

Nindooinbah Homestead



The stunning Nindooinbah Homestead, with owners Euan and Kaye Murdoch on the verandah.

Restoration a labour of love

ANYONE who has been involved with the restoration of a crumbling historic building will tell you in no uncertain terms it is not an undertaking for the faint-hearted.

Cost aside, it can be the stuff of nightmares, with hidden dramas lurking in every room constantly poised to test even the most patient of renovators.

Unseen structural problems, rotting

foundations, white ant and moisture damage, heritage-listed building renovation restrictions, cost overruns, sourcing tradesmen competent in age-old skills ... the list of potential problems goes on and on. But there are always exceptions to every situation, just ask Euan and Kaye Murdoch.

The former owners of Herron Pharmaceuticals, the Murdochs have been the proud owners of iconic Nindooinbah Homestead since 2005.

The property, which sits on 3000 acres

of prime grazing land in the Kerry Valley, was purchased following the death of previous owners Margaret de Burgh Perse and gentleman painter, grazier and bon vivant Patrick Hockey.

Originally built in the 1850s by Alfred William Compigne and later purchased by John Collins & Sons for William Collins who intended to use the property to fatten cattle for the frozen meat trade which he had helped to pioneer in the 1870s, Nindooinbah has a long and proud history in the Beaudesert district.

But unfortunately the ravages of time, neglect and a number of unsympathetic attempts at renovation over the years had left the once proud Nindooinbah Homestead - and the wider Nindooinbah property - in a far from pristine condition.

But then came Euan and Kaye Murdoch. After eyeing off the property for months at a discreet distance prior to purchasing it at auction, they proceeded to pour millions of dollars into the rejuvenation project (they prefer the word rejuvenate, as opposed to renovate).

Undaunted at the prospect of returning Nindooinbah to its former glory, they enlisted a small army of local contractors to rejuvenate the homestead and turn the property into a world class Angus, Brangus and Ultrablack stud cattle breeding facility.



The rejuvenated Nindooinbah dining room.

The responsibility for the total rejuvenation of the homestead and myriad of outbuildings was handed to Rod Andersen of Rod Andersen Constructions, while Nick Cameron was employed to manage the rural renovation and establish the farm's cattle breeding program.

Euan and Kaye lived in two small rooms in the house for two years while the works took place and were intimately involved with the project on a day-to-day basis.

The result after five years of painstaking work is best summed up in a word - amazing.

While official confirmation of the high standard of the rejuvenation is, to an extent, unnecessary, the finished project recently gained recognition for its excellence with a National Trust of Queensland Heritage Silver Award.

After working so closely with the National Trust for so many years to comply with hundreds of guidelines demanded to complete a "sympathetic" rejuvenation in keeping with the original character of the homestead, it was an award that was received with much enthusiasm.

After recently enjoying a guided tour through the finished homestead with Euan and Kaye and the wider Nindooinbah property with Nick Cameron, it is easy to see why there is such pride in what has been achieved.

To walk around the homestead is to take a step back in time to the late 1800s - with a modern twist.

Every original aspect of the building has been faithfully retained, down to returning silky oak panels, doors and windows and all cedar



Nindooinbah Homestead from the air.

timber throughout the house to its original condition. But it is not a musty museum, the homestead has had many 21st

Century additions included in the makeover.

The entire building was restumped - a major undertaking in itself with all 200-plus stumps put into place by hand - every room was totally stripped back to its frame, most of the roof

was replaced and modern bathrooms and kitchens were installed.

“The result after five years of painstaking work is best summed up in one word - amazing.”

Over the course of the five years of reconstruction, countless coats of paint and wallpaper were peeled back to reveal a building of exceptional beauty, with Kaye's interior decorating expertise used after all the work was done to furnish and impeccably decorate the building.

Now that they are able to sit back and enjoy the labours of five years of hard work, Euan and Kaye readily admit that they were "stunned" when they first saw the derelict condition of the building and were overwhelmed by the extent of the work required to restore the property to its former glory.

But not a couple to shirk a challenge, they enthusiastically threw themselves into the fray.

"It was just overwhelming the amount of work that was required," Kaye said.

"The house was very run down, there was hardly a fence post standing upright and there were even barnacles in the toilet.

"I am certainly not making any criticisms of the previous owners, but the property had not had any money spent on it for several decades.

"Initially I thought 'what have we let ourselves in for', but we now think it was the best thing we have ever done."

As far as Euan is concerned, the aim from day one was to bring Nindooinbah back to its original condition, but not to leave it in a time warp.

On the face of it a straightforward requirement, but necessarily so.



Kaye and Euan Murdoch relax under a beautiful Jacaranda tree on the property.

>> Continued next page



Workers in the Nindooinbah dining room during restoration.



Prior to restoration Nindooinbah Homestead was in a badly run down condition.



The Nindooinbah kitchen prior to the start of the rejuvenation project.

Important to ensure it had a homely feel

Given that the homestead is heritage listed, the reality of the situation was that it took years and many, many meetings with heritage officials to receive all relevant approvals.

"I think the Heritage Council is now extremely happy with what we have done, all along it was important to us that we de-formalised it," he said.

"We have children and grandchildren and it is a working farm, so the house had to be practically orientated.

"As it is now, every room is used as it was and the colours are similar, but it is a home, not a museum."

