

## HOME STANLEY TASMANIA

Kerry and Alastair Houston walking their border collie, Floss, on Godfreys Beach with their daughters Lucy and Bonnie. **FACING PAGE** A portrait of Alastair's grandmother Rosemary Wachen, painted in the 1960s by Ulrica Burke, hangs in a room at the Ship Inn.

### ROOM AT THE INN

KERRY AND ALASTAIR HOUSTON MOVED THEIR YOUNG FAMILY TO A HISTORIC HOTEL ON TASMANIA'S WILD NORTH-WEST COAST IN SEARCH OF A QUIETER LIFE.

WORDS VICTORIA CAREY PHOTOGRAPHY MARNIE HAWSON  
STYLING LYNDA GARDENER AND BELLE HEMMING



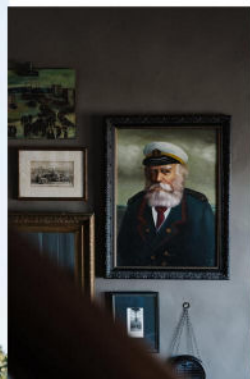


LUCY HOUSTON WALKS along the pebbly Tasmanian beach with her younger sister Bonnie. Their border collie Floss trots steadily ahead, turning occasionally to check on the pair. Lucy is nine, the same age her father Alastair was when he went to Scotland's Isle of Skye. "My great grandmother had her 100th birthday and we went over from Tasmania for the party. Her family had a beautiful house on the Isle of Skye called Talisker," explains Alastair, whose mother Primula grew up holidaying on this Inner Hebrides island. "We stayed there for three months and I went to the local school. Going to a primary school with only 60 students and right on the loch was an amazing thing."

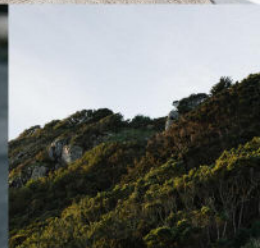
More than 30 years later, Lucy and her seven-year-old sister Bonnie go to a little village school with just 60 pupils,

much like the Scottish one their father once attended. Clearly this childhood experience has been a lasting influence on the talented stonemason and landscaper, even prompting the 46-year-old and his wife Kerry to move their young family 400 kilometres north from Hobart to Stanley on Tasmania's rugged north-west coast. For the little fishing village's weather, as well as some distinctive landmarks such as the Nut, a volcanic rock formation jutting dramatically out to sea, evoked memories of the Isle of Skye for Alastair when the family stopped in Stanley on a road trip.

"We first came here nearly five years ago. I remember driving in and seeing the town from the lookout. It reminded me of Portree on the Isle of Skye and I had this whole feeling of being back in Scotland. I felt very nostalgic for that time," >



Alastair Houston's happy childhood memories of the Isle of Skye in Scotland made him want to give his daughters a similar experience. **CLOCKWISE, FROM RIGHT** Bunk beds for the girls; Stanley is famous for its beautiful rugged landscape; guests are welcomed into the study, which leads into the Houstons' kitchen; the family's living room; the inn looks down to the harbour; Kerry found this portrait of a sea captain on eBay and today it hangs in the entrance hall. **FACING PAGE** The Ship Inn is nestled at the foot of the Nut, an ancient volcanic plug named Moon-Nut-Re-Ker by the local Indigenous people.





A wall of artworks in the family's living room. From left, pheasant lithographs purchased in Paris by Alastair's great aunt Diana Wrother; an old English oil painting of a boy with a dove is believed to date from 1700s (artist unknown); sanguine pencil sketches of Alastair's great uncle and aunt (1880 and 1886) by E.S. King; *Manual Labourer* (undated) by Bunty Houston, Alastair's grandmother.



The view from Highfield House, a local historic site, towards the Hut, with Bass Strait beyond. **CLOCKWISE, FROM RIGHT** Kerry and Alastair with daughters Lucy and Bonnie; the girls love to walk their dog Floss after school. Wild Waves, one of the rooms on the top floor of the Ship Inn. The wallpaper is Raphaël Black from Sandberg Wallpaper and the bedhead is from The Upholstery House; the environment is pristine: the Ship Inn's distinctive mustard exterior is a local landmark; Highfield is one of seven rooms at the Ship Inn, each with its own distinctive style. The Fine Art Cloud wallpaper is from Anewall. **FACING PAGE** Stanley is surrounded by rich farming land. For stockist details, see page 144.



says Alastair. "So we kept coming back to Stanley for our holidays to stay in a little cottage. I felt like I was back in Scotland, but I could drive here!"

Three years ago, the couple decided they needed a base in Stanley and bought a holiday house. Previously empty for two years, the 1892 cottage was renamed Little Talisker and became their first renovation project. What they didn't know at the time was that it would be ideal preparation for a much bigger project on the horizon.

"Being away from Hobart felt like a real escape, which we loved. But the thing we didn't expect was that we would make so many friends so quickly and become part of the community," says Kerry, who had been working as an HR manager for a large healthcare company in Hobart. "We really liked the people and kept thinking about how we could move up here permanently."

