

Second bloom

A 'lost' historic garden near the Barossa Valley is being restored to its former glory

CHRISTINE McCABE

STROLLING the historic grounds of Anlaby Homestead, less than an hour's drive north of South Australia's Barossa Valley, I'm reminded of the romantic story of The Lost Gardens of Heligan.

The latter rediscovered and restored grand Victorian garden is tucked away in Cornwall but Anlaby, once a vast pastoral spread spanning 650sq km, occupies far more marginal climes, marked by golden hills and scrubby bush — big-sky country that is subject to searing summers and never enough rain.

Founded 175 years ago near the old copper mining town of Kapunda by the Dutton family, Anlaby's boundaries these days barely push 200ha (the family's best-known descendant, the writer and historian Geoffrey, sold the spread in 1978) but the country's second-oldest merino herd is still here, as is the historic farm village.

Like Heligan, this was once a garden with incredible resources and, just like the Cornwall garden, it was all but lost when Sydneysiders Andrew Morphett and Peter Hayward happened upon it a decade ago.

During Anlaby's Edwardian heyday the property employed a team of 14 gardeners (some from England) to maintain the extensive flower terraces and large parkland of exotic trees. The Duttons even kept their own steamship, dispatched as far as Japan on plant-hunting expeditions. A sophisticated irrigation scheme, redirecting water over hundreds of square kilometres via a system of dams, weirs and stone aqueducts, kept the garden alive during the long, hot summers.

Vast greenhouses and shade houses were built, ponds dug, and thousands of rose bushes planted. The house was expanded, an Italianate facade added and other improvements hurried through in time for a 1910 visit by the Prince of Wales, but he failed to show.

Riding high on the sheep's back, the Duttons operated Anlaby like a grand English country estate, employing 70 staff, and every morning the bell was sounded for the men to come and take their orders. The concept of noblesse oblige had its colonial counterpart and as far back as the 1850s the Duttons opened the gardens weekly to Kapunda's hoi polloi.

Motoring towards Anlaby today, barrelling down



Anlaby Homestead, above; owner Andrew Morphett near the stable block

gravel roads, sending up plumes of dust so thick they obscure the flaxen hills, it's hard to imagine that such a large life was lived in this quiet and remote place. It's only as you turn down the 2km-long, sugar gum-lined drive that any hint of a garden appears. Dwindling into the paddocks, two other grand avenues, one of red gums, the other of oak trees, and both abandoned for more than a century-and-a-half, stand as testament to the ambition of the Duttons' planting schemes.

Anlaby is home to about 600 trees held on the state and national registers, likely more than any botanic garden in the country. Arboreal gems are scattered everywhere, ankle deep in dry grass, like Roman ruins.

But it's the accoutrements of the kitchen and cutting gardens that are most delightful. Touring the 4ha garden (down from 18 a century ago) is like embarking on an archeological dig. Behind the homestead, there are the remains of a vast shade house, its walls restored

to shelter a kitchen garden, and the remnants of an even more impressive glass house. A huge tank, once used to heat and cool the building, along with the cracked, tessellated tiled floor and a quirky fern grotto, await restoration.

There's an antiquated cucumber house, mushroom house and a quaint apple house, used to store fruit over the winter.

A three-storey folly by the pond once served as Geoffrey's writing tower; a piano was kept on the ground floor so the women of the house could practise in peace.

Morphett admits it was a daunting prospect when, more than 10 years ago, he and Hayward flew from Sydney, almost on a whim, on a filthy hot February day to view the property. Almost everything in the garden, other than the trees, was dead, he says, and they were given only five hours to inspect the 23-room house (with its butler's pantry, silver safe and grand public rooms) and 40 large outbuildings, including a manor house, huge shearing shed and impressive stable block.

But like Heligan, the romance of Anlaby was irresistible; the garden demanded rescue. The deed was signed and after commuting from Sydney on weekends for a year, Morphett and Hayward moved in and began slowly restoring the house — rewiring alone took 18 months. With the help of just one full-time gardener and using old photographs, nursery catalogues and the 1911 diary of Anlaby's former head gardener, work proceeds gradually on the internationally significant gardens.

Stone walls have been repaired, the grand peacock aviary restored and orchards and a fanciful rockery re-established. A few of the original plants remain, including a Malmaison rose, which may have been a gift, says Morphett. Current projects include the rebuilding of the 45m pergola and whimsical rose maypole.

