

50 Towns in 50 Weeks

Tunbridge

50 Tassie Towns looks at the little places you might have heard of but never really explored. It's about the locations that make our state special and the people who call them home. ISABEL BIRD reports.

TUNBRIDGE sits adjacent to the Midland Highway, on a quiet, two-minute detour from the busy commuters, tourists and truckies.

The highway drone is somewhat ironic, given the former business of its colonial town.

It used to be a well-known coaching stop for companies and their families between Launceston and Hobart.

The Victoria Inn, the Tunbridge Inn and the York Inn used to house guests overnight.

Today, the three-storey Tunbridge Manor, built in 1840, still sits prominently along the road, with its eight bedrooms, various bathrooms, living spaces, attic rooms and cellar.

The day I travel into the town is the first time I've ever been to Tunbridge.

I pass just two cars on the road. The only other movement comes from inside a grand sandstone, two-

storey Georgian building, that used to house the general store.

As I head over to investigate I'm greeted by owner, Malcolm Enright, and carpenter Kim Vagt.

Designer Mr Enright, from Brisbane, lives in Tasmania for two months of the year, and Mr Vagt, from the US, in a restored "Californian bungalow" up the road.

Mr Enright and his wife Barbara Heath, a jeweller, bought the property and began restoring it eight years ago.

The creative duo are in no rush to bring this historic 1846 property back to its original Georgian state. "It was just in a sphenozzle, this place," Mr Enright said.

"We have ripped out every bit of Edwardian and Victorian crap that was there and have started again. We are reinstating what it looks like to be Georgian."

The upstairs Georgian symmetry

layout, with two smaller bedrooms and two larger bedrooms, has already been returned.

A back wall has been stripped back to reveal the bright pink original Georgian paint.

The work has all been undertaken with a passion for architectural practice, with only the best being brought in to undertake the work, such as an elderly stonemason from Oatlands, and experienced plasterers who undertook similar work on properties at Oatlands.

"It is a long-term love affair," Mr Enright said.

"Everyone is trying to draw us on what it is going to be, and asking 'Why are you doing all of this?'"

But Mr Enright said there is no long-term plan.

"At the moment we just really love the space," he said.



Back to the future... Tunbridge Manor owner Malcolm Enright and carpenter Kim Vagt at the inn.
PICTURES: ISABEL BIRD



Tunbridge... the things you should do

- Take a self-driven tour around the town and be entranced by the many cottages, some restored and some not.
- Visit the Township Lagoon Nature Reserve, and see if you can spot the endangered Tunbridge buttercup.
- Inspect a former horse-drawn carriage, that sits on display, and imagine the travellers from former decades.
- Pack a barbecue picnic and make use of the cooking facilities, and playground, at the Tunbridge Community Park.
- Inspect the Tunbridge Convict Bridge, built in 1848 by convicts

