

FEATURES

# Restoring the charms of a bygone era



• By SHIRLEY SINCLAIR

WITH tender loving care and more than \$100,000 in restoration work, former Brisbane couple Jim and Leigh Ruig have transformed Maleny's oldest residence into a charming, Federation-style guest house.

The salmon pink and olive green Maleny Lodge guest house in Maple Street opened at Easter after an exhaustive four months toil for the couple.

Jim said he worked, on average, from 7 am to 2 am, seven days a week, while Leigh continued to operate her Leigh Bird Hair Design in Brisbane.

Built in 1894 by timber merchant A.C.K. Cooke, the

50 square home is set on 0.3 hectare. Its walls and floors are a wealth of workmanship in quality pit sawn white beech and cedar.

The old Queenslander came into the Ruigs' lives as a secondary concern.

"We wanted to live in Maleny and thought it would be good fun to run a guest house," Jim said, with an enthusiasm that has not been dulled by all the hard work.

Although only 29, he said he had a passion for all things old. His hobby is collecting and restoring old furniture.

He left no secondhand shop or antique store unturned as he gleaned items to recreate the turn of the century feeling of the guest house. Light fittings were part of the old Telecom building in Brisbane; an old wood stove is in the kitchen; and even the toilet seats are silky oak.

In keeping with the time, a communal bathroom services the four double and one twin rooms. No wardrobes can be found in the cosy bedrooms — only hanging rods and chests of drawers.

Hot water bottles warm the toes on crisp Range nights instead of modern electric blankets and a Federation emblem forms part of an architrave down the 30 metre polished wood hallway.

The backyard is filled with jacarandas, bandicoots, a flowing creek and a functional well that once supplied the whole township.

The Ruigs' dream will be completed once back rooms have been renovated and a deck added for manager's quarters.

Their energies already have been rewarded, as the guest house is full most weekends.



• ABOVE: Jim Ruig stands in front of Maleny's oldest residence, which he and his wife Leigh have given a new lease of life as the elegant Maleny Lodge guest house.

• TOP: Jim and kitten Alcina relax in one of the four double rooms which perfectly recreate the Federation era.

• ABOVE: Maleny Lodge's elegant dining room. The Ruigs searched secondhand and antique stores to find furniture to recreate the turn of the century feeling.



## Treasure Hunt

Find the National Treasures hidden in the pages of **The ENTERTAINER**