

[PROJECT]

GLENDARRAH HOUSE, SYDNEY

[ARCHITECT]

HANCOCK ARCHITECTS



BELLEVARDE

Welcome to Building with Belvedere: Insights.

In this edition, we take a closer look at an exceptional project where alterations and additions were undertaken to a house originally built in the 1870s.

Architect Tanya Hancock of Hancock Architects worked with the owners to redesign their place to one that suited their new lifestyle and incorporated inspiration from their travels. Belvedere's Site Manager, Jak Gannon, collaborated closely with the architects and owners to deliver a home of outstanding craftsmanship.

We hear from Tanya, as well as the owners about what it was like working with Jak and the Belvedere team on this special house.

We hope you enjoy their stories.

As always, we welcome any questions, feedback, or opportunities to discuss your next project.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'John Fielding', with a stylized flourish at the end.

JOHN FIELDING
AND THE BELVEDERE TEAM









We set out to create a spacious, light-filled home that embraced classic architectural principles while preserving the integrity of the existing heritage structure. The new design needed to complement, not compete with, the original home, maintaining its character while introducing a contemporary way of living. Maximising sunlight, enhancing spatial flow, and creating a sense of refined ease were central to the vision.

The design blends clean, modern lines with classical proportions and symmetry, inspired by the timeless elegance of European architecture. Tall, narrow windows, soft rendered façades, and subtle brass detailing create understated sophistication. Moroccan influences are woven into the dwelling, pool, and landscape, adding warmth, texture, and cultural depth.

Respecting the heritage portion of the home was crucial. The south-facing backyard informed the decision to design the home as a courtyard house. This approach allowed us to maximise northern sunlight in living spaces and outdoor areas, enhancing natural light, thermal comfort, and privacy while connecting to the landscape.

Material selection prioritised thermal efficiency and durability for the seaside environment. A solid construction approach ensured longevity and low maintenance. Soft, natural renders and textured finishes paired with brass detailing, especially in doors, added warmth and tactility, ageing beautifully over time. The result is a timeless, resilient home that feels grounded and refined.

Bellevarde came highly recommended for their impeccable reputation in delivering high-quality, detail-driven builds, but also through a personal connection via mutual colleagues. Their commitment to collaboration and integrity made them an ideal partner. Working with site manager Jak Gannon, site administrator Matthew Song, and the Bellevarde team was a privilege. Their dedication, ingenuity, and attention to detail were evident in resolving complex junctions and fine-tuning elements on-site, elevating the project's outcome.

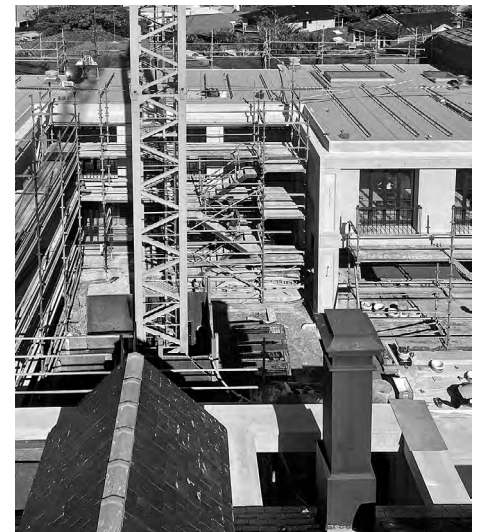
Bellevarde didn't just execute the design—they enhanced it with exceptional rigour and precision. Long lead times for imported materials, doors, windows, timber flooring, and terracotta tiles posed challenges, requiring meticulous planning and coordination. Site access constraints demanded logistical precision but Bellevarde's adaptability and foresight ensured the build was delivered to the highest standard.

The brass doors and windows, sourced from England, were a standout feature, both for design impact and technical complexity. Their fabrication, shipping, and installation were handled with precision by Bellevarde, making these elements a defining feature of the home and adding warmth and craftsmanship.

The level of finish is exceptional—crisp detailing and thoughtfully chosen, tactile materials executed perfectly. Working with Bellevarde felt like a true partnership, with builders actively problem-solving and taking ownership, a rare and invaluable mindset.

The owners are thrilled. The home feels personal, beautiful, and entirely theirs. It functions effortlessly for their lifestyle and continues to reveal new moments as they live in it. It's one of those rare projects where everything aligned—the client, the site, the build, and the team. There was a shared vision and mutual respect throughout the process, which made for a truly rewarding experience. We're incredibly proud of what was achieved and deeply grateful for the collaboration that brought it to life.

Bellevarde's commitment to excellence and collaborative spirit make them a pleasure to work with.















