc. and they slide out on two plywood boards with hanging hooks.

What floor covering?

There were numerous possibilities for floor coverings for the studio and kitchen but I slowly narrowed them down.

Vinyl was removed from the list quickly as it is highly energy intensive to produce, uses lots of chemicals and offgases for a long time. *Marmoleum* was high on the list but needed to be glued down.

Rubber sounded good but only one company makes natural rubber floors and it is in France so rubber has to be shipped from Malaysia to France and then to Australia. Synthetic rubbers are made from oil so that was not on the list. Carpet was also not on the list.



Timber was on the list, but when it came down to a floating floor that was not glued or nailed (so truly recyclable or re-usable), the options shrank a bit. Then when I started looking at where the timber was from, was it FSC, could it be sanded back, the options shrank even more.

We made a list of questions and applied them to all the products.

The questions we asked were:

- Was the product made from sustainable materials?
- How far did it have to travel?
- Was it easily recyclable?
- Did it need another product to fix it, i.e. glue, nails?
- Did it offgas?
- Could it be laid by me or did it need professional skills?
- Was it available in Tasmania?

Bamboo

In the end it appeared that a floating bamboo floor would tick nearly all the boxes. The clincher was a visit to Good Environmental Choice Australia (GECA) website and finding a couple of bamboo flooring companies that were GECA certified. This included the levels of glues and binders used in manufacture as well as the sustainable harvesting and planting of the bamboo.

It gives some peace of mind. The only downside was that it was made in China so the travel was long. However all other flooring alternatives apart from a



*Above left: Compact but efficient laundry.
Above: Bamboo floor in the extension looks beautiful and was easy to lay.*

cork/rubber composite also came from overseas.

The bamboo flooring we chose was arc bamboo in a natural colour. It is a strand woven bamboo flooring product 15mm thick that clicks together on all four sides using *Uniclic* technology. It can be re-sanded if necessary and comes pre finished.

It has been down for three months now and is performing well. It is easy to keep clean with a microfibre mop and sweeping. The aluminium oxide finish is a little easy to scratch if not careful, but so is polyurethane. However, we have since found out that the company does not use aluminium oxide any more as it is very difficult to repair.

We bought the flooring on special and saved 20% and it was a dream to lay. It literally floats over a 3mm foam underlay. The profile edges ensure that it all fits together very easily. You have to leave a 12mm gap around the edges for expansion and contraction. This was hidden under the skirting.

Laundry washtub blues

The new laundry is a small space off the kitchen. It is about 1200mm wide and 1700mm long.

We painted the walls down to where the tiling would meet after first doing

the corning. Then we laid wet area lining board down to the plywood floor. This was followed by a waterproofing compound, including up the prescribed 40mm of the wall; in fact, much higher than that.

Next was the tiling. This is when I found out that the seconds we had bought were seconds for a reason. Not quite square, all of them, so it made the laying a little awkward. Also, my tile cutter is 300mm wide and these tiles were 330mm wide, so out came the diamond tip grinding wheel.

After tiling and grouting the walls and floors it was time to install a bench. When our glass for the extension sliding double glazed doors was shipped from the mainland it came in a big plywood box. I used the sides in the building of the extension, but the top and bottom were 75mm thick planks of pine. I had kept them for this very purpose so out came the biscuit jointer, belt sander and orbital sander. Two coats of *Volvox* hard wax oil to protect the whole bench and a couple of holes for the washing machine hoses and voila!

For the splashback Mandy had been working on a mosaic of Chinese dragons in red, black, and yellow ...see the *Surfaces Special Feature* starting p. 25 for more details.

Our pulley system washing hanger was installed and a blind put on the window. There's no dryer but there is space for one on the wall. We resprayed our laundry tub fire engine red, put in a couple of shelves and our super efficient



front loader Asko washing machine and it was finished. The washing machine and tub are plumbed into our rainwater tanks.

Water tanks

On the west side of the new extension is a space approximately 1.5 metres wide between the extension and the boundary fence. Further up this long narrow space is our hot water service. The downpipes from the new roof and half of the existing house come down at this point also. An ideal place to put some space saver water tanks. The idea was to link these to the laundry, washing machine and new toilet to conserve mains water.

Research soon found that on the mainland reasonably sized narrow, tall water tanks were easily available from a variety of sources. Here in Tasmania it was a slightly different story. There were 1000 litre tanks available as a slimline from most manufacturers but bigger than this and the choices were much narrower.

It really only came down to one company, Tankworld in Launceston. They had a 2500 litre or a 3000 litre slimline made by Nylex that would fit perfectly. In fact two 3000 litre tanks would fit.

Tankworld recommended a flat firm surface, preferably concrete. Our problem was that a sewer pipe and a stormwater pipe run under the ground here and I really wanted to keep them accessible if possible without having to dig up concrete.

The answer was to purchase a number of large concrete slabs, 900 x 450mm, that are normally used for placing



hot water services or gas cylinders on. Thirteen of these were laid on top of crusher dust.

We ordered the tanks, removed a section of fence to get them in and voila! water storage.

