

# AUCTION NEWS

## “AUSSIE EARL” AUCTIONS MANSION FITTINGS FOR MULTI-MILLION DOLLAR REFIT



**Melbourne’s leading royalty, 82-year-old “Aussie Earl” Englishman Keith Rous – the sixth Earl of Stradbroke – and his wife of 42 years, Rosie, never do anything by halves.**

They are about to carry out a multi-million dollar renovation to dramatically enlarge and modernise the massive Hawthorn mansion “Haven”, built in 1898 and with its twin towers one of the original landmark properties of St James Park Estate, that they bought almost three years ago – and are ditching many of the property fittings to do so.

“At an age when most people are downsizing, we are upsizing,” they laugh.

The couple decided the best way to offload what they don’t want in the house is by auction.





Jobs selling encyclopaedias, collecting rents and working on building sites eventually led to investment in real estate in both Brisbane and Sydney before in 1977 a move to farming on a large property on the New England Tablelands in New South Wales.

Twelve years later a New England drought prompted the family to buy Mount Fyans property near Darlington in Victoria's Western District, a holding that over 28 years he gradually expanded from 800 to 6000 hectares. In the meantime (1983), he inherited his English title after his father and grandfather died within days of each other – leaving four million pounds in death duties and financial challenges facing the family's large (1400-hectare) Henham Park estate in Suffolk.

One of these was a cousin ensconced on the estate who refused to leave so, rather than face a protracted court battle to obtain occupancy, Keith challenged him to a shooting duel, immediately declined as the cousin quickly vacated the premises.

The Earl of Stradbroke then started restoration work and the historic estate has since become a popular venue for the annual Latitude music festival and other public events, and tourism. In 2016, Keith and Rosie sold Mount Fyans and, by chance shortly after, the mansion at 14-16 Isabella Grove, Hawthorn – literally across the street from where they currently live – came onto the market.

The restoration and expansion work is being carried out under the guidance of Melbourne architect Robert Simeoni who wants to maintain the period feel of the street at the front of the house while providing a series of new gracious living spaces and a large private courtyard at the rear of the property.

Accordingly, they have asked auctioneers John Ainger and Phil Caldwell to sell the grand staircase, leadlight windows, chandeliers, light fittings and unwanted furniture on site from 11am Sunday April 14.

Keith Rous is no ordinary developer. He has an exuberance for life and a knack for making money – whether it be breeding and selling ferrets as a child, being kicked out of Harrow for running a betting racket involving his classmates, or amassing a fortune after he arrived in Australia aged 19.



**Portrait ladies**



**Sculpture by Colinet**



Sculpture by Chiaparis



Arthur Boyd Shoalhaven



“We are keeping the front one-third of the house as is and renovating the back two-thirds,” said Rosie.

“The renovations will include underground car parking, a cloister, lift, new staircase, internal hallway and open fireplace.”

Caldwell believes the biggest auction challenge will be the grand staircase, which stretches majestically to the upper floor.

“Providing we find a buyer, it will be sold with the proviso that our builder does the removal, a condition applying to all the fittings sold at auction,” he said.

The staircase chandelier was originally a gas-fired gasolier probably dating from when the house was built.

Keith and Rosie’s furniture for auction includes a 17<sup>th</sup> century court cabinet and Georgian tables, bureaux and bookcases from his English property.

The sale also offers five internationally important high quality bronze art deco figures by French artists Chiparis, Colinet and Preiss.

Works by several Australian artists are on show including Arthur Boyd’s Shoalhaven and major Brett Whiteley lithographs more than two metres tall.

A gallery size John Olsen painting is another attraction along with two early David Boyd’s and a work by Ben Quilty. Other auction highlights include Sevres vases and a Rococo mirror.

Keith and Rosie cannot wait for the auction to finish as, a few days later, they will launch into the renovations.

This same enthusiastic attitude seems to have coloured their family life. Keith has a total of 15 children from two women – with (second wife) Rosie bearing eight of them. Perhaps their continuing zest for life can best be summed up in the family motto Keith created once he inherited his English title, replacing the until then 1100-year-old saying “I Live in Hope”.

It simply reads “We Fight like Lions and Breed like Rabbits”.