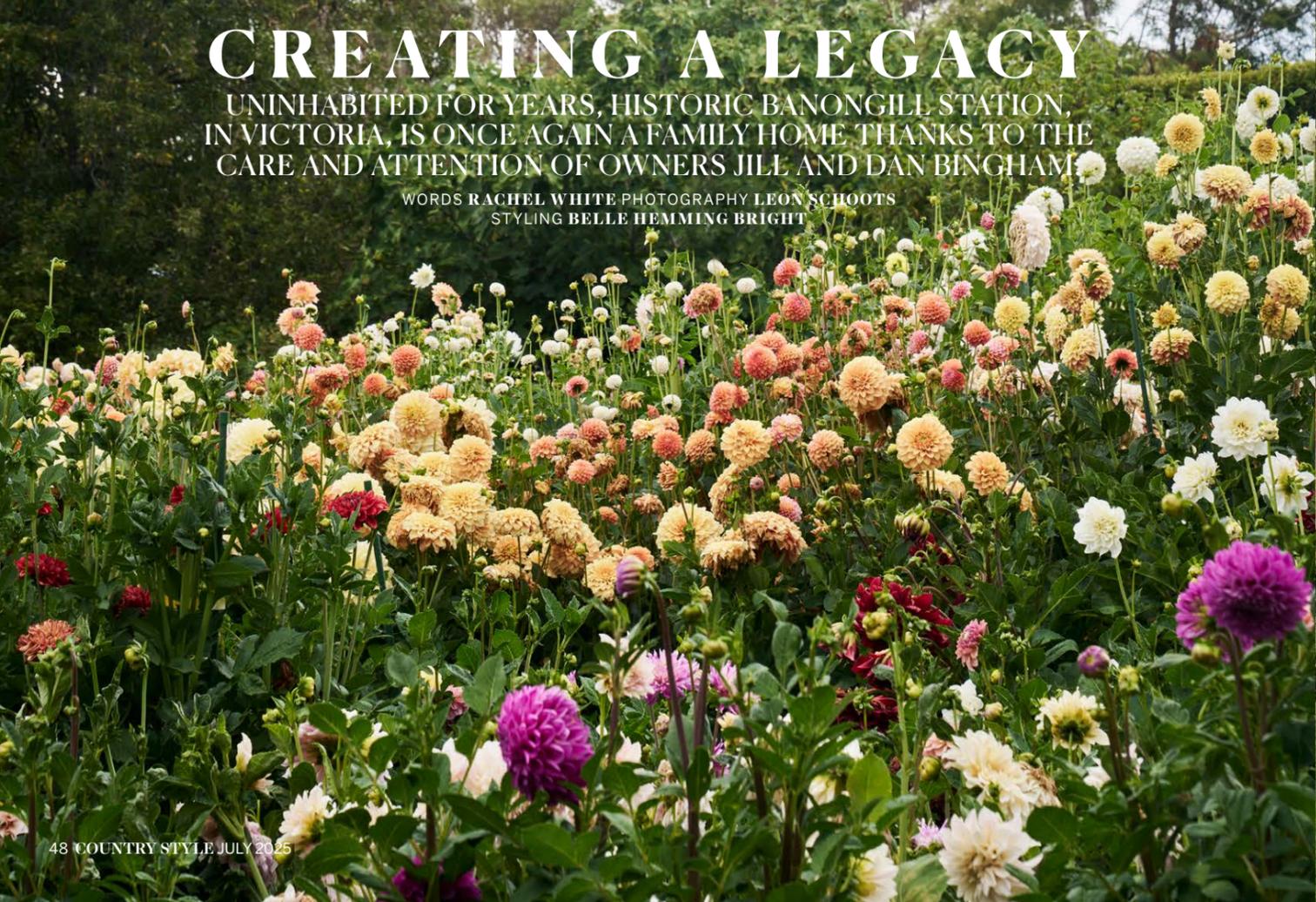




CREATING A LEGACY

UNINHABITED FOR YEARS, HISTORIC BANONGILL STATION, IN VICTORIA, IS ONCE AGAIN A FAMILY HOME THANKS TO THE CARE AND ATTENTION OF OWNERS JILL AND DAN BINGHAM.

