

# THE Owner Builder

BE INSPIRED – REAL STORIES ABOUT REAL OWNER BUILDERS

216 ♦ DECEMBER 2019-FEBRUARY 2020 ♦ SUMMER 2019

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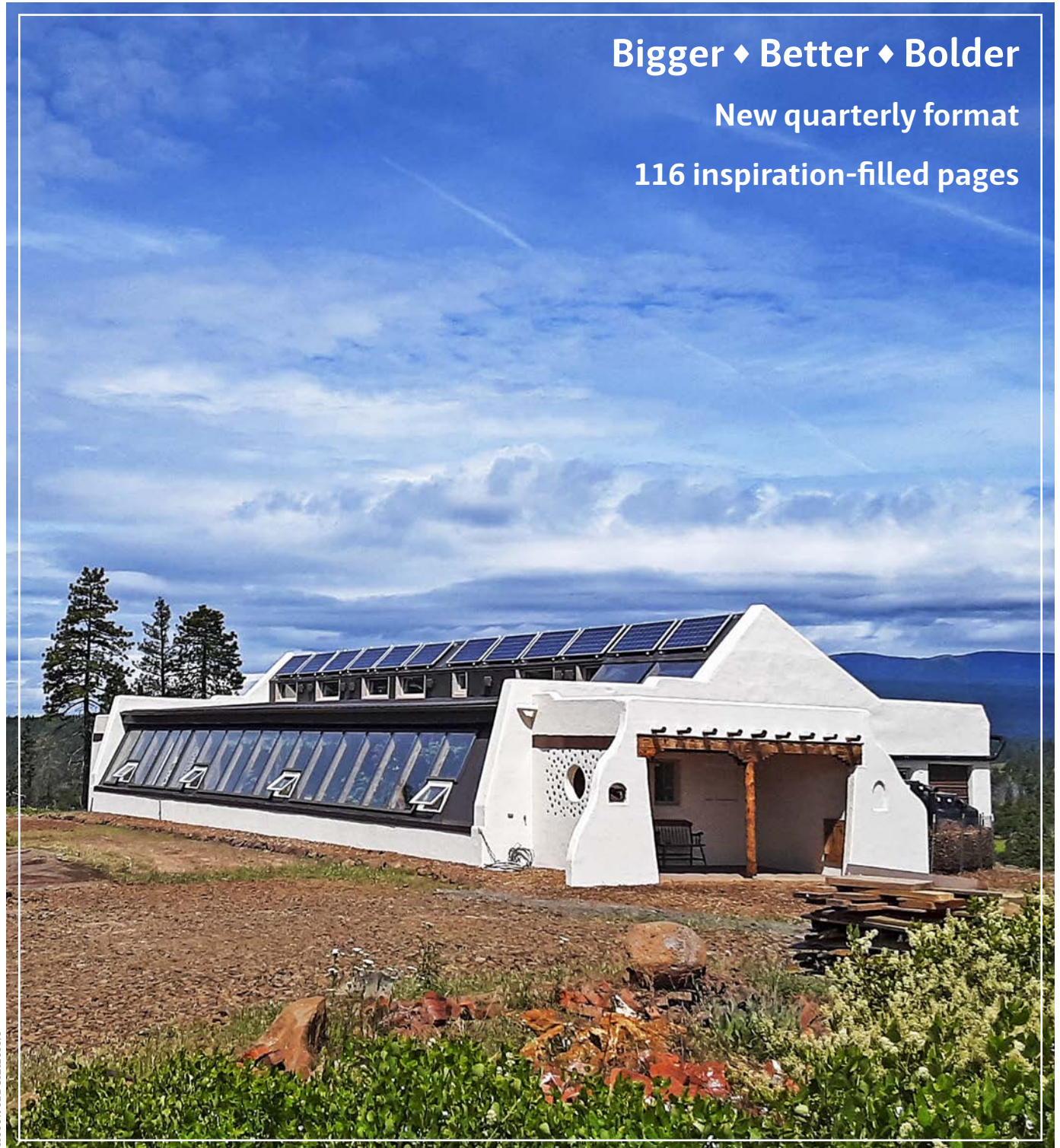


PHOTO: JOEL CHALLUPNY

EARTHSHIP ♦ FERROCEMENT ♦ URBAN INFILL ♦ GRANNY FLAT ♦ STRAW BALE







# Events wrap-up...

## **Sustainable House Day**

15 September 2019

Narara Ecovillage, Narara NSW

By Linda Scott, Photos by Meng

With nine completed houses open for viewing, built of straw bale, hemp and straw panels, plus an Earthship-inspired home, the visitors streamed through the gate all day.

