



# Destined for **Life in the Country**

Story and Images Marilyn Collins

**T**he recent worst storm experienced in the Hunter Region for 100 years certainly tested every home for its tolerance to withstand gale-force winds and torrential rain for days on end.

One new residence built for Sarah and Robert at Luskintyre passed with flying colours due to the high standard of craftsmanship by their chosen Morpeth-based builders, Ken and Daniel Proctor of Proctor Building Solutions.

The couple chose their home site of 100 acres at Luskintyre, a small rural area in the Hunter Region just off the New England Highway near Lochinvar. Luskintyre is known in the region for two landmark attractions.

One is the Luskintyre Bridge used in the filming of the popular film "Tomorrow When the War Began", and the other is the nearby Luskintyre Aviation Flying Museum, which has the largest fleet of operational Tiger Moths in Australia, based on a private airfield.

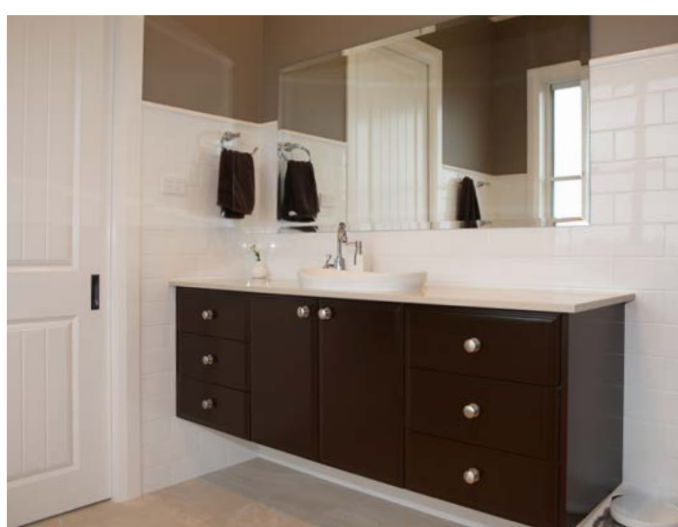
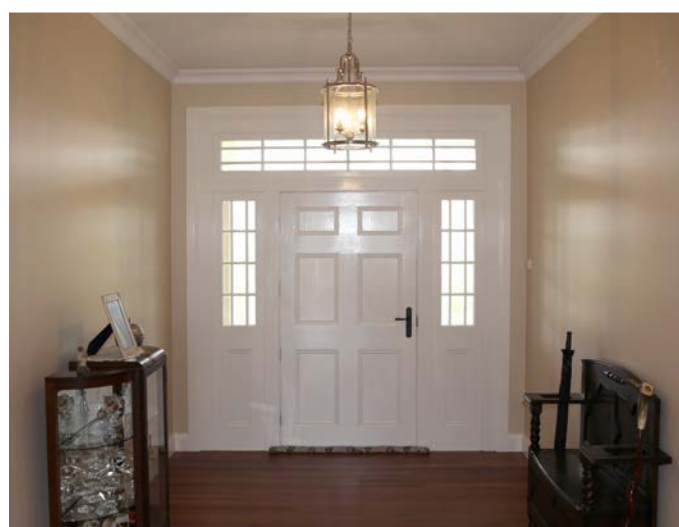
Five hangars are used for the storage and restoration of vintage aeroplanes, particularly de Havilland Tiger Moths.

The much-travelled couple had moved every two years for ten years, so they decided to settle down in this part of the region. Robert, born and bred on his parents' Merriwa cattle station, wanted to create his own land holding to run beef cattle and give their sons the same country-lifestyle childhood.

Sarah and Robert share a common, work-related career, both being employed in the Meat and Livestock Industry, so it was obvious that their acquisition of such a parcel of land, purchased in 2012, would be the ideal site for their dream country homestead on which to raise their two active young sons and create their own going concern for grazing beef cattle.

"We had in mind a home design which was a blend of a modern and sophisticated country homestead, without looking cheesy country," explained Sarah, "if you know what I mean." >





After visiting a number of home display centres to gain inspiration and a feel for the latest creative home ideas, they felt they needed to build rather than try to adapt a design more suitable for a residential block. They contacted Ken and Daniel Proctor of Proctor Building Solutions, who had been referred to them. They provided a list of their criteria on which to design their proposed home.

The 'must haves' included a Zincalume roof, a rendered exterior, 10-foot high ceilings, an eco-friendly design with no air conditioning and five bedrooms plus a study with open, informal living space. Most importantly, every room had to have a view of the surrounding paddocks, the large dam below the house paddock and the surrounding locality!

