





relaxed LUXURY

PHOTOGRAPHS **MAREE HOMER** AND **TONY SHEFFIELD**

An inspired renovation has turned a pleasant Burradoo home into a stylish retreat where every detail has been considered, from a new statement entrance and entertainer's kitchen to buxus ball landscaping and a bocce court.

MELISSA PENN visits a home where every day feels like a holiday.



A white colour scheme was applied to all the living areas. "It's timeless," says Kate. "And white keeps the focus on the garden too."



FROM TOP OWNER KATE'S FAVOURITE PLACE TO SIT IS AT THE DINING TABLE; UNIQUE KITCHEN INCLUSIONS ARE A FRENCH LACANCHE STOVE, DISTRESSED MIRROR SPLASHBACK AND MESH DOORS ON THE TALL CABINET; BLACK TOUCHES, SUCH AS THE STOOLS AND DOOR HARDWARE, CONTRIBUTE TO THE CLASSIC YET MODERN LOOK.



ABOVE THE KITCHEN, WHICH MAKES THE MOST OF GARDEN VIEWS, INCLUDES A LARGE STONE ISLAND, WHITE JOINERY AND A FIRECLAY BUTLER SINK.
PREVIOUS OPENING PAGES A DRAMATIC GARDEN DESIGN WITH ROWS OF BUXUS BALLS LEADING TO A FORMAL COURTYARD CREATES A SENSE OF ARRIVAL.

The first thing Kate noticed when inspecting her Burradoo weekender for the first time four years ago was its pleasing symmetry. “When you look at the house from the front, its proportions are balanced,” she says. “I love symmetry. We hadn’t even been inside the house, and I said to my husband Gary, ‘This is it!’”

The then 15-year-old house was painted a deep Tuscan orange with a blue front door and its traditional interiors lacked connection with the large garden. “We got back in the car and Gary thought I was joking. I said, ‘No, I’m serious. I see what this house can be.’”

The couple, who also have a house in Killara in Sydney, were looking for a home that had space for them as well as for their two adult daughters, their partners and friends to visit. “At the time we had a weekender in Manly on the water, but although it’s lovely, Manly is very busy,” says Kate. “Gary has a high-powered job [as a management consultant] and travels a lot. We both grew up in the country – Gary in England and me on the Victorian border – and I’d been saying for years, ‘I think we should buy a house in the country where we can be quiet and step away from the world.’”

The extensive inside and out renovation, complete with a French-inspired landscaped garden featuring rows of buxus

balls, two outdoor fireplaces and a bocce court, took three years – “One year for the inside, one year for the landscaping and one year for the structural changes,” explains Kate. “It was finished late in 2023 so I’m looking forward to hosting Christmas here for the first time this year.” The couple called their new home Oakhanger after the village Gary grew up in.

On the advice of interior designer Georgia Boyd of The Classic Outfitter in Sydney (Kate has worked with her before on their Sydney home and used her extensively for this home’s interiors), Kate and Gary appointed bespoke design and construction business Cadence and Co to undertake a complete reimagining of the house.

Cadence and Co, which has offices in Bowral, Woollahra and Terrey Hills, called the renovation project Parterre Manor. Design principal/partner Michael Kilkeary says it captures “a sense of classic country comfort, which is so readily associated with the Southern Highlands”. “It features a mix of traditional and contemporary elements, combining traditional charm with pared-back simplicity to achieve a sense of relaxed luxury.”

The interaction between house and garden has been particularly successful, says Michael. “A focus in designing the new layout was to improve the relationship of the house to the garden. This has been done through broader glazing, more generous doors and windows, but also by introducing



ABOVE CUSTOM-MADE WINE RACK AND DRINKS CABINET. **BELOW, FROM LEFT** SOPHIE GRALTON'S *THE FARM BOY*; A PORTRAIT OF MUCH-LOVED LATE PET LIZZIE HANGS IN GARY'S STUDY (ALONG WITH PORTRAITS OF THE COUPLE'S TWO DOGS). **OPPOSITE** THE TRANQUIL LOUNGE ROOM IS "A GOOD SPOT TO READ OR HAVE A NAP".

destinations within the garden. The garden design makes a strong graphic statement but settles well with the home's classic country style."

Almost all the furniture, appliances, furnishings, artworks and ornaments were bought new for the house. Kate amassed many of the smaller pieces herself over about a year, storing them in cupboards until the house was finished. "We weren't downsizing – we still have our Sydney house – so we had to start again with everything," says Kate. "When I began unpacking, it was like Christmas."

When it comes to her love of symmetry and the art of

creating table vignettes, Kate is inspired by interiors she sees on Pinterest and by her large library of classical, traditional interior design books, particularly those by late US interior designer Charles Faudree. "I can browse them for hours," she says.