WORDS RACHEL WHITE PHOTOGRAPHY LEON SCHOOTS
STYLING BELLE HEMMING BRIGHT



"It's a beautiful house to live in because there's so much light and we've got such amazing views of the garden," says homeowner Jill of the 1853-built residence. **FACING PAGE** Jill gathers a bouquet of homegrown dahlias. "We plant over 2000 tubers each year in our garden," she says.

"EVERYONE IN THE AREA KNOWS ABOUT BANONGILL Station," says long-time Skipton resident Jill Bingham, 53. "Before we bought the property, I'd come to a couple of open gardens here and I remember thinking it was the most beautiful place I'd ever been. Never in a million years did I imagine we'd ever live here!" But when fate presented an opportunity, Jill and her husband Dan, 55, seized the chance with both hands.

They bought the 2023-hectare property, located in Victoria's Western District on Wadawurrung Country, off-market in late 2020 and moved in early the following year with their youngest daughters Tess, 20, and Bella, 14. "We were actually looking for more farming land initially," recalls Jill. "We weren't looking to buy the house, but it was part of the deal."

Jill and Dan, both farmers, knew exactly what to do with the land, which bordered their existing mixed cropping and livestock properties, but quickly realised they would need all the help they could get restoring the historic homestead. "I was equal parts excited and terrified, and completely overwhelmed," says Jill.

Built over two distinct periods, the oldest section of the home started life as a stone cottage in 1853. This section houses the kitchen, scullery and former nursery. In 1905, a grand red-brick extension was added, making up a third of the current dwelling. At 87 metres along its north-facing frontage, Banongill Station was built to impress, with six large bedrooms, four bathrooms, three living areas, a billiard room and a full-length verandah.

"It's been a massive undertaking," admits Jill. "When we moved in, the house was just a shell. A lot of the original features, like the fireplaces, were missing and the kitchen wasn't functional. It hadn't been lived in properly for a really long time."

To aid the restoration process, Jill enlisted the services of her good friend, interior designer Genevieve Wallis, who had recently set up her own design studio in nearby Ballarat. "There was a lot of work needed to maintain the structure," says Genevieve, "but my primary design brief was to inject warmth and fun into the interiors."

Genevieve chose bold textures, a unified colour palette and a few unexpected accents to keep things lively and modern, while respecting the home's heritage features. "I used variations of the same tones and textures throughout the house to create consistency end-to-end," explains Genevieve. "The size of the home meant we really couldn't be too subtle with the design, or it would be lost in the space completely."

With more room to move than ever before, Jill and Dan enjoy sharing their home with friends and family, including their older daughters Sophie, 28, Lily, 26, and Ruby, 23, who no longer live at home. "It's great to have the extra space because our eldest, Sophie, is married with a little boy and another on the way, so it's nice to have room for lots of family to be here all at once," says Jill.

United in their vision for the home, Jill and Genevieve agree that the strength of their friendship helped them collaborate effectively on this challenging project. "We were open to >

"The stone section of the home has been rendered, and the rest of the extension is red brick. We've restored the exterior, so we've brought the render colour back to the red brick colour," says Jill. "We worked with a heritage consultant to get the right colour." **FACING PAGE** Haymes Paint in shades of Bush Eucalypt and Remote Green create a serene feeling in the kitchen. "The first thing we did was the kitchen, and that was during lockdown so it was a two-year process," says Jill. "We wanted a kitchen that looked like it had been here forever. It's the hub of the home where people congregate." Ballarat's Andrew Mann Joinery completed the finishing touches.



"Being respectful of that history and being able to honour it has been really rewarding."



CLOCKWISE, FROM LEFT Taps from Designer Tapware Co pair with a Chambord sink; "Having so much space took a lot of getting used to. We used to lose Bella all the time - she'd just wander off!" says Jill of their cute dog; the old station storeroom held provisions for workers and food for the homestead kitchen. **FACING PAGE, CLOCKWISE, FROM TOP LEFT** The property's fruit trees hold peaches, figs, apples, pears, quinces, apricots and more; zinnias, cosmos, Queen Anne's lace and celosia are grown from seed in the greenhouse; "The renovation has been very respectful of the home's history; we haven't changed the timber dining room," says Jill; a path leads through an escallonia hedge.



