

Susie Silverii and Laurence Parisi spent years dreaming of buying land to raise their growing family on. They inspected several homes in Melbourne's outer north-east to make a tree change happen, including several by famous local designer Alistair Knox (1912-1986), but none were quite right in their current state.

'Many of these homes had very quirky floor plans that required too much work, or they weren't large enough for our growing family. I was only ever prepared to make a tree change if we found a perfect Knox match for us,' explains Susie. 'Fortunately, we came across this home on 20 acres of private bushland, and were lucky enough to move in just before the pandemic exploded here in Melbourne.'

This particular home in Hurstbridge (a town just north-east of Melbourne) was built by Knox, but designed by John Pizzey, who was Knox's right hand man for 15 years before starting his own architecture practice. Laurence and Susie loved the home's floor plan, and learning about its rich history from the vendors who commissioned the house back in 1978.

'It was untouched, in completely original condition, and something we felt we could put our own stamp on. We fell in love with the views, being high up on a hill, and on 20 acres of very private natural bushland. It had an instant, calming feel,' Susie says.

Through their conversations with the former owners, Laurence and Susie have learned many details about the home's origins. The mud bricks were made from clay sourced from a local dam, the fireplace slate hearths and thousands of bricks were salvaged from the original Richmond Primary School; timbers were sourced from a demolition yard; and the three leadlight windows came from a church in Briagolong, Gippsland!

Nearly all of these original details remain today in the timber ceilings, restored mud brick walls, brick flooring, and open fireplaces wrapped in recycled apricot bricks. 'There is not a single plaster wall in this house,' says Susie.

Laurence and Susie haven't made any structural changes to the property, although many rooms have been given a sympathetic, cosmetic update. Most

significantly, they renovated the bathrooms and laundry to feature partially tiled and [Dulux Whisper White](#) walls, and the pool has been restored.

‘The renovation/restoration process mostly involved problem solving,’ says Susie . ‘It was sometimes challenging to remain faithful to the original design while trying to adapt it for modern family living, staying within budget for each space, and working with the uneven floors and walls of this handmade house.’

Susie loves so many details of this home, but what she appreciates most is the way it makes her family feel. ‘It’s more about the experiences this home is allowing us to experience; the memories it is helping us to make; and the feelings it is making us feel,’ she says. ‘We love that it is a sustainable home and that we are preserving a piece of local history.’