On Georgia's advice, accent colours throughout are soothing blues and greens against neutrals of creams, soft greys and whites to ensure the transition from room to room is visually seamless. Says Kate: "I love classic interiors – I find they don't date. Anything too contemporary or modern is never going to fly with me. My daughter's fiance says this house is Killara [their Sydney house] 2.0."

Modifications were a combination of cosmetic and structural. Inside, a white colour scheme was applied to all the living areas – previously unpainted timber window frames are now white (Dulux Natural White Quarter) while walls are Dulux Natural White Half. "It's timeless," says Kate. "And white keeps the focus on the garden too." Existing parquet flooring in the hall, kitchen, dining and living area was retained, taupe wool carpet was laid in all other rooms, and the four bedrooms and three bathrooms and powder room were completely refitted.

One of the first structural changes was connecting the existing three-car garage to the house via a glass breezeway, creating a second, back entrance to the house. "My sister is an interior designer who lives in the country," says Kate. "She told me country people always come in the back door so we should



“Another great thing about the house is its three metre ceilings. It’s not an old home but it has little touches that mean it has good bones.”







ABOVE EXTRA FRENCH DOORS WERE ADDED TO THE MAIN BEDROOM TO LET IN LIGHT AND GARDEN VIEWS. **OPPOSITE, FROM TOP** A BATH WITH A VIEW; THE ORIGINAL EN SUITE BECAME A DRESSING ROOM.

have a fabulous back door. She came up with the concept, which was then designed and created by Cadence and Co.”

Framed in black-steel double-glazed glass panels, the back entrance is a dramatic welcome to the house. A painting by Kate’s childhood friend Sophie Gralton hangs above a slimline hall table (Sophie’s works also hang at the front door entrance and in the living area) and there’s a wooden antler pendant light from Interiors by George – these are elsewhere throughout the house. “I think you have permission to do that kind of thing in the country,” says Kate.

The previous kitchen had an angled bench that cut the room in half. The light, white space now has at its centre a large island topped with stain-resistant Gitani Stone ‘bianco quartzite’. “I’ve had Carrara marble in the past and I’ll never do it again because I’m a bit OCD and trying to remove stain marks from wine glasses nearly killed me,” laughs Kate. “I’m a big cook and when everyone is here you need a big space to put everything out. This is a large room and if the island had been too small it wouldn’t have worked. Everyone congregates here and it’s a great spot for brekkie.”

With touches of black – in the drum pendant lights, door hardware and stools – the classic yet modern kitchen feels

“a bit English, a bit French, but fun and classical”, says Kate. Adding character is a French double-oven freestanding stove by Lacanche, a distressed mirrored splashback, a fireclay butler sink and bronze finished mesh on the cabinetry doors.

A dining table with upholstered antique chairs sits by the bay windows in the kitchen. It’s the perfect spot for meals overlooking the garden but also for a coffee or to listen to music or work on her laptop – Kate says it’s her favourite place in the house. “Although there are many spots to sit and relax, this is where I tend to gravitate.”

The adjoining living area has cream armchairs and a couch, a gas fireplace and a TV. To the left of the fireplace is a custom-made built-in wine rack and drinks bar. Off this room is Kate’s serene sitting room with a pale blue chaise longue and an antique round table. It’s connected to the kitchen by a door with a glass panel at the top. “It’s a lovely feature that lets in light,” she says. “Another great thing about the house was its three metre ceilings.”

Around the corner, adjoining the front door and entrance hall, is the lounge room, a luxurious cream and green space with marble fireplace, ornate gilt mirror and large ottoman upholstered in plaid linen. Green-themed artworks by Hunter





ABOVE THE STRIKING NEW BACK ENTRANCE – THE OWNERS WANTED ONE AS ‘FABULOUS’ AS THE FRONT – WITH ARTWORK *LITTLE BLACK DOT* BY SOPHIE GRALTON.
OPPOSITE, FROM TOP OUTDOOR SEATING AREA WITH GAS FIREPLACE; SEPARATE GYM AND SAUNA IN THE BACK GARDEN; THE GYM LOOKS OUT TO THE BOCCIE COURT;
 CADENCE AND CO SUGGESTED A CURVED OUTDOOR SHOWER, WHICH THEY DESIGNED AND CRAFTED FROM WHITE CEMENT.

Valley artist Sarah Bishop adorn the walls (several other of her works hang in the house) while cream, black and green ornaments are dotted around.

“The only rule I have about this room is that Gary’s not allowed to bring his red wine in here,” laughs Kate. “It’s a good spot to read or have a nap, and it’s great when the kids are here with friends, because we can scoot away and leave them to it.”