Led by ecovillager Liz Bassett, over sixty members were involved in making sure the day ran smoothly. From parking, welcome, registration, information on tours to talks and food, it was a day that attracted those curious about the ecovillage and wishing to learn about sustainable housing. The annual national Sustainable House Day event offers visitors the opportunity to view inside these houses.

More than 500 visitors and members mingled and exchanged information, with the opportunity to talk to architects, designers and builders, while children enjoyed riding their bikes, playing on the trampolines or climbing the treehouse.

As a break after walking around the village, visitors were able rest their feet at a variety of talks, including a talk about Tiny Houses and a presentation on plans for a natural house, with bamboo reciprocal roof and a hobbit-style studio attached. The ecovillage's building review panel offered visitors the chance to learn about the sustainability guidelines. Founder Lyndall Parris shared how her vision is becoming a reality with her hemp house, owner built by husband Dave, close to lock up stage.

The Coffee Cart was open for business as well as an improvised outdoor café for tasty lunches, with outdoor seating under the gazebo or a quick visit to the courtyard for a pizza baked in the woodfire pizza oven.

As they left, a quick survey revealed that what visitors enjoyed the most was the Earthship-inspired home, the ability



to talk to home owners and builders, to see inside houses with natural building materials and the general feel and atmosphere of the village.

Keep in touch with events via the website and subscribe to the newsletter. Visit on one of the monthly open days. There are also several natural building workshops (earthbag, cob, light earth and straw bale) coming up. And, of course, keep an eye out for next year's Sustainable House Day. ♦

### ♦ **Narara Ecovillage**

Led by founder Lyndall Parris, 20 Narara Ecovillage pioneers purchased the land in 2013, after many years of negotiation. In 2018 the ecovillage received the Subdivision Certificate from Central Coast Council and 2019 saw the first houses completed, with nine being occupied by the end of the year. With Stage 1 sold out, Stage 2 plans are well underway; a DA will go to council in the next few months.

02 4328 1588

[www.nararaecovillage.com](http://www.nararaecovillage.com)



## Events wrap-up (cont'd)



## Sustainable House Day

15 September 2019

Shepherds Ground Village, Butterwick NSW

By Sally Maguire

Sustainable House Day 2019 at Shepherds Ground coincided with the Spring Open Day and there were more than 150 people 'on the Ground' that day. Two hemp masonry homes were open for inspection. Builder Shane Hannan held an information session on building with hemp masonry and was later joined by local architect, Natalie Van Der Merwe. Together they spent a couple of hours taking questions from those interested in hemp design and construction.

Solar expert Rohan Story from Immortal Systems gave off-grid solar advice and tips to interested parties. Steve Denshire from Goodwood Constructions spoke about sustainable building techniques, especially in relation to design life, and also got people involved in building a mud/hemp pizza oven for our village. Pederson Design had a display that focused on the concepts of Passive Houses and sustainability. Shepherds Ground members did the catering and sold biodynamic produce as did Slow Food Hunter Valley. The day was an enormous success and all monies raised are already being used for tree planting.

### Margie's house

This home was designed from the outset to be built from hemp. It follows a set of building guidelines that encourage sustainability and healthy building biology. The house footprint is minimal and all materials were chosen to reflect the low carbon ethos of the Shepherds Ground Farm and Village.

*Tour some of Australia's most environmentally progressive homes on show annually. A valuable resource for anyone looking for inspiration, ideas and the key to sustainable living. The next SHD will be on 20 September 2020 nationwide.*

**03 9631 5421, [www.sustainablehouseday.com](http://www.sustainablehouseday.com)**

The house is entirely off-grid and solar passive design principles were factored into all aspects of the house. A feature of this house is the *Jotul* wood burning stove, low emissions 87%. Building an off-grid, hemp masonry home is an achievement that Margie shares with all those who helped, and living in this unique home is a pleasure.

