

## Chapter V

### 'Geraldton' in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century'

'Geraldton' was acquired by Sarah and Bill Howey in 1993 from the Connors family who had lived there for c. 6 years 1987 - 1993.



'Geraldton' 2010

An article in the Scone Advocate dated 1 September 1982 under the headline 'Happy Historic Geraldton' described the house thus: "Geraldton is a lovely example of early colonial architecture and ranks with the other historic homes of the Upper Hunter. It is a single story construction with shuttered French doors opening onto the front veranda. In the some 160\* years since it was built various additions have been made to the house, but the lines of the original are still clearly evident and are complemented by the well-designed additions."

Approaching from the garden the front veranda has painted concrete support columns matching the original wooden ones which they replaced. The front door is solid red cedar. The 'Geraldton' sign was carved for father Dr David 'Toby' Barton by son David at boarding school. The hallway at the front entrance is tiled with red quarry tiles. Doors from the front hall open into two of the original front rooms of the house – the main bedroom to the left and guest's bedroom to the right. A doorway through the wall of built-in wardrobes in the main bedroom leads to an *en suite* bathroom which has a connecting door into the dressing room. This is one of the ante rooms which have been added to either end of the front veranda. A panelled door leads from the guest's bedroom on the right to the adjoining dressing room and bathroom. At one time this was a consulting room for Dr Oswald Barton.

The main hall of the house is intersected by another at right angles, and this second hall links the front two rooms with the dining room and 'kitchen' on the left hand side and to the study and a large sitting room on the right. The sitting room has French doors which lead to the enclosed back courtyard. It is contained by the L-shape formed by the main part of the house and the kitchen. The other two walls are of brick red; one is the last remaining wall of the billiard room built by the Shaws and the other was built to match by the Bartons. The courtyard gives an outdoor atmosphere to much of the house – as Mrs Janet Barton said: "The nicest thing about this house is that no matter which room you are in, you feel that you are in the garden." The dining room which is rather dark contains some marquee furniture. The kitchen and main utility room off the dining room has a bay window added making it a much used family room. The old 'pantry' has been turned into a laundry and the original maid's room is a third bedroom with en suite bathroom.



Courtyard 2010

### Beautiful Gardens

There are one and a half acres of garden around 'Geraldton' – well-kept lawns and a variety of spring flowers, azaleas and camellias. The trees included a huge London Plane (planted 1957), Claret Ashes, Hawthorns, Jacarandas, Flowering Almond, Citrus and Gums. An ornamental grape covers the back veranda and a thick trunked wisteria adds beauty and age to one side of the house.

### Miller-Pinkerton Gathering      Sunday 27 October 2002

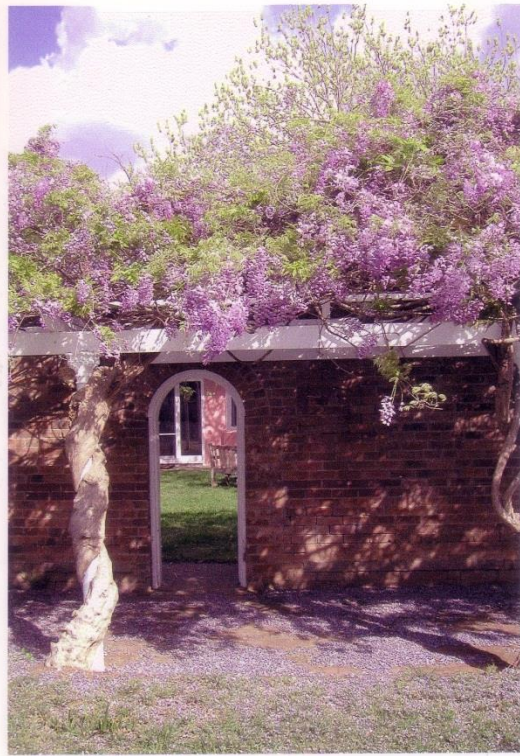
In 2002 the Howey family hosted the Miller- Pinkerton reunion gathering on Sunday 27 October 2002 to mark the centenary of the passing of original patriarch Mathew Miller. The following descriptor was provided by Sarah Howey for the many descendants who attended.



Bill and Sarah Howey  
Owners from 1993 pictured in 2007

The original construction was a four-room cottage called Belmore House built by its owner Mathew Miller. Mr J. A. K. Shaw purchased it in 1909 and renamed it 'Geraldton' after his wife Geraldine. The Shaws built the billiard room and part of the wall remains as the eastern wall of the courtyard. The original cottage had double brick walls with made on site or at the 'brick pit' at the eastern end of Susan Street (now the Murray Bain Oval and formerly the stock sale yards). Each room was a separate four-walled construction seated on red-gum floors – resulting in major problems with rising damp.