"We didn't want to live in a museum, we wanted it to be a comfortable family home," Jill says. "I love the warmth of the timber and the cupboards hidden at either side of the fireplace in the dining room and lounge area. I also like the large windows that have a beautiful view of the garden and the paddocks in the distance."

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exploring each other's ideas. There was also an established level of trust there already," says Genevieve. "Working with Jill has been fluent because of our friendship."

This fluency is evident in the harmonious visual language they created together. "Genevieve understood that we wanted it to be a comfortable family home, not necessarily full of antiques, but very respectful of history nonetheless," says Jill.

Buying an historic home in a near-derelict state presented unique challenges, including a long list of restoration works, but Jill says it's been surprisingly satisfying to learn more about the house from the process of repairing it. "We had to repair a lot of the solid plaster in one section, and the plasterer said he thought the sand in the plaster was from the property," she says. "We realised it was from the banks

of the creek, so he was able to make new render from the same material as the old. Being respectful of that history and being able to honour it has been really rewarding."

Although important, restoring the physical building isn't what has made the biggest impact at Banongill Station. Ultimately, restoring a human connection is what's truly brought the grand old dame back to life.

"The homestead was most recently owned by an agricultural investment company; it hadn't been a full-time family home in decades," says Genevieve. "Seeing each of the rooms come back to life and watching how much Jill, Dan, their daughters, and now their grandkids, can enjoy it has been the most rewarding thing for me - they're building their own legacy of memories." *CG*

Visit banongillstation.com.au, genevievewallis.com, and andrewmannjoinery.com.au

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CLOCKWISE, FROM LEFT The master bedroom features a custom bedhead from Heatherly Design and linen from Adairs. The walls are painted in Porter's Paints Gunmetal Grey; an existing mural in the old nursery was painted on Belgian linen and glued to the wall; "The bath is original, it was removed from another bathroom and re-enamelled," says Jill; a casual setting in the master bedroom; Alice Wildflower tiles from Perini make a lovely bathroom backdrop. FACING PAGE "The Flower Room has an entry from the garden where you can hang your coat and hat, and wash your hands," says Jill. "I think it was also where flowers for the homestead were arranged. The room is completely original, including the beautiful window."





CLOCKWISE, FROM LEFT The path through the picking garden leads to the change rooms on either side of the building. They sit above a deck on the creek which once had a diving board. It's where people swam and boated on the creek," says Jill; the garage features a loft room; a path winds along the western side of the garden, from the homestead to the creek; the station store also houses a marble butcher's room and a wood storage room.



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1 Andorra rug in Albatross, from \$1500, from Armadillo. 2 Thomas O'Brien Bryant floor lamp in Bronze/Brass, POA, from Bloomingdales Lighting. 3 Hutt wool throw in Ivy/Natural, \$259, from Città. 4 Etra Eucalypt velvet cushion, \$99, from L&M Home. 5 Laura armchair in Earth, \$2885, from Crafted. 6 A.H. Beard Body Balance Integra II mattress, \$2199, from Harvey Norman. 7 Mulberry kubu carry basket, from \$109, from Wicka. 8 Lucerne compote in Bayleaf, \$210, from Provincial Home Living. 9 Large single bowl narrow fluted farmhouse sink, \$1890, from Farmhouse Sinks. 10 Campania two-hole bridge mixer with goose neck swivel spout, \$1560, from Designer Tapware Co. 11 Celeste coffee table in White Marble Black, \$1905, from GlobeWest. 12 Sovereign urn in White, \$239.95, from Provincial Home Living. 13 Half Hailstorm paint, from Porter's Paints. 14 Mariner paint, from Porter's Paints. 15 Lawson side table in Natural, \$450, from Provincial Home Living. 16 Flocca Macaron linen cushion in Fonda, \$129, from Hale Mercantile Co.