Even the farm, though dramatically reduced, is ticking along nicely. The historic merino herd, established in 1838 when the Duttons employed Alexander Buchanan to walk 5000 sheep overland from Sydney, today produces super-fine wool for luxurious blankets, throws and wraps sold in Anlaby's small shop and online.

And the elegant stable block, with its groom's cottage, blacksmith, saddle room and large carriage house, is back in business (a performance of *Madama Butterfly* will be staged in the quadrangle on April 12 to celebrate Anlaby's 175th anniversary).

The stable tower clock keeps good time thanks to the year-long efforts of horologist Darrell Kaesler, while classical music plays softly in the stalls where Morphett keeps his beloved Warmblood Kaiser and chums Stanley and Kara. Now a wedding venue, the enormous Clydesdale stable is so commodious it might as easily have housed elephants.

Morphett and Hayward are working tirelessly to secure Anlaby's future, opening the garden for tours and afternoon teas. Visitors are also welcome to stay in the manor house, a three-bedroom B&B situated next door to the stables, and have the run of the garden.

●anlaby.com.au

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Pop goes the easel

Budding artists can hone their skills in creative digs when a prefab sprouts in Bendigo

KENDALL HILL

THIS is, surely, the ultimate in pop-ups. On May 1, all things going to plan, a 128-room hotel will materialise in country Victoria in just seven days.

Unlike the more common, transient form of pop-up (ads, shops, restaurants) Schaller Studio will be very much a permanent addition to the historic gold-rush city of Bendigo.

The Schaller is the latest from Art Series Hotels, the innovative force behind Melbourne's recent boom in cultural accommodation (the Cullen, Blackman and Olsen hotels).

Like its predecessors it will feature works by a name-sake artist, in this case Mark Schaller — a Melbourne sculptor, ceramicist and painter whose works are held in major public and private collections across the nation. Unlike its predecessors, the Schaller will be a modular, prefabricated building that construction company Hickory Group predicts will be erected in a week on a site beside the \$630 million Bendigo Hospital redevelopment.

Then the fun part begins — decorating each of the rooms, or "workspaces", with Schaller's brightly coloured Bendigo-inspired paintings; installing his 8m-tall mosaic on the hotel's facade; and furnishing the gardens with four specially commissioned sculptures.

Schaller, who works from studios in inner-Mel-



Mark Schaller, above; and an impression of the new Schaller Studio



bourne and Elphinstone, a half-hour from Bendigo, says he is looking forward to spending more time in the "romantic and historic" city to gain inspiration for the hotel artworks.

"The city is the vibrant art centre for regional Victoria and I intend to start uncovering some of its hidden gems," he says.

Art won't just hang on the hotel walls. Public spaces will offer books and equipment to encourage visitors to channel their inner artist. On-site painting classes, artisan markets and regular exhibitions will further stir the creative spirit. And Schaller Studio staff will be trained by Art Series Hotels' in-house curator to lead tours of the hotel's collection and advise guests on the city's best cultural outings.

The Bendigo Art Gallery, one of Australia's oldest and largest regional galleries, will collaborate with the Schaller to "reaffirm Bendigo as the regional hub of art

and culture in Victoria", says director Karen Quinlan. Forthcoming exhibitions at the gallery include *Genius and Ambition*, a capsule show of almost 100 works from London's Royal Academy of Arts, including paintings by Turner, Constable and Gainsborough (until June 9), and *The Body Beautiful in Ancient Greece*, featuring sculptures from the British Museum's renowned collection (August-November).

Art aside, the Schaller Studio will provide guests with such creature comforts as in-room coffee machines, free WiFi, wireless docking stations and balconies with views across hotel grounds and gold rush-era streetscapes. Minibars will be stocked with premium local offerings such as Heathcote shiraz and Castlemaine Rock, the region's famous boiled sweet.

Local produce will also be a highlight of the on-site restaurant, The Pantry. And when wanderlust strikes, guests can choose their wheels from the hotel's stable of designer Lekker bicycles, scooters and Smart cars to tour the city and surrounds.

Visitors keen for a sneak peek at Schaller's work should keep an eye out for a brightly painted tram plying the city's 19th-century tracks from this month. Schaller's bold brushstrokes adorn the ceiling and exterior, while the interior has been kitted out with a daybed, sofas and a workbench where passengers can create their own mobile masterpieces.

Following the Schaller Studio's debut, Art Series plans a midyear opening for the Watson Apartments and Hotel in Adelaide, named after the indigenous artist Tommy Watson, and another budget studio hotel, the Larwill, in Melbourne's Parkville later in the year.

●artserieshotels.com.au