When the Bay View Guest House, only a few doors up from Little Talisker on Alexander Terrace, came onto the market in 2018, the pair decided to make their dream a reality. They bought the heritage-listed building, which had started life as the Shamrock Inn in 1849. Built by Michael Lyons, the grandfather of former Prime Minister Sir Joseph Lyons who was born in the weatherboard cottage next door, it has had several name changes over the years. Called the Ship Inn from 1854 to 1888, the decision was made to return to this

name as it reflected the days when it was a favourite with the sailors who would regularly stay in one of the 40 rooms.

Alastair and Kerry embarked on restoring the distinctive two-storey weatherboard, which was saved from demolition in the early 1970s by sculptor Jon Eiseaman, into luxury accommodation. It would also need to double as a home for their extended family that includes daughters April, 22, who is studying in Melbourne, 14-year-old Matilda, who is at school in Hobart, and Kerry's parents Carole and Michael Ralston who now live in an apartment at one end of the building.

The exercise was not without its challenges, especially as Alastair was still commuting to Hobart every second week. Luckily, that "will draw to an end later in the year as he finishes a huge stone cladding job," says Kerry, 51, who ran the guesthouse while project managing the job with the builder — and living on site!

"It was challenging not having a kitchen for 10 months.

I managed to cook with a single plate induction cooktop and a temporary bench and sink, which got relocated about four times. Eventually it was out in the old billiard rooms, and the water drained into a bucket that needed constant emptying. In the mornings you could see your breath it was so cold.

"But we adored our tradesmen, they have been brilliant — thank you Circular Head region for supplying the most talented, friendly and punctual tradesmen we have ever >

"We really liked the people and kept thinking about how we could move up here permanently."



The Lyons Retreat room at the Ship Inn was named after the only Tasmanian-born prime minister Australia has had – Sir Joseph Lyons, who once lived in the cottage next door. The walls are painted in Haymes Paint Umbertone. For stockist details, see page 144.

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dealt with. How many other people get their tradies bringing fresh fish or a whole cooked lobster over for them?"

After creating a blank interior canvas, the next step was to furnish the rooms with pieces, many of them family heirlooms such as the paintings of Alastair's grandmother Rosemary and mother Primula hanging in two of the suites. It was here that the expertise of Lynda Gardener and Belle Hemming, who worked with the couple on the project, came to the fore. Alastair's request was simple: "Please have Mum somewhere — I don't want her sitting in an attic, that wouldn't be right. Now the room revolves around her portrait and I couldn't be happier — they made it so beautiful."

But what is the best part about living in an historic inn in a village that looks like something out of a Thomas Hardy novel? "Feeling like we belong. The community here is so welcoming and have embraced our extended family.

People know our name," says Kerry. *CS*  
Ship Inn, 16 Alexander Terrace, Stanley, Tasmania,  
0439 749 140, [shipinnstanley.com.au](http://shipinnstanley.com.au)

#### ABOUT THE HOUSE

- The interiors are by Lynda Gardener and Belle Hemming from Inside Story Studio who do residential and commercial work. 0416 032 111; 0413 689 006; [insidestorystudio.com.au](http://insidestorystudio.com.au)
- Haymes Paint was used in the majority of the rooms. Minimalist 1 was used in four suites while Umbertone was used in the reception room and entrance hall. The mustard exterior colour was custom mixed. Exterior trim is in Haymes Paint Barely There. [haymespaint.com.au](http://haymespaint.com.au)
- Kitchen and custom cabinetry throughout is by Alec Blacklow from Smithton Joinery. (03) 6452 1501.
- Local tradesmen worked on the Ship Inn, including builders Chris Armstrong, 0428 142781; and Rene Hansen, 0419 041 566. Electrician Pat Dwyer, 0419 0346 079.
- Bedheads are by Andy Hemming from The Upholstery House. 0413 689 006; [theupholsteryhouse.com.au](http://theupholsteryhouse.com.au)



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WORDS KYLE MASON AND LYN JUSTICE PHOTOGRAPHY ANDREW HAYNES

## ROOM WITH A VIEW

The spacious kitchen overlooking the beach at Tasmania's Ship Inn is a far cry from a cramped galley kitchen. The main part of the original kitchen was outside the former pub's old tap room, which was dank and dilapidated with rotten floorboards and just the one window looking towards the billiards room next door. Owners Kerry and Alistair Houston got heritage approval to knock through the metre-thick wall to incorporate this old disused space into their new kitchen area. "We wanted to retain as much of the feel of the room as possible, so the original stone walls are still visible and the sloped ceiling remains," Kerry says.

A skylight lets in much-needed light and the long kitchen island integrates the two spaces. "It was really important to get our two new windows built so we could see the beach from the kitchen," Kerry says. These bi-fold windows will be thrown open in summer so they can eat outside on the patio, built by Alistair, or in the private rear courtyard.

As the kitchen is one of the first rooms you see when you enter the apartment, Kerry wanted the fit-out to look "more like furniture and less like a modern kitchen" — which is why they wanted to hide the appliances and chose an integrated fridge and dishwasher. "The kitchen has been a game-changer," says Kerry. >

Read more about Kerry and Alistair's home on page 40.

JOINERY Smithton Joinery (03) 6452 1501  
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Pat Dwyer Electrical, 0419 346 078 BENCHTOPS  
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