Twenty years ago, we bought and renovated a charming 1870s cottage, perfect for our young family. With two small children, the house suited our needs. The large central room adjacent to the southern backyard and eastern pool, a key part of that original renovation, let us keep an eye on the kids. As our children grew into their twenties, the open-plan layout started to feel outdated. We wanted a home that reflected our new lifestyle, inspired by our love for Moroccan design.

We tasked architect Tanya Hancock with transforming the cavernous central space into intimate, private areas. The vision was for a riad style home centred around a Moroccan-inspired courtyard with a pool lined with handmade tiles. A trip to Morocco cemented those ideas—we found some beautiful green pool tiles and imagined bronze doors and aged oak floors to elevate the aesthetic.

Bellevarde helped us bring this vision to life with unmatched dedication. Site manager Jak Gannon was a revelation. When local manufacturers quoted exorbitant prices for our bronze doors, Jak found a company in England that could craft them affordably, even with the inclusion of shipping costs. His ingenuity didn't stop there. To save time, Jak reversed the construction process—having the windows made first and building the openings to fit them. His team handled the intricate installation, a feat typically requiring specialist installers. The fit is flawless. Without Jak's resourcefulness, these integral features might not have made it into our home.

Working with Jak was a joy. His pragmatic, honest approach and great sense of humour turned a potentially stressful project into a fun collaboration. Nothing was too much trouble—he tackled every challenge with pride, as if it were his own home. Administrator Matthew Song excelled at coordinating contractors, keeping every detail on track. Bellevarde's commitment went beyond our expectations, delivering a home that perfectly balances function and beauty.

The pool, a centrepiece of our design, posed a unique challenge. The handmade Moroccan tiles, each slightly different, were stunning but tricky to install. Many tilers hesitated, wary of their durability in a pool setting. Bellevarde's John Fielding, however, embraced our vision. 'If you want them, you should have them,' he said, working with us to find a solution. Three skilled tilers laboured for six weeks in sweltering summer heat to lay the tiles, creating an outstanding result.

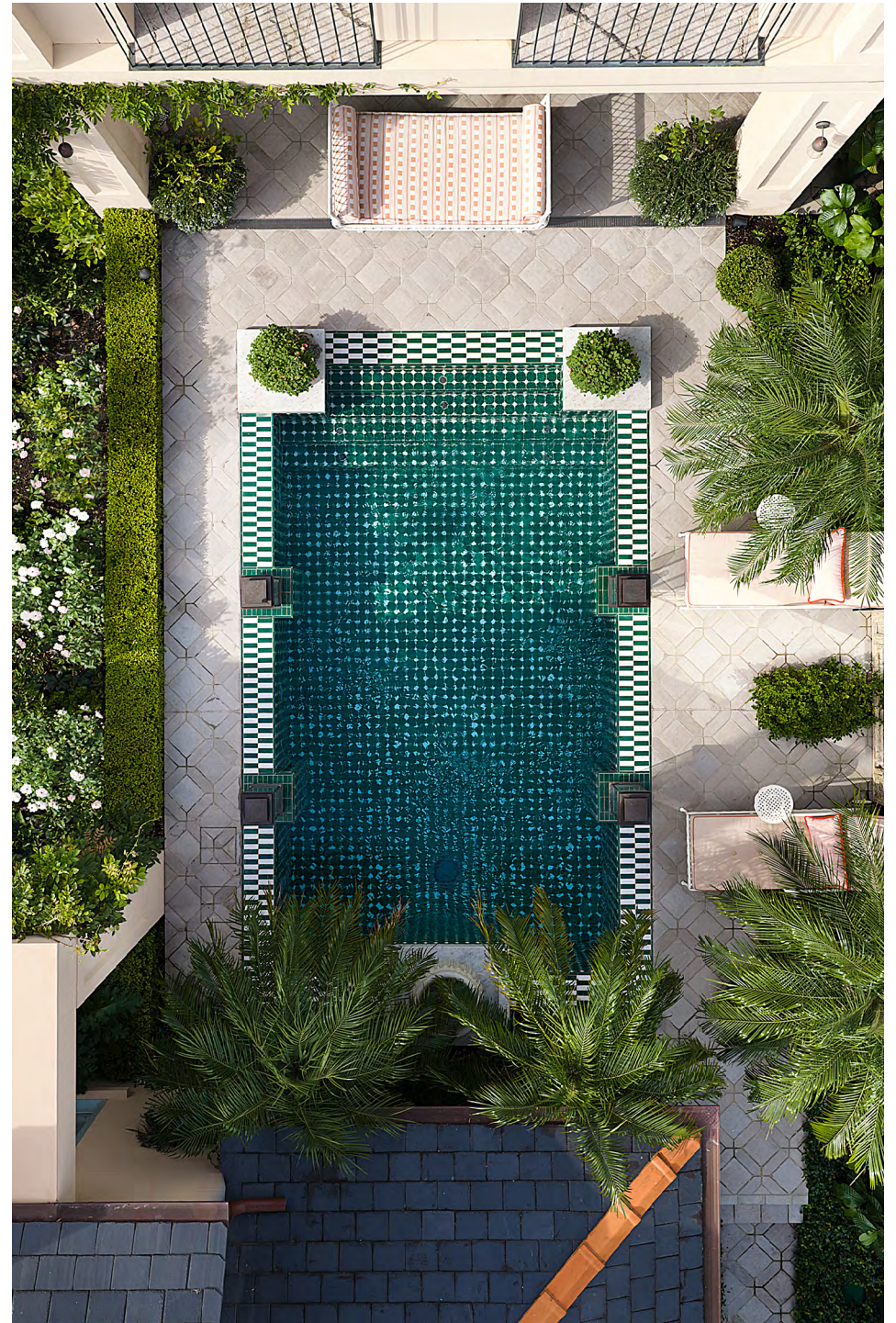
John and Jak's integrity and openness to our aesthetic preferences made them a dream to work with. They led a team of exceptional craftspeople—painters, electricians, and stone mason—all sharing a passion for excellence. John's eye for detail was extraordinary—he'd spot a 2mm discrepancy and ensure it was fixed, all with a calm professionalism that inspired trust. Landscape designer Paul Bangay crafted a stunning courtyard and garden, while interior designer Briony Fitzgerald's keen eye shaped the interiors and furnishings.