The initial floor plan was massively bigger than the actual size built, of some 400 squares, so compromises had to be made due to budget constraints. The decision to build at the furthest point of the building envelope created a long driveway down to the adjoining double carport which shares the same roofline of the residence. Ken and Daniel's concept was in line with the couple's thoughts as they worked on the final plans together.

Due to the high ceilings it was decided to install high internal "Hume" doors (2340 millimetres), ceiling fans, and tinted glass windows. A concession to chilly winter mornings and evenings was the installation of a wood stove set onto a terrazzo hearth positioned in the corner of the living room, which would warm the house easily.

The wide, front entry foyer was one touch of country-style grandeur that they decided to include in the design. The door tread step is terrazzo, created in one piece with the same colour toning as the fireplace hearth. The panelled front door is a recreation of a picture found online by Sarah of an old-world front door, with side panels and skylight above the door. A decision was made to feature bevelled glass in the side panels and skylight.

Sarah said she underestimated the time and energy one puts into building a new home and the time needed for internal and external colours and fittings, adding that the internet was a source of many a great find.

The kitchen, fitted by "Hunter Kitchen King", is a mix of industrial/French provincial style. Sarah wanted a Caesarstone-topped island bench without a sink, giving ample room for the family to sit on stools for casual meals and perfect for serving platters of food when entertaining.

The sparkling-white kitchen has the sink positioned overlooking the rear view of the property and has a full view of the back verandah. The walk-in pantry was designed big with ample shelving to accommodate all small appliances such as kettles and toasters, keeping the kitchen clean and tidy. A stunning feature is the overhanging pendant lights acquired from Melbourne's Schots Home Emporium.

The white tiles, originating from Italy and supplied by Jacoba Tiles, were literally a "splash out and a must have" which add the perfect ambience of a Tuscan country kitchen and give a special, upmarket look to the entire space.

Opposite flows the informal lounge room designed to cater for a young family watching television together. Aluminium white French doors feature in this room as well as the master bedroom – all windows for the residence were supplied by Langford Windows.

Throughout the main living area the floors have been laid with red ironbark hardwood, and the lounge and bedrooms have the deepest and thickest carpets, adding a touch of comfort and luxury. As a concession to modern-day living, the formal dining room has been positioned in the open living space, flowing from the kitchen and opening out onto the rear verandah.

"The huge dining table was once my granddad's," said Robert. "Growing up we often referred to the table as granddad's table. When I received it I decided to give it a facelift by sanding it back and applying a clear varnish. This table has great sentimental connection and is now a lovely, practical and conversational piece with interesting grains showing throughout the timber and perfect for the next generation to utilise."

The living room features antique English oak and French walnut dressers/sideboards locally found in Newcastle, which give that true traditional country feel, with similar pieces in the main entry foyer.

The master suite is at the opposite end of the house to the other bedrooms, with an entry foyer leading into a spacious room with a wall of windows and a French door opening onto the rear lawn. The room links a massive walk-in dressing room with storage and hanging space and an ensuite with a separate toilet. A chesterfield-style leather studded bedhead is a special acquired piece in the master bedroom.

Next to the bedroom is the couple's study, as they both often work from home in their professional roles. All rooms have been fitted with internet connections. >





The side entrance to the residence is via the carport straight into the spacious tiled-floor mud room/laundry room with a separate toilet, this facility being well positioned to take off farm boots and wash up before entering the main part of the house.

The four guest rooms, each with extensive, built-in wardrobe space, are near to the shared, three-way bathroom with the same custom-designed vanity as the ensuite bathroom – chocolate brown in colour. A deep soaking bath and glass-screened shower recess has been created with a wall colour of deep blue.


Special attention was given to the selection of door handles, 140-millimetre skirting boards, wide architraves and standard decorative cornices.

Being a country home, the installation of a massive 160,000 litre water tank, positioned on the dam side of the house, will ensure a plentiful water supply.

Robert already has his “man shed” established for his machinery and farm equipment. The boys have their chooks, and a young kelpie pup completes the country scene.

The build took seven months from February to September 2014. During the build they lived in nearby Singleton, so they were on hand to keep a watchful eye on the progress and to liaise instantly if any problems arose or changes had to be made. Sarah and Robert said their building project with Proctor Building Solutions was a well-managed and streamlined process, allowing for lots of day-to-day communication which paved the way for a positive and enjoyable building experience.

“As a result, I would highly recommend Proctors to anyone looking to build. We were impressed with their workmanship, ability to tailor to our budget, flexibility and overall professionalism,” Robert said.

The couple's next project will be the creation of a front garden and landscaping to add the final touch to what is already a charming country home. 

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*Builder: Proctor Building Solutions*

*Windows: Langford Windows*

*Tiles: Jacoba Tiles*