View into the courtyard under the wisteria



Shuttered Window

There are 10 such windows or French Doors with shutters

In 1923 Dr Oswald Barton, son of Australia's first Prime Minister Sir Edmund Barton, purchased Geraldton. His son Toby and wife Janet returned to live at Geraldton in 1957. Since 1957 Toby and Janet Barton set about overcoming rising damp, repairing and restoring the house to its original configuration, removing the billiard room and adding the kitchen wing. The garden was a great love of the Bartons. They created the courtyard as it is today and constructed the sandstone walls. Rumour has it Toby acquired the large sandstones from the old kerb and guttering of the revamped Kelly Street and used them as a test of his potential son-in-law's metal in helping build the walls! Toby and Janet planted many of the deciduous trees including London Plane (1957), English Elm, Chestnut, Box Elder in the courtyard, Celtis and Hibiscus hedge.

Bill and I have simplified the garden by removing some garden beds. We feel the house is pretty enough to stand on its own without the clutter of unnecessary plantings. We have tried to keep the garden "sit-on mower" friendly. The Jacarandas were planted by Mrs Oswald Barton and watered by bucket from the old hand pump to the left of the front of the house. Geraldton has three 'redundant' underground tanks! In the front garden as you enter the gate we removed the 'Ironbarks' and planted roses – Hybrid Musks – Felicia, Cornelia, Buff Beauty, Penelope, as well as Charles Austin, Heritage and Clair Matin.

We have tried to keep a simple easy care garden relaxing and cool with an emphasis on perfumed plants. Bill wanted to encourage birds by placing water around the garden and planting cover. We have had some success attracting parrots especially a family of King Parrots who often shelter under the plane tree during our hot summer days. Last year during the drought a Satin Bower Bird and his entourage visited for some time. The fairy wrens have returned at last. English Blackbirds have established a perennial breeding colony. One mature adult has a distinctive white rump. We have compiled a list of at least 80 species of birds, either indigenous or migratory, which regularly frequent or live in the garden.

The 1860's slab hut was at one time a cow bail, carriage horse stables and dog kennel and is now Bill's woodshed. It can be seen at the back of the garden. Plantings around the visitor's cottage and pool area are simple repeats of the front garden, Seaside Daisy, Catmint, Euphorbia, Scabiosa, Salvia, Iris and Valerian of all colours, and Lavenders. These plants seem to do well here so I dare not argue with them! Bill is very proud of the post-and-rail fences surrounding much of the garden which are made using sawn ironbark from the old sale yards accumulated by 'bower bird' Toby Barton. Some of the rails still bear the original stencilled yard numbers. The so-called 'Mans' Room' used for the gardeners has been extensively enlarged by and is used as an extra bedroom and guests quarters. Roses in this area include Dapple Dawn, Duet, Iceberg, and Pierre de Ronsard. The side fence shared with 'Hillview' and the tennis court fences are planted with Star Jasmine and Banksia rose and in late September the Wisteria is stunning draped over the courtyard wall. We limit our watering where possible except to look after the deciduous trees and we seem to be waging constant war with the possums and Tweediana (Cat's Claw Creeper). It must have been a very popular climber early last century! Bill claims success is directly proportional to the vast amount of straw and Lucerne mulch he/we have lavished on the garden. Water helps! In recent times the very large old Sugar Gum at the very front near Shaw Street has been removed to make way for many new plantations. The surrounds of the tennis court are a moving feast and the entrance drive way has seen considerable changes in removing and replanting,

Being novice gardeners when we purchased Geraldton almost 20 years\* ago we sought advice and help from many family and friends including Ross Watson (lawn), Prue Robertson and Jose the Spanish Back-Packer who spent a week with us in the autumn of 2002 and successfully tamed the Plumbago hedge amongst other things! Thank you also to Anna Gipps who looked after the garden while Bill and I were in Sydney for three years.

On frequent occasions other groups have visited Geraldton including 'Open Gardens'. The Women's Committee of the National Trust inspected the house and gardens on Sunday 29 April 2001 between 9:30am and 12:30pm. There were over 800 visitors on the day.

Sarah Howey October 2002



The swimming pool is a new addition to 'Geraldton'



The courtyard has always provided an ideal venue for cultural, social and scientific collaboration



John Morgan, Richard Greenwood and Bill Howey  
Sharing 'intelligence' between Newmarket (UK) and Scone Hunter Valley?



The good old days?

Ron Jeffries and Bill Howey discuss commerce, trade and social interaction in the horse industry



Racy Reminiscence in the Garden at Geraldton

Bill and Julie Rose

Shona Murphy, Bev Chapman, David and Sue Bath



Politics in varying forms has almost always been a facet with 'Geraldton' residents



Scone Shire Citizen of the Year Award 1996.

Dr Toby Barton won the same award in 1981



Upper Hunter Shire Council 2010

Winners of the Bluett Award

Cr Ean Cottle, Cr Errol Bates (Deputy), Cr Lee Watts (Mayor), Cr Bill Howey, Cr Michael Johnsen

Cr Deidre Peebles, Cr Lea Carter, Cr Lorna Driscoll, CR Pam Seccombe

Cr Howey served on the UHSC 2008 - 2012