The project wasn't without hurdles. The aged oak parquet floors, a key element of the design, arrived after a 12-month wait, only to be misshapen and the wrong colour. Jak took it in stride, reworking borders and finding a way to lay them perfectly. Similarly, the handmade Italian outdoor tiles required intensive cleaning with specialised acid. Bellevarde sourced the right materials and craftspeople to ensure a beautiful finish, preventing costly delays.

Jak even brought our vision for bespoke outdoor tables to life. Using a photo we found online, he designed stainless steel frames incorporating Moroccan tabletops, coordinating with fabricators to deliver exactly what we imagined. These tables, like the bronze doors, add a unique character to our home.

Even after completion, Bellevarde's maintenance team, led by the ever-smiling Tom Enev, has been quick to address anything that needs fine tuning. We're in love with our forever home. We'd work with Bellevarde again in a heartbeat.





At Belvedere, we have four principles that have served us well in ensuring we maintain standards across every job.

{First Principle}

FIND THE BEST PEOPLE

It is about searching until we find the people who share our love for building houses as well as they can be built.

That's what Belvedere is—a team of us who just want to build extraordinary houses. It is an attitude that can't be driven or constrained by external factors. It's innate.

We employ apprentices to artisans and experienced site managers—the rest are tried and trusted contractors. Many of our people have been with us for over 20 years and a few for more than 40.

{Second Principle}

KEEP ON LEARNING

Everything we have learned in building some of this country's most complex and challenging houses is formalised in our 200-page Belvedere Construction Manual.

It details step-by-step instructions on how best to perform every critical task.

It is on every site and is constantly reviewed and updated as our knowledge grows and as building techniques, materials, equipment, and technologies, evolve.

We visit completed builds and catalogue the best of each project to continually improve and refine our methods. We also keep a library of our favourite architecture and building publications to stay informed of the latest developments and learn from others.



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{Third Principle}

FORM A BUILDING TEAM

It takes three key players to create a great house: owner, architect and builder. That is why, on each site, we form the building team headed by our site manager who lives the project start to finish. The trio meets regularly to review, discuss, and guide every aspect of the project. This ensures everyone knows just where we are, where we are going next—and ensures that the team make the best decisions.

It is the best way to deliver an extraordinary house that only ever costs what it should cost, and brings great joy to all of us.

{Fourth Principle}

MAINTAIN THE HOUSE

This came from listening to owners. They asked us to take care of their houses as well as we built them. So we formed our own specialised Belvedere Maintenance division. It benefits from access to all information about the build. Plus we can often call on the very tradespeople who built it.

Each new home has its own maintenance manager, who thoroughly understands the house and cares deeply about maintaining it to the highest standards.

According to owners and architects, we deliver the most efficient and skilled post completion care they have ever worked with—indeed several have asked us to take care of other properties we didn't build.

We welcome any questions, feedback or opportunities to discuss your prospective projects.

{Construction} 2021—2024
{Interviews} Hamish Spencer
{Design} Pidgeon Ward
{Photography} Prue Ruscoe, Piers Haskard (Drone)
{Paper} Colorplan, Knight Smooth
{Printing} Ellikon Press