Pump

There are a number of devices that have the tank water enter one side and the mains pressure water the other. When it senses the tank water getting low it automatically switches to mains pressure until the tank fills again.

We decided on the Bianco *Rainsaver*, which comes as a package with a DAB 577kpa 120lpm pump, with a two year warranty on the pump and a four year warranty on the *Rainsaver*.

Now when we flush the loo or water the garden we know that it is coming from the tanks and not the mains, unless of course we run dry which is unlikely in Tassie.

I built a pump cover from leftover sandbank *Colorbond* and treated pine from the old deck.

So-fa so good!

Mandy and I decided that we would like one big piece of furniture in the studio. Everything else is on wheels and can be packed away when not needed to make the studio very adaptable.

Mandy found a sofa, in good condition, for ten bucks at the Deloraine tip shop. She took apart all the cushion covers and used them as patterns and started collecting pairs of jeans from the op shops.

Above left: Perfect place for slimline tanks. Above: The 'new' sofa, made from op shop jeans and a tip shop sofa, came up a treat!

Mandy bought the largest sizes she could to get the most denim. Denim is a great furnishing fabric; tough, hard wearing, recycled and adaptable. She also kept an eye out for cord trousers and jackets as cord tends to come in brighter colours.

Much cutting, patching, sewing and trying later and the sofa came into fruition. Cost was \$10 for the sofa, \$50 for the jeans and approximately \$10 for thread and needles. It is very comfortable and Jade (our new dog) thinks it is hers!

Ramp it up

Plans for the extension included a ramp off the deck. Although we have two sets of broad steps, a ramp just makes moving furniture etc. so much easier. It also gives access to our elderly neighbours.

I decided to make it about five metres long and one meter wide with a support saddle at the low end, one near the top where it changed width to go around a rock gabion and then supported at the deck as well. After welding the saddles and concreting them in, I laid three 150mm C sections down and fixed them.

On top of this I screwed down some left over *Futurewood* decking to match the deck. When building the saddles I made provision for uprights for a handrail.

These are bolted in and the banister bolted to these. This is so I can easily remove the whole thing for painting in sections or if I need to move larger objects up the ramp.

Jade – a welcome addition

As sadly mentioned in our last article, we lost our mini foxy terrier, Tessa. She had been part of our adventures for about twelve years and was very much missed.

Now, Jade has joined the family. She is a four year old Foxy cross Jack Russell with a zest for life and a nose that gets into everything. We got her from the RSPCA shelter at Devonport. Jade is very happy go lucky and bright as a button.

S.O.B.S (Slow Owner Building Syndrome)

When you are owner building it seems that time stretches, in the words of Buzz Lightyear 'To Infinity and Beyond!' then folds in on itself, has a bout of hysterics and then tells you that your owner builder permit needs renewing.

People ask 'How's the house going?' 'Grrrrrrr,' through clenched teeth politely.

On the plus side you do get a warm fuzzy feeling when you get a Certificate of Occupancy. ♦

Follow our progress on our blog:
www.greentasreno.wordpress.com

See TOB 151, 152, 155, 159, 164 and 169 for previous updates.



Links & resources

♦ Tankworld Tasmania

Tasmanian owned company manufacturing moulded polypropylene tanks.

03 6343 5444,
www.tankworldtas.com.au

♦ Nylex

Rainwater tanks manufactured from UV stabilised food grade materials.

1300 469 539, www.nylex.com.au

♦ Bianco Rainsaver

The Bianco Rainsaver MKIII is a device that automatically switches between tank water and the main supply.

1300 783 601,
www.biancorainsaver.com.au

♦ Michael Thomson

From his workshop, Tasmanian Sculptural Furniture, Michael designs and builds sculptural furniture, doors, mirrors and gifts.

www.tasmaniansculpturalfurniture.com

♦ GECA

Good Environmental Choice Australia is an independent, not-for-profit organisation that runs the internationally recognised Environmental Choice Australia Ecolabelling Program.

www.geca.org.au

♦ Healthy Flooring

Healthy Flooring Network, based in London UK, aims to raise awareness of the links between fitted carpets, PVC flooring and health and to encourage and promote alternatives.

www.healthyflooring.org

♦ Organoil

Maintain and preserve timber using vital, natural materials from the plant and mineral kingdoms.

02 9773 9399, www.organoil.com.au

♦ Livos

Countertop oil: available as a transparent finish that prevents temperature caused discolouration of light wooden surfaces and is heat resistant to 50 degrees.

03 9762 9181, www.livos.com.au

♦ Futurewood

Looks like timber but is made from recycled HDPE (industrial and post consumer waste), rice husks and recycled hardwood timber.

1300 484 308,
www.futurewood.com.au



Top: Gabion topped with a water feature.

Above: The new ramp increases access to the house and new extension.

Inspiration



KELLY SWALLOW

For inspiration on covering your own refound treasure, you can't go past looking at this site. Kelly's chairs are individually sourced vintage pieces, each with its own unique charm. The personality of every piece is rediscovered by painstakingly and lovingly choosing an exciting collection of fabrics to create unique pieces with newfound splendour.

www.kellyswallow.co.uk