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MANSION
AUSTRALIA

Bunda's jewel in the crown

AT HOME

Restoring an icon to its former glory is a labour of love

ELLEN HILL

For almost half a century, world-renowned antique dealer and jeweller Veronica Bunda has been a willing servant of her medieval castle-style home.

Sandwiched between the Great Western Highway and the great western railway line at Springwood in the lower Blue Mountains of NSW, glimpses of the turrets of the Victorian folly in the yard of the home she and late husband Robert bought in 1972 are visible through the trees.

Locally, the mansion is known as "Springwood Castle", and many among the middle-aged set remember parties in their youth hosted by "the Bunda boys", Mark and Ben.

Mark is now a jewellery appraiser in New York, while Ben is the Bunda Fine Jewellery creative director in the family's Strand Arcade workshop in Sydney's CBD.

Yet Bunda House is never more vibrant than when it is brimming with guests. Between Ben and his young family and a revolving door of friends, Veronica is seldom alone in the mansion.

"It's a house that really comes to life when you've got about eight to 10 people here," she says.

With six bedrooms, four bathrooms, formal library, butler's pantry, multiple games rooms, several office spaces and workshops, there is plenty of room to spread out.

Then there's the mirrored steam room, not to mention the medieval-style turreted folly in the yard.

The mansion is furnished almost solely with exquisite antiques.

Veronica compares the "very



her office to the "tremendous piece" in the formal library.

"This is one of the best bookcases in Australia," she says.

The magnificent mahogany floor-to-ceiling Regency structure with removable shelves was made in 1815 from a single tree, each of its four panels matching. It is the length of the wall precisely.

"Can you imagine the weight of this? It truly is fabulous. If you wanted to commission it today, you couldn't even get the timber."

The small Queen Ann dining table in the lounge room has legs that "look like a chocolatier has

"That Italian table over there — fabulous! It took me about five years, but I put heavy weights on it and got the bow out of it."

The Tasmanian blackwood staircase leading to the bedroom wing is a copy of the servants' quarters staircase in Vaucluse House: "Beautiful, beautiful timber. I just love it. I feel sorry for anybody who doesn't."

But Veronica concedes that looking after a place like Springwood Castle is a big deal.

The sprawling heritage-listed estate sits on 1.25ha which was sold to the "Father of Federation" Sir

Twenty years later it was in the hands of Irish-born bedding manufacturer John Lawler, who built the 600sq m romantic sandstone mansion he named Eringarth between 1881 and 1883. Initially seven acres, he gradually sold off portions of the property.

NSW Office of Environment and Heritage documents state that the property was gifted to the religious order the Sisters of St Joseph in 1926 and was used as a home and a school. The nuns also built a chapel.

Veronica Bunda and her husband Robert bought the then run-

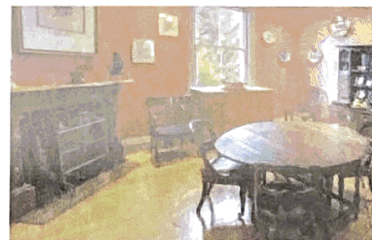
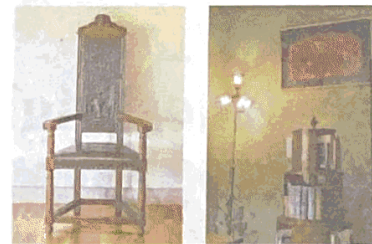
Clockwise from main: Veronica Bunda outside her castle; the catacomb of stone rooms; an antique book trolley; one of the original fireplaces; and a French Gothic chair

friends in Springwood, renaming it Bunda House.

The couple began an extensive renovation of the property, replacing the iron lacework, extending a rear wing and castellated tower at the north end of the property and infilling an east-facing veranda on the rear wing.

Veronica took over the painstaking work when Robert died 12 years ago.

She has finally succeeded in clearing the catacomb of stone rooms beneath the main house, turning them into games and sitting rooms, a wine cellar, office



ished concrete floors. In fact, Veronica oversees every piece of work conducted at Bunda House: often works alongside trade people cleaning, gardening or sweeping the rooftops of leaves.

"When I have somebody doing things for me, I work all day with them," she says.

"The house owns itself and I'm its chatelaine."

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Likewise Veronica's five grandchildren, who "love having a grandma that owns a castle" and

TROPHY HOMES
AROUND THE NATION

JONATHAN CHANCELLOR

Socceroo nets \$2.9m sale

Former Socceroo turned property developer Stan Lazaridis has sold his Perth home for \$2.9m. The left winger, who was capped 60 times, bought the City Beach property in 1997 when he was playing for West Ham in London. He knocked down the 1970s home and built a house, marketed as influenced by Versace's mansion, in 2006, the year he joined Perth Glory from Birmingham. Past its grand entry foyer with piano, the home on 900sq m has five bedrooms, four bathrooms, a cinema and games room. An alfresco entertaining space overlooks a swimming pool, spa and bar. Ray White Dalkeith Claremont agents Vivien Yap and Phoebe Shi had the listing. Lazaridis took to the property game after retiring in 2008.

Miner looks to offload home

Mining industry veteran Brad Gordon has listed Winbrook, his Brisbane mansion for a November 30 auction. It has been listed by Christine Rudolph and Matt Lancashire of Ray White. The Kalinga house features five bedrooms, five bathrooms, plus a floodlit tennis court with elevated spectators' rotunda. There is a pool with



The Brisbane home of Brad Gordon

— and twin cabanas. It sits on a 3380sq m block. There's also a home theatre, a gym, wine cellar with bar room and a library. Over the years he has worked at Placer Dome, Emperor Mines, Intrepid Mines and Acacia Mines.

Fox news: penthouse sells



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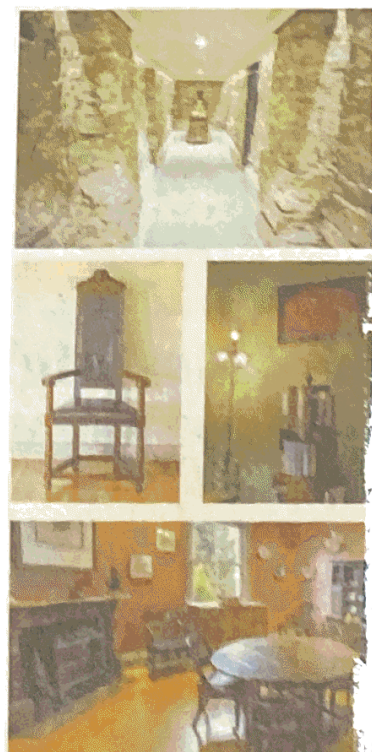
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