



Treasure trove

Adrian Cutting and Amelia Ansaldi have filled their cottage in the Adelaide Hills with interesting furniture amassed during decades of professional antiques collecting.

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A Victorian cast-iron garden table with apples from the garden. Facing page Amelia, Adrian and Felix on the stone verandah at the back of their early settler's cottage.



The Hahndorf settler's table in the living room has a cedar and pine plank top and red-gum base. **Facing page, top** The front of the cottage next door to the antique shop. **Facing page, below** Isabella's bedroom opens onto the back verandah

As you step from the street straight into the living room of Adrian Cutting and Amelia Ansaldi's early settler's cottage, its warmth and charm beguile. The wood fire crackles and the 1960s leather couches invite you to linger — and as you do, your eye starts to wander over a wealth of unusual decorations, from naïve folk art and Danish needlepoint to early Australian folk-art furniture, such as a side table made from a wine barrel lid with tree branches for legs.

The cottage, built in 1856, is on the main street in the village of Meadows in the Adelaide Hills. It's filled with treasures the couple has amassed during 20 years of collecting and selling antiques.

Adrian and Amelia, both 38, met when they were 18 and have been a team ever since. Adrian spent two years working for a dealer, then struck out on his own. Amelia left her job as a receptionist at the same time and they began to develop Country Life Antiques, which has recently developed into Danish Vintage Modern.

The cottage, next door to their antique shop, became theirs in 1991 and 16 years on, it's still home, though the family has grown to include their young children, Isabella and Felix. Meadows is a small village steeped in history, close to the Kuitpo Forest and about 45 minutes drive south-east of the city.

Adrian and Amelia, who both grew up in the Adelaide Hills, were looking "for an old home, with a cottage-y country charm". Built in the mid-19th century by Jesse Catt, a stonemason and butcher, the building still retains many of the attractive features of an original settler's cottage.

"We speculate that the butcher's shop was on the right side of the house, which is now Felix's room," Adrian says. The large, old-fashioned door, made of wood and wrought iron, that opens to the street is typical of a shop of that era.

"Some of the buildings in Meadows are among the oldest in the state," Adrian says. "There was a pug [brick mill] here back in the 1840s, so the bricks in the front of the house, which are quite finely made, would have been made there. The back of the



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house was added later and the design is much more random and rough."

"When we found the cottage it was fairly original, structurally," Amelia says. "However, there had been a few really bad modifications, like shocking wallpaper — and synthetic lawn on the kitchen floor, if you can believe that!"

The couple have not renovated extensively, preferring to maintain and restore. The floors are mostly polished pine, probably from the 1920s, though as Adrian points out, "We did have to replace the floors in the office... We realised that the day my father-in-law fell through the floor when we were moving a wardrobe into the room!"

They stripped wallpaper and whitewashed some of the walls; others were painted with a rich ochre glaze. The cottage needed rewiring completely, as there were only two power points in the





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place and the shingle roof needed fixing. There was also no hot water in the kitchen.

“I can remember the first time we used the fireplace,” Amelia says. “It was a freezing night, but the fire didn’t seem to be working properly. When we went outside there were flames shooting out of the chimney! We had to get the Country Fire Service out — and the whole town came down to have a look. It was a great way to meet everyone.”

The house has nearly half a hectare of land out the back. The couple has done much work on the garden over the years.

“We planted a lot of deciduous trees — silver birches, a weeping elm — as well as garden beds, borders and roses,” Amelia says. “It had shoulder-high grass when we moved in and there were rusted rainwater tanks everywhere. There are also remnants of old stone buildings — who knows what their history is.”

The house is decorated with many pieces that reveal the couple’s interest in Australian folk art, and Danish furniture and art

“You don’t know where you’re going to find things,” Adrian says. “We’ve had a lot of fun over the years going to country clearing sales, where two or three generations

of stuff are dragged from a house and laid out in a paddock. The CWA ladies put on lunch as you trawl through years of someone’s history.”

Since 2000, the business has expanded to include antiques imported from Denmark.

“I have a friend in Copenhagen who collects antiques. In 2000 I went over to have a look around and he took me to some fairs,” Adrian says.

“Now I go over two or three times a year on buying trips and have containers of antiques sent back to display in the stores.”

The couple, who restore much of the furniture themselves in their workshop across the road from the cottage, opened their second store in the Adelaide suburb of Norwood in late 2005. It, along with the store in Meadows, features original vintage furniture and design classics from Scandinavia, as well as a wide range of Danish modern art. They also have a showroom for classic Danish lighting by Louis Poulsen and Verpan.

Adrian is a fine example of a person turning an abiding interest into a life’s work.

“I’ve always loved fossicking, even as a child,” he says. “And if it’s in your blood, it can easily evolve into a career.” **ACS**



The vegetable garden at the rear. **Facing page, from left** The office features Danish folk art and a 19th century Scandinavian sofa bed; a 1940s boy's coat and an early Australian folk-art side table flank Humpty Dumpty; the Victorian cedar bed was salvaged from a local farmhouse. **Facing page, bottom** The kitchen has a range from the 1880s and a French farmhouse table.