



Mal's collection of bone implements



Some of Barbara's jewellery designs



Mal collects all sorts of clocks

What a gem

A jeweller restores life's treasures, writes Tonya Box

BENT over a workbench in her quiet home studio in Wilston, Brisbane jeweller Barbara Heath tends to the hopes and dreams of her clients.

Fragile, distraught, optimistic or hopeful, they stumble upon her path seeking answers to profound problems.

A broken earring, a fractured family heirloom, a ring of promise, each holding a memory or sentiment that to its owner is of inexplicable value.

For 32 years Barbara has restored precious items and designed jewellery for life's most cherished moments – a first Christmas, wedding, birthday, anniversary.

Her business name could not be more fitting. She is the Jeweller to the Lost.

Barbara's long list of clients is owed to the best type of advertising there is – word of mouth. She now works on jewellery for the granddaughters of some of her first customers.

Alongside fellow jeweller Juan Luis Gonzalez, Barbara works in her downstairs studio surrounded by lush trees in an untamed garden.

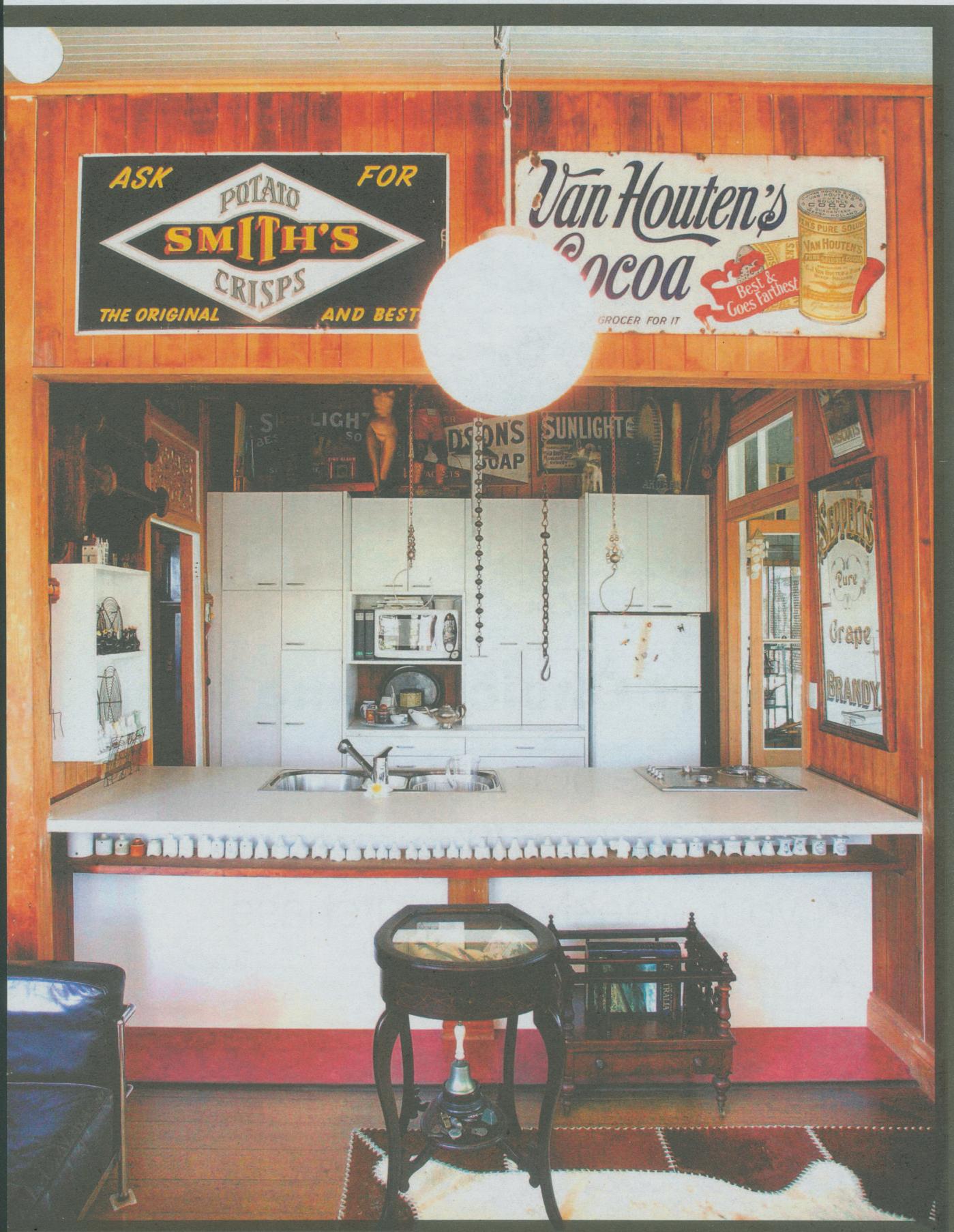
The tapping of metal against metal is the soundtrack for our meeting.

Like many people who run a business from home, Barbara thought it was important to create a work zone that wouldn't invade her living space.

"Downstairs is for working and upstairs is for living," Barbara says.

"There's no internal staircase and this allows an important separation between these spaces, even if it is only 50 paces to the front door."

Upstairs, Barbara finds solace reading a good book in her favourite armchair.



Mal's pie funnels are lined up under the kitchen bench, left; an old news poster, above

Pictures: Mark Cranitch