

Our House Sneak peek 3



RETREAT . . . Leigh and Jim Ruig, below, used recycled timbers to create a superb living space, far left, a practical kitchen, left, and a comfortable bedroom, above. Pictures: Suzanna Clarke



Life in the raw

Cindy Lord

BRISBANE couple Jim and Leigh Ruig wanted a place where they didn't have to take off their boots to come inside. And they've got it.

Oaky Creek Farm is their rugged "home away from home" near Lake Manchester in Esk Shire, west of Brisbane.

Out the front is a giant red shed, to the side a carefully nurtured polo field and out the back cosy living quarters.

Built entirely from recycled timber from Jim's antique timber business, the back rooms were intended as a caretaker's residence.

But the Ruigs and their children Morgan, 11, and

Camilla, 9, love their retreat so much they now stay there every minute they can.

Inside there is an open fire tailor-made for sitting around with red wine and a guitar, cow-hide rug and even a wagon wheel candelabra to complete the rustic appeal.

A self-confessed cowboy, Jim says he wanted to keep everything raw.

"We pared everything down to basics to keep it gutsy. The timber is beautiful as it is, in its simplicity and rawness."

The only concession to finish is a plaster-board ceiling.

Jim says some of the huge hardwood beams were broad-axed from grey ironbarks that were standing when Captain Cook was sailing along the east coast.

As part of their dream to recreate a property with the ambience of an Argentinian ranch, the Ruigs moved 30,000 tonnes of earth on to the 25ha bush block to create the ideal site for a polo field.

Three years later, the grass is almost ready for its first tournament.

Leigh exercises their 20 horses daily, along with the help of a full-time groom.

The giant plank wall barn is Jim's pride and joy: the trusses are recycled from an old shed, the piers from the demolished Teneriffe Wharf in Brisbane.

However, going back to basics doesn't mean shunning the modern world. Jim says when they get sick of the stars and open fire, there's always the Internet and cable TV.

COURIER MAIL

"OUR HOUSE"

Tuesday, June 8th, 1999