Euan and Kaye did not see the project as simply for now, but rather for the entire district well beyond their own lifetimes.

It is, they say, a responsibility they took to heart.

"When we first started we thought it would set the house up for another 25 years, but really it is now set up for another 100 or more years with the work that has been done," Euan said.

"Rod Andersen was here for five years and the quality of work that he and his team put into the place is extraordinary.

"I actually don't recall a 'quality' conversation with Rod, I think it was a combined expectation, we worked very well together."

To get the project off the ground, a conservation team of eight people was employed who would meet monthly to map out the way forward for the project.

The "conservation team" included three ex-chairpersons of the Queensland Heritage Council, an architect, a heritage landscape architect, a wallpaper and fabric conservator and others.

At any given time there was anything up to 30 different tradesmen working on the house, with the project providing a major boost for the local economy.

Throughout the project there was constant dialogue between the heritage council and the conservation team to find common negotiated ground over proposed changes to the building.



The Nindooinbah manager's house had to be moved to a new location.

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A decorative illustration of a white teacup and saucer. The teacup is filled with purple flowers and green leaves. Several purple butterflies are flying around the teacup. The background is white with a subtle floral pattern.

For more information contact Katrina on 5543 6065

"Initially they said there had to be no changes, it had to stay as it is," Euan said.

"That included light fittings, wall coverings, curtains, taps, carpets and lights, but we went back to them and said, 'this is not a museum'.

"Our dream was to make it a home so that when our grandkids came here they could jump up and down with excitement that they were going to stay here.

"That was never going to happen in what was a closed in, musty old building that many people of our vintage experienced as children when we were told to sit on the couch and don't swing your legs.

"We wanted a home and fortunately over a period of time that fact was finally understood."

Understandably Euan and Kaye are extremely proud of the final product.

Not only have they saved one of the Scenic Rim's most iconic buildings from an uncertain future, but they have ensured that it will live on for many, many more years.

As Euan said, they "wanted to make a difference". All evidence clearly points to them having succeeded.

>> Property transformed, see article p10-11



Nindooinbah House prior to being rejuvenated.



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Transformation awe-inspiring



Farm manager Nick Cameron has been at the forefront of establishing the new-look Nindooinbah property.

WHILE work was slowly progressing on the rejuvenation of Nindooinbah Homestead, an equally awe-inspiring transformation was happening to the 3000 acre Nindooinbah property.

Years of neglect had left the property overgrown, run down and seriously in need of major improvements.

Clearly Euan and Kaye Murdoch with the help of the expertise of farm manager Nick Cameron were the right people for the job.

As was the case with the homestead rejuvenation, a master plan was initially prepared with just one aim in mind - to turn the property into a cattle breeding showpiece.

Roads were bulldozed across the property, new farm buildings were erected, other older buildings were either upgraded, demolished or moved, dams were dug and an extensive irrigation system was installed.

As well, pasture was improved, land



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Gold Coast UBD Map 23, Ref P14

Overcoming years of neglect the challenge

abutting the Albert River was laser levelled, scrub and long-dead tree stumps were removed and an extensive range of farm equipment was purchased.

Effectively Nick was given a blank canvas by Euan and Kaye along with an edict to "establish Nindooinbah as one of Australia's pre-eminent cattle breeding facilities".

While it is still early days, seven years down the track cattlemen from throughout the country are already starting to sit up and take serious notice of the quality of Nindooinbah's Angus, Brangus and Ultrablack stud cattle.

For Nick, being able to establish the Nindooinbah farm from scratch was a unique opportunity that he grabbed with both hands.

Given that the property had never seen any pasture improvement in the past, one of the first jobs was to stick rake the entire property in conjunction with an excavator that removed hundreds of old tree stumps.

Next came the erection of kilometres of fencing, bulldozing internal roads, digging a huge dam, installing a sophisticated irrigation system on about 200 hectares of land to drought proof the property and the construction of the nerve centre of the property - a fully automated cattle yard and embryo transfer facility.

"The property was very tired and just hadn't had any money spent on it for many years," Nick said.

"The aim from day one was to set up the place for the artificial reproduction of cattle."



The beautiful rural outlook at Nindooinbah.



A highly prized Nindooinbah stud bull.

After years of running his own properties, Nick said it had been a dream come true to establish Nindooinbah from scratch.

"It has been a dream for somebody like me to be able to create what I believe is the ideal farm," he said.

"It has been a great opportunity and has been fantastic.

"What we have focussed on from day one has been cattle reproduction and it has been a fascinating journey ... to see things get transformed on almost a daily basis has been incredibly exciting.

"It has been a very rewarding process."

Now that the majority of work to establish the property is complete, the aim now is to concentrate on breeding top



Farm manager Nick Cameron with a herd of cattle on the farm.

quality stud bulls in volume for commercial producers throughout Australia.

In many ways Nick believes the establishment of the Nindooinbah breeding program is a return to the early days when the Collins family bred cattle on the property, only in a more technological age.

With two successful recent cattle auctions under their belt, Euan and Kaye Murdoch and Nick Cameron are now confident all of their hard work is being vindicated.

And all current indications point to Nindooinbah-bred cattle playing an ever-increasing role in the evolution of the Angus, Brangus and Ultrablack breeds in Australia.

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