

MALENY GUEST HOUSE IS A DREAM COME TRUE FOR JIM AND LEIGH

Those Federation days revisited

Restoring a run-down guest house to its former splendor has been the realisation of a dream for Jim and Leigh Ruig.

And the former Brisbane hairdressers have spared no expense or effort in retaining the turn-of-the-century-flavor of the old Queenslander tucked away in the Sunshine Coast hinterland.

Although the Maleny Guest House in Maleny's main street, Maple, only officially opened for business at the end of April, it has already won a strong following of Brisbane yuppies keen to turn the clock back.

In fact, entering the guest house through the solid timber and stained glass door is like walking into the pages of a novel where plots centre around sitting rooms, reading and music rooms, and huge winged armchairs.

"It's not just another place to sleep," Jim said. "People come here to soak up the easy atmosphere of days gone by."

As a result, opera and symphonies — not FM radio — fill the room; guests are encouraged to read books or play chess in front of the circa 1840 antique red cedar fireplace rather than watch television.

A tennis court and piano have yet to come to complete the picture of the old home's heyday.

The house was completed in 1898 as a private residence for the local hotel licensee, a Mr A.C. Cook, his wife, mistress and 10 children.

It was the first well built home in the area, most of its neighbors being simply slab huts.

It was converted to a boarding house in 1930 and soon after to a guest house.

But by the time the Ruigs took over early this year, the Maleny Guest House was a rundown ruin.

Jim set about fixing the plumbing, rewiring and

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By DOT WHITTINGTON

decorating with the help of a Brisbane firm, keeping in mind the Federation period of its birth.

Originally 11 rooms, it now has four double rooms, one twin, a large dining room, spacious kitchen, two big bathrooms, two toilets, and a central entertainment area.

The 30m hallway features the Australian Coat of Arms, a Federation original.

The interior is painted in neutral heritage colors, lifted by carefully coordinated rugs and curtains.

The white glass night-shades date from 1908 and originally adorned the old Brisbane Telecom building.

These were among a number of finds for Jim and Leigh.

Haunting the auction rooms, they also came home with pews from the old Ann St Church.

"The furniture comes from everywhere and it all has a story," Leigh said.

The dining room is dominated by an extendable mahogany table which came from a priory and seats 10 on hand-carved mahogany chairs.

Guests who choose to dine-in start with sherry, can take a three course meal from Wedgwood and silver, and finish with port from crystal.

Bedrooms are simple, each with a silky oak dresser, period bed with valance and 100 per cent down quilts for the cool Maleny nights.



Maleny Guest House is home sweet home for JIM and LEIGH RUIG.

Keeping in touch with the period, a hot water bottle and bathrobe are also supplied.

At breakfast guests are encouraged to sit around the wood stove in the cosy kitchen for slabs of bread and home-made jam and a choice of breakfast teas or freshly brewed coffee.

"We are not in competition with motels," Jim said.

"It's bed and breakfast and a whole way of life."

The couple have yet to start work on the 0.3 hectare garden but Jim said he was still finding terraces.

The garden features a well which still flows and a creek which flows through the property and is lined with well established weeping figs.

"It needs work but it has been an established classic backyard with heaps of fruit trees," Jim said.

That work will have to fit in with a busy schedule keeping guests living in a style to which it is easy to become accustomed.



Dining room features mahogany table from a priory.