



# Yately House

Sonja Charles takes us through the history and how she came to belong to it

When I decided at the beginning of 2014 that I wanted to do something completely 'out there', my two main options were to rent out my house and travel around Australia, or to buy a property where people would love to stay and have wonderful experiences. And here I am at Yately House in Braidwood. Sonja Charles — pleased to meet you. I think I have had as many jobs as Yately House has had owners. In fact I've had more. I have been a cleaner, a waitress, a gardener, an After School Care Co-ordinator and a Real Estate agent.

I have a degree in Psychology from ANU and studied post grad counselling at the University of Canberra. I am a qualified horse riding instructor, and Australia's youngest ever Advanced Dive Master. The most wonderful job I have had was working with teenagers in residential care. I then moved into aged care, and just before coming to Yately I looked after

a quadriplegic man who taught me all about caring for someone who depends on you for [almost] everything.

Having been single all my life, and finding myself between jobs, I was checking out singles sights one night, when I found an interesting enough profile of a fellow who said he was from Yass Valley. I wondered if that was the same as Yass, and being an ex-Real Estate agent, I went straight to the internet on the 'allhomes' page.

That was the end of my interest in the singles sites!

Within three months I had driven all over the region between Sydney, Canberra and Trossachs Heads. I had missed a few stunning places in Goulburn, and kept re-visiting a listing in Braidwood that didn't really grab me at first, but looked interesting.

So in November of that year I drove out to Braidwood to a long circular driveway under some of the biggest trees I had ever seen in a garden. I had

no idea what to expect, and played chases with the agent until we ended up on the same part of the enormous, wrap-around veranda.

When I walked in the front door the scale of the house became instantly apparent, and I was shown around in a mild haze of awe. High ceilings, stunning windows and huge rooms with fireplaces. It is an unexpected experience if you have only seen the house from outside. But there was something else here too. From the moment I entered, the house started to get inside my veins.

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There is a peace inside  
Yately House. When you  
walk around in silence,  
you are somehow  
given back to your  
own awareness.

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I suppose it is very like mindfulness. The house intrigued me, and despite some minor drawbacks to it being a B&B, I started the process of trying to purchase it.

Sincere gratitude from myself, and I am sure the owners at the time, must go to Denver Shoemark, the local agent who had recently taken over the listing and made the process unbelievably simple.

In April of 2015 I became the current owner of this gorgeous Victorian home. I still can't believe it! I have had one bathroom renovated and have started the Sydney Harbour Bridge-esque task of painting whatever needs doing next.

Everyone in the region knows what a state the house and gardens were in when it was purchased by Peter and Pauline Duggan. Having seen and loved the house since 1968, they were finally able to purchase it on December 21st, 1991. I find it more than interesting that I was born on December 21st, 1968!

The Duggans did an incredible job, not only restoring the house, but re-establishing the garden. Some 25 years later, there are some things that need thinning out or removing. However I am so grateful that I have a garden that complements the house so very well, and is full of plants that are robust in the extremes of the local environment. I am having a lot of fun continuing the work Peter and Pauline started.

My most recent investment in the house was to have it insulated. A

range of expletives could not describe my horror at how cold the house was during the winter of 2015. This winter was a lot milder. However, guests still found it frightening cold. Since the insulation has gone in — well — let's just say I am glad I spent the money (which was much less than I expected).

I have found great friends in Karen and Frank Hansby, Karen being the daughter of the Duggans. They really noticed the difference temperature wise in the house and have been a wealth of valuable information I could not have got elsewhere. Thanks guys!

The next months will see some more revamping of the garden, including a new fence of some sort. Hopefully it won't send me to the wall, as it did the original builder of the house, George Tweedie. By 1883, Mr Tweedie could not afford the investment he had made in the house, and was heavily in debt to Christopher Newton. Tweedie was ordered 'to cover building, fences etc. to the sum of two and half thousand pounds'. In 1883! My wonderful neighbour Chris Nelson recently alerted me to a photo in Jill Clarke's new facebook page 'Braidwood Businesses: A History'. The photo shows Yately House with an extensive fence all the way around it. It would have cost a fortune on top of what the house cost Tweedie, and I may have even found some of those fence palings behind some structures in the garden!

Yately has hosted some fantastic events and guests in the last 18 months. We had a wonderful dinner for the Bendigo Bank, and an amazing performance by 'Beautifully Mad' back in June. This world class duo are due to perform here again on the 1st of



REGGIE HOPPED INTO THE PICTURE WITH SONJA BUT DANIEL MISSED OUT.



October, supported by local girls 'Rubydears', who are developing the most wonderful harmonies in their repertoire of folk and gypsy style

music. I am so happy to be able to do this sort of thing in a town like Braidwood.

I would love for anyone in the town who knows something about Yately that I may not to get in contact with me. The number here at the house is 4842 1766. It would be much appreciated.

I would like to say a big thank you to all those who have been so helpful to me since I came to Braidwood. Shoemarks, Nelsons, Linda Gannon, and all the crew at the radio station and the men's shed. You and many others are having a hugely positive impact on my life.

Viva La Braidwood!

