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Devonport Couple Restores Historic Warkworth House

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In East Devonport, Tasmania, a beloved piece of local history is entering a new chapter as Amber and Rhys Taylor step in as the new custodians of Warkworth House, a landmark residence with roots dating back to 1860.

The couple, known locally as the owners of Laneway Cafe, purchased the historic home after discovering it online one quiet Sunday. Despite the day’s limitations for inspections, their excitement was immediate and unwavering.

“It was love at first sight,” said Mrs Taylor. “I couldn’t contain my excitement. As soon as Rhys saw it, we both knew this was it.”

Originally built by the Winspear family, Warkworth House has stood as one of East Devonport’s most enduring heritage properties. For nearly six decades, it was home to the Burgess family, whose contributions to the maritime and artistic heritage of the region left an indelible mark.

The Taylors plan to restore the property while preserving its historical integrity. Mrs Taylor, a musician, envisions the house as more than just a residence, a space for artistic expression, intimate concerts, and community events.

“We want it to be a warm, liveable space,” she said. “But also a place that honors the past and brings people together.”

The couple plans to begin renovations after receiving the keys in mid-August. While they are familiar with home remodeling, this marks their first major restoration project together. Their focus is on blending comfort with heritage preservation, all while working within existing overlay guidelines to protect the property’s cultural value.

Elders Tasmania agent Amy Rawston, who managed the sale, highlighted the importance of the transition. “Warkworth House is iconic. Captain Dick Burgess and his wife, Deda Ann, a respected local artist-left a legacy here,” she said. “Some of Deda’s original artworks remain in the home, and more will be displayed at a local museum.”

Rawston called the sale a career highlight, praising the Taylors’ community-minded vision. “It’s not just being restored, it’s being reborn. This home will once again be a living part of East Devonport’s story.”

Through tours, events, and arts programs, the Taylors hope Warkworth House will serve as a hub for Tasmanians to engage with their heritage, a celebration of history, not just a reflection of it.