### Jane's house

This was the first hemp masonry home to be completed and lived in on the site. Jane's house is completely electric and she did extensive consultation with a solar expert to ensure her power needs would be met; the home includes a 7-Star rated Daikin air conditioner. Universal design accessibility was also taken into account, with ramps, doorways and living spaces designed to accommodate disability and wheelchair access.

### Celebration

Shepherds Ground is a blossoming farm and village. This will be the first year that a commercial crop has been produced – biodynamic garlic – and this will be celebrated with a 'Harvest, Haul and Plait' your own garlic day in November. Other farming ventures underway include raising heritage Baudin pigs and preparing the ground for cabbage patches. The market garden is now producing enough biodynamic produce and flowers to service village members and friends at the 'Farmgate' held every Wednesday.



Construction on the fifth hemp home is well underway with the *Hempcrete* walls completed recently. This was done with the generous help of a huge team of volunteers made up not only of Shepherds Ground members but people from far and wide who are interested in learning about hemp construction. The hemp install was led by Hemp Lime Constructions, a small team who can now say they have built their very first full *Hempcrete* home. Three more members are currently poised to begin construction in the coming months.

Shepherds Ground members are so pleased to be able to work with people and organisations at the forefront of natural building techniques in Australia. This is a young but fast growing industry and whenever we can we are holding workshops and information sessions to help facilitate the sharing of knowledge and expertise. ♦

### ♦ Shepherds Ground Farm and Village

There are still a limited number of shares left in Shepherds Ground. Village construction is expected to ramp up in the coming year and focus can now turn to some of the longer term projects, including a community hall as well as shared housing, to facilitate the concepts of affordable and cradle to the grave housing.

0411 791 517

[www.shepherdsground.com.au](http://www.shepherdsground.com.au)



## Events wrap-up (cont'd)



### **Eltham Mudbrick Tour**

20 October 2019

St Andrews, Victoria

*By John Kennedy*

After attending the 2019 Eltham Mudbrick Tour, I've reached the conclusion that owner built mud brick homes mature like good wine.

The Tour has been running annually, as a fundraiser for the Eltham High School Music Program, for close enough to thirty years and continues to grow in attendance and interest each year. Whereas in recent years the open home visits have largely been in and around the Eltham residential precinct, with a mix of newer and older builds, this year the tour took in five properties all in the St Andrews area at the northern end of the Nillumbik Shire.

A couple of the homes remain in the hands of the people who built them thirty-five or so years ago. This was during one of the great eras of owner building locally, when all sorts of goods were scrounged and recycled – beautiful unique timbers, industrial building trusses, old bridge beams, leadlight windows – and when the land could be bought cheaply and the owner builder sweat equity method took them a long way. One owner reminded me that she and her husband built their home in twelve months. 'We started on the job early every morning, then went off to our jobs, built again when we returned home and had monumental weekend working bees with family and friends,' she related.

### **Open homes**

The four homes that were open all had a common thread. A couple had inground swimming pools included right from the project start; the bush fire risk was – and still is – considerable, so it was great to have a water resource stored and it was ideal for a dip after a day of muddying.



PHOTO: JANE HINWOOD / NMA



Two of the homes have had extensions made, putting a counter to the view that a lot of muddies are almost impossible to alter or expand sympathetically. One had a large extension added using rendered concrete block construction, to take in a former courtyard area and create extra family accommodation. Similarly another is underway, also using concrete blocks on a concrete slab, which will be appropriately clad at the finish.

One of the homes is a bit more recently built but the owner builder has included a wood fired pizza oven plus an adjacent gazebo for eating and drinking services.

The striking thing about all four of the homes was the impacts of the personal tastes of their owners; wonderful carpentry using recycled timbers, art works, antique furniture pieces and rugs made them all delightful personal living spaces exuding great warmth, comfort and character.

Most of the houses included another Eltham owner built feature – an open fire place large enough to burn timbers about as big as a railway sleeper! It is worth remembering that conventional services like power, water etc. just weren't, and in many of these locations still are not, available. Solar panels are foremost on a lot of these properties.

