

which ultimately divided the family and caused a bitterness which is still not completely resolved. It's sad because mother is nearing 102, and she is still being influenced by others. I've been determined to have my father's name cleared with KNIL — and this I recently achieved.

"I did a trade course, fitting and turning, but not long after I completed that I got into hospitality and worked at various hotels. My dealings with wine merchants eventually led me into that industry.

I became a sales rep for a very good wine company and I was allocated the northern part of Holland as my territory but it was not easy to sell wine in this area as the people there preferred hard liquor. My best customers were the Catholic priests, they bought all the best wines, but I was running out of priests.

"So I decided to leave the Netherlands and went to the Immigration office to seek a new country to live in. As I had an uncle in New Zealand that seemed like a good place to start. I had an interview at the Embassy and quite suddenly New Zealand was my new home. The whole process took two weeks and that included the five day flight on a Super Constellation to get there.

"It was 1963 and it was difficult to find work that involved communication skills because I did not know the language well at the time. A furniture factory gave me a start and I made chairs, about 50 a day, for six months. I worked at 'Watties' for the next six years or so. As soon as I became a New Zealand citizen I decided to move to Sydney.

"I found it easy to find work in those days, but after about seven years with various employers, I decided I wanted to work for myself. I bought a French restaurant in Northbridge where I lived and where I met my partner, Trish. I found the restaurant business very tiring and unrelenting and after three years bought a video shop franchise which did very well for a while but unfortunately the franchise went bankrupt and I moved into yet another industry — renovations.

"Trish and I made many trips to Braidwood to visit her

daughter. We fell in love with Lake Bathurst and ended up buying a cottage there and established an antique shop after twenty years in Sydney.

"A man came in from Bungendore needing finance to apply for a job. He offered me a lamp in return for \$1000. It sounds a bit like a cross between the 'Jack and the Beanstalk' and the 'Aladdin's Lamp' tales, but I took a gamble and made the deal.

"I was fascinated by the lamp. My interest was fuelled further by extensive research and before long I was winding down the antiques to concentrate on lamps. I sold that lamp for \$1100 to a local woman who was building a self-sufficient home in the hills. She now has an endless supply of Tim Tams! I now wish I had kept this, my first lamp.

"Eventually I set up the lamp shop here in Braidwood. I recently made a trip to Europe and the States to source more lamps but I am discovering that each year gets harder and harder to find the genuine article. They are becoming quite rare."

Robert sells online and sends lamps all over the globe. He has provided lamps for such productions as 'Moulin Rouge' 'Peter Pan' and 'Dad and Dave - on our Selection'. While I was there a couple from Perth purchased three lamps. I spoke to them and they praised Robert's knowledge, integrity and most of all the exquisite range.

The 'Carters' annual publication of antiques has acknowledged Robert's expertise in his field by inviting him to value the lamps in their guides.

He is truly passionate about lamps and can explain the origins and workmanship of each one in his shop. He loves them so much, I don't know how he can part with them, but he did reveal that he has a private collection in his home that he will never sell. Trish concludes by saying "Robert has worked in many jobs but he is happiest now - surrounded by his lamps."

After our chat, he opened his shed to reveal his other passion . . . vintage cars, but that's another story.



**N**EW TO THIS Bed & Breakfast caper I might be, having only been here since April, but what an interesting time I have had. Every weekend brings a smile to my face as I meet and greet the guests in this quirky little part of town.

Last week I met a man who was born and lived in what is now 'Little Finch'. He was here for a family reunion. He told me that Tom Tass, the local boot-maker shared the premises and that he became a millionaire by making boots for the miners, then moved to Wollongong.

Five minutes later, I checked in a guest who was here from Wollongong to celebrate a friend's 50th — she turned out to be the granddaughter of Tom Tass and informed me that he had, in fact, won the lottery — that's why he left Braidwood. Coincidences like this happen all the time.

People who choose to stay at B&Bs with shared facilities are usually very sociable types who enjoy the interaction of other like-minded guests. And usually I am in the middle of them. Enjoying their company and the common ground they find with each other. I have been invited to join birthday celebrations on the verandah, dinner parties in the kitchen, charades and singalongs in the lounge room.

The 1860s baby grand piano needs a good tuning but it can still produce a solid rollicking sound. I have had guests teaching me guitar chords, how to write poetry and draw. Some very gifted storytellers have stayed here and shared anecdotes of Braidwood that I am sure are not in any history books. I have had a massage and a psychic reading.

The guests intrigue me and the shanigans they get up to during the night. I have come in the next morning to tackle the sheer drudgery of the domestic duties to find different scenarios ... a bra and pillow on the



THE WARNOCK FAMILY RECENTLY ENJOYED THE B&B AS A BASE FOR A FAMILY REUNION AND CHRISTENING.

## At the Braidwood Country Bed & Breakfast you can make both!

Mandy Thane books us in

kitchen table, fluffy handkerchiefs in the fridge, a bottle of wine in the washing machine, a heater missing. Mostly though, I find, that the guests have left the kitchen spotless, bedrooms tidy and the bins emptied — and lovely comments in the guestbook.

*A well placed apostrophe, punctuating a very enjoyable part of the journey — wish this was my house.*

John, Central Tilba

Sometimes on arrival, I haven't had all the rooms ready but the guests are more than happy to make their own beds and, after cooking their own breakfast the next morning, they wash up! I have even given guests money to go out and buy the breakfast supplies because I haven't had time. I like how the guests cooperate with each other — one lot might cook the bacon, one the eggs, another organises the toast and someone else is on coffee duty.

Then they all sit down together and eat — sometimes I join them! It's a good time to share the events of the night before - usually a wedding, reunion or birthday party.

When digital TV came in, I had to toss the 1975 model, even contemplated upgrading, but as time went by I never got around to it and nobody has commented. The building is old and the floorboards creak and the door-knobs are positioned for midgets (many a time I have wandered in to find guests on their knees at their door) and they often stick (one evening Matt Hulse, the baker, had to come in and break in to one of the bedrooms). Possums chase each other around in the wall cavities and the smoke alarm will go off if you forget to activate the fan before showering.

However, I was reading through all the old guest books and the comments carry a common thread - quirky, cosy, friendly, good location, great breakfast, comfy beds, love the piano and fantastic open fire (until someone built a bonfire in there and nearly burnt the place down) so we now have a lovely gas heater!

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