In the main bedroom (walls are a muted grey Dulux Pipe Clay Half), there’s an air of laid-back luxury with navy and grey furnishings, an upholstered bedhead and an ottoman at the end of the bed. A pair of armchairs is set up for reading, while wainscoting added to the walls draws the eye upwards and adds drama and detail to the room. Extra windows were added to frame the garden and let in light; all are hung with off-white linen curtains.

Where a small en suite once stood is now a generous dressing room for two. An adjoining bathroom became a large, luxurious en suite tiled with natural stone. The bath looks out to the garden.

Next to the garage, separate accommodation was converted into Gary’s study and a guest wing. Next door is a new black steel-clad gym, a sauna and an outdoor shower, which is surrounded by a bespoke moulded design. “I love straight lines, but Cadence and Co said we should have something curved here so they hand-made this from white cement,” says Kate.

The existing verandah and new outdoor terraces were paved with limestone – the terrace outside the main living room was extended out into the sun and to create room for a dining table and lounge area. An outdoor room with gas fireplace and seating was created in a corner near the breezeway and is a perfect spot for evening drinks. “It’s so peaceful and I love that every now



“We wanted to impress on scale hence the size and sheer number of buxus balls ... Eventually the balls will grow so they are almost kissing each other.”

Great balls of buxus

Myles Baldwin says using buxus in spherical form is a modern take on a formal garden. “In my eyes, hedging had its heyday in the '90s when there was hedging around a house with a row of roses or shrubs behind it. It was very rigid border and the back side of the hedge went black and you couldn't access the plants behind it.

“In the new buxus garden, buxus is the hero. Whether it's a ball or another shape, it's not just the edging plant to a greater garden.”

He likes both Japanese and English buxus, however “Japanese buxus is a little lighter in colour but has a better growth rate. Both do well in the Highlands but need enough nutrients and water to prevent them going yellow in winter.”

To maintain the domed shape, buxus balls can be trimmed around three times a year. Says Myles: “You want the growth without losing density – I call it formative pruning. If they are trimmed too regularly, they can shrink and you won't get the shape and size you want.”



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP PATH LEADING FROM THE BACK ENTRANCE TO THE FRONT GARDEN; DEER STATUE IN THE FRONT GARDEN; URN FROM THE ORIGINAL GARDEN.
OPPOSITE DESTINATIONS WITHIN THE GARDEN WERE CREATED – FROM SEATING AREAS TO A SPA, WHICH CAN BE USED YEAR-ROUND.

and again you can hear the train going past,” says Kate. “It’s such a country sound.”

Outside, gutters were replaced, and the house was painted in a soft grey. Kate particularly loved the existing tin roof for its rural aesthetic. Front and back gardens had dramatic makeovers thanks to Sydney-based landscape architecture and design studio Myles Baldwin Design. As well as 126 buxus balls arranged in neat rows surrounded by white pebbles, lush plantings of mature magnolia little gems, viburnum, lamb’s ear and hydrangea were added.

Says Kate: “I knew I wanted buxus balls – we have them in Sydney – but here we could have them en masse. I love the French style of a planned, symmetrical garden. While this garden is much more relaxed than our very French, very formal Sydney garden with hedging and topiaries, the buxus balls give a sense of structure that I love.”

Of the garden design, creative director Myles Baldwin says: “We wanted to create a sense of arrival at the front of the house, so came up with a forecourt design of buxus balls flowing through to a formal courtyard. We wanted to impress on scale



ABOVE THE OUTDOOR FIREPLACE MADE FROM BUNDANOON SANDSTONE IS POPULAR WHEN FAMILY AND FRIENDS VISIT. **BELOW** BOCCIE COURT WITH MANCHURIAN PEARS.



hence the size and sheer number of buxus balls, which are designed to be a series of beautiful domes, surrounded by a garden that's a bit wild and unstructured. Eventually the balls will grow so they are almost kissing each other."

Constructed from Bundanoon sandstone, the tall fireplace and wicker seating draws people into the garden. It and the nearby bocce court are popular when family stay, says Kate. The bocce court was built to the dimensions of a competitive court – when Kate saw how big it was, she had two rows of Manchurian pears planted within it to soften its appearance. Outside the gym, a paved area with sun lounges and a spa is used year-round.

"The biggest success of this house is that it's a place where our kids and their partners can come and we can all relax," she says. "Our daughter Emma loves to go horse riding; while our daughter Harriet takes friends to wineries. To have a place where your adult kids still want to visit you is so special. We all love it." **HL**

Photography on pages 60, 64, 65, 66 (excluding gym interior), 67 and 70 by Maree Homer, stylist Kayla Gex. Supplied by Cadence and Co.