## Mixed use complex

The fifth building on the tour was the remarkable building complex constructed on the St Andrews cross roads on a difficult site located immediately opposite the famous Saturday St Andrews Community Market (see *TOB 183 June/July 2014*).

Built in a series of stages over at least five years by local builder Michael Young, the complex combines a pizzeria-restaurant and coffee shop, that trades as A Boy Named Sue, with the larger building now occupied by local winemakers Punch Wines, as their cellar door with an apartment available for lease above. There is also a small adjoining mix of service buildings with the building work, material choices and detailing all of the highest standard.





## Events wrap-up (cont'd)



### Compliments

And finally, a compliment to the Eltham Mudbrick Tour organisers. It takes a large number of volunteers to run, it functions with a fleet of Budget rental buses that drop you off at each house location with another bus ready to take you on to the next open house after your inspection. The tour and attendance is so popular, I think about three hundred paid up attendees, that you must book online and take an allocated time to go on the tour. It works so well that a couple of hours is about the ideal time to allocate.

After the cost of public risk insurance almost threatened its closure only a few years back, the organising Committee has undertaken a real risk management plan to help the day function. I well remember the debacle of the early days when you simply turned up and registered for a free for all, then drove your own car around the often tiny and one-way streets of Nillumbik Shire where there was really no parking available.

It was great to see many younger members and couples on the tour. With the unaffordability of a lot of conventional housing, I took this as a sign of a comeback ahead with more new sweat equity based, owner built and less than traditional housing projects ahead.

This is a great day so if you haven't been, think ahead and register online for the 2020 Eltham Mudbrick Tour to be held in October. ♦

### ♦ Eltham Mudbrick Tour

The tour maintains the tradition pioneered by legendary mud brick house architect and builder Alistair Knox. It is run by Eltham High School community volunteers to support the school's renowned instrumental music program.

[www.elthammudbricktour.org](http://www.elthammudbricktour.org)  
Facebook: *Eltham Mudbrick Tour*

### ♦ Nillumbik Mudbrick Association

The principal aims of NMA are to protect and promote the mudbrick building industry and to strengthen Nillumbik's standing as Australia's most important mudbrick region. Tour Platinum Sponsor.

[www.mudbrick.org.au](http://www.mudbrick.org.au)







PHOTO: ANGEL BENSON

## Heartfelt thanks from Eltham High School

Being involved in the Eltham Mudbrick Tour over the last 10 years has been an amazing opportunity for Eltham High School's community of students, teachers and parents to connect with our larger Shire community but also the much broader passionate mud brick house community across metro Melbourne, regionally and interstate, whilst raising funds for our extraordinary and renowned music program. The tour reflects the very strong generosity of spirit in these communities that come together for one day each October to experience and celebrate the unique and beautiful homes, gardens and landscapes within Nillumbik Shire. Moving the tour to the St Andrews area this year gave it new energy and opportunities to interact with and support that community.

We extend heartfelt thanks to all of the tours' homeowners present and past, as the tour would not be possible without their willingness to open their homes. Also to all who support the tour through their attendance, freely given time and services, plus sponsorship including our major sponsor, Nillumbik Shire Council.



