

45 Napier Street, Fitzroy 3065....(between Victoria Parade and Gertrude Street)

### **The House:**

This two storey terrace house was built in 1850. A ground floor extension of 2 bedrooms and a wash house/bathroom was added in 1880. These new rooms were rented to visitors to the Great Exhibition. Access was via the garden path, extending from the kitchen to the back yard. There was no garden as such....just dirt. A chain operated flushing toilet was added in 1897, when 'Smellbourne's' sewerage was first connected.

I purchased the property as a run-down rooming house in November, 1999. The facade was plain, with peeling paint. There were 7 numbered bedrooms, 1 indoor cold water tap, no hot water and only 2 power points...both in the kitchen, with a disconnected, ancient gas stove...and of course no heating. In the wash house was a gas meter, double trough, clothes boiling copper with laundry stick, an old bath tub over which a home-made shower dangled and a rocket-style heater. By feeding the gas meter with 20 cent coins and igniting the rocket, a quick shower was instantly available.

This was all huge fun during the summer months, but I needed to make plans for surviving in winter so I went about creating my dream bathroom in what was bedroom no.2....all black and white, a claw-foot iron bath and cupid bronze chandelier holding dusky pink fittings. Original Victorian oil paintings and frame posters now adorn the walls.

Security at the front of the house was also a priority. A local iron craftsman copied the wrought iron window and door security from a photo I had taken in Budapest the previous year.

The newer part of the building was falling apart, so over the next year I redesigned the house from the kitchen on, keeping sections of the original high garden wall, to create light wells and garden nooks. The reconstruction was completed in 2002.

You will have reached my front door when you find the painted doormat on the pavement! Inside you can glimpse the green of the back garden but will probably be distracted by the meditation and welcoming room, where a large altar dedicated to encouraging world peace is crowded with wax figures and candles. Many characters...large and small...reside here. Including a very tall, protective dragon called George.

As you continue towards the garden you will pass a large theatre prop of gumnut babies and the dining room, with an old theatrical stage backdrop of an Italian garden scene on the wall. Two courtyard gardens and an original garden wall provide nooks and crannies for many plants and give me an enchanting view through the kitchen window.

Once up the stairs to the lounge, the back garden dominates the view through a two storey bay window, filling the room with light and colour. Negotiate the indoor swing, pass the two full-sized fairies Looking down from the mezzanine, walk under the magnificent green crystal chandelier and you are there.

### **The Garden:**

I designed the garden using a frame-work of steel archways as the focal point. The bluestone path and slate patio were created upon completion of the building. Working within the confines of a long and narrow space, the design promotes an illusion of width, and allows for a feature at each main junction of the archway.

Climbing roses, Chilean Jasmine and various creepers weave their way up and over the frame. Camelias, azaleas and geraniums provide the stable colour, with violets and ferns thriving in the many shaded sections. A bird bath provides constant joy and of course there is the chandelier....

Hanging baskets of ferns and perennials such as pansies, balsam and orchids adorn the archways, to lead the eye along. In the final southern section is a thriving vegetable and herb patch.

Many of the plants are self-seeded and left to their own devices. I also cheat a bit with a fake here and there and to fill a colour gap.