PHOTO: JANE HINWOOD / NMA



PHOTO: JANE HINWOOD / NMA



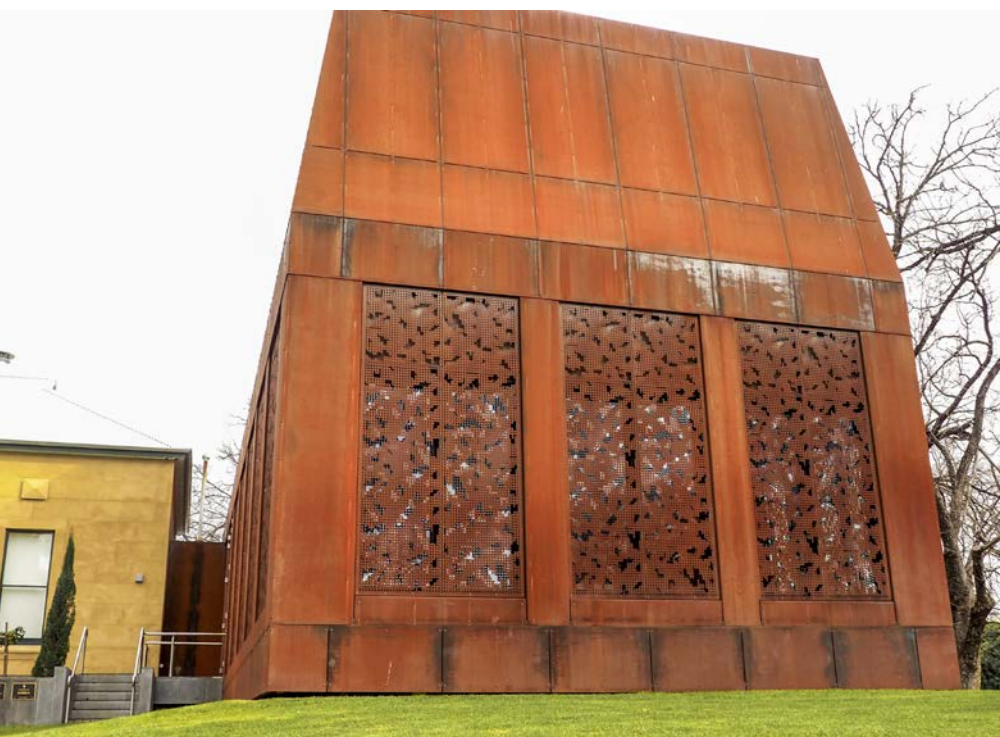
## Events wrap-up (cont'd)

### ***Bendigo Sustainable House Day***

27 October 2019

Bendigo Vic

By Liz Martin



Bendigo residents are keen for more information about how to be more sustainable, save energy and money and live a more comfortable life. The day started with Nicola Welland giving us lots of information about building materials and the relative advantages of different types of insulation. Tim Forcey then suggested we all use reverse cycle heat pumps for our heating, cooling and hot water and get off gas, which is becoming increasingly more expensive and the way it is produced is a problem. When you add solar you are way ahead in looking after your energy needs.

Around 250 people then started exploring the eight houses, the *Ortech* prefabricated village and the RSL Soldiers Memorial Passive House extension.

A mud brick house had added insulation, retro-fitted double glazing, painted the roof and added a sunny north facing extension. A small terrace house gave a great example of living small and lightly on the planet. Maree and George's *Timbercrete* house and garden was very popular. The permaculture farm was a treat and several houses that had been retrofitted were supplying lots of information to those with existing homes. And then there were the new builds with high levels of insulation.

Bendigo Sustainable House day is packed with information and experience; every year the homeowners share the secrets that make their homes more sustainable to live in, so others can come away inspired. ♦



#### ♦ **Bendigo Sustainability Group**

Creating a supportive culture for understanding, inspiration, action and hope from which the wider Bendigo community can grow a sustainable future together.

03 5443 5244

[www.bsg.org.au](http://www.bsg.org.au)



## From the ashes...



Maree and George lost nearly everything on their property in the Black Saturday bushfires of 2009. They are previous visitors to Bendigo Sustainable House Day and researched materials and designs for their new build with inspiration from those days.

Their philosophy was to use recycled materials where possible and often advertised for sources. One of these adverts produced a load of old bridge timbers that are a feature of the house inside. The house was built using *Timbercrete* bricks, made of concrete and sawdust and timber waste. Inside, bookshelves line the walls of the snug living room heated by a wood fire. In summer the house is well insulated, protected by a grape vine for shade and remains cool with no air conditioning.

As you tour the extensive gardens you can see remnants of the old buildings and walk across what was once the tiled bathroom floor. Dams and native plantations provide habitat for many species of birds. There are many water tanks, including one that is never touched but sits there in case of fire. They compost and have wicking beds and are setting up a garden surrounded by recycled pallets that they hope the Karen Community will use as a community garden. George has been creative with old tools that were burnt in the fire but are now 'farm animals' scattered through the garden. The children's playground is made of huge beams and creative use of old boats.

From the ashes comes a house built with purpose and care and a garden regrown to provide a new sanctuary for its owners. ♦

