



St Ursula's College
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COUNTRY HOMES

Town & Country

A trip down home's boarding house history



The Desenzano Homestead now sits in the leafy country town of Highfields north of Toowoomba.



The Desenzano home when it was a girls boarding house at St Ursula's College.



Desenzano Homestead was named after a village on the shores of Lake Garda in northern Italy.

SCHOOL GIRLS

THE St Ursula's College boarding house, Desenzano, was named after a village on the shores of Lake Garda in northern Italy. It was the birthplace, in about 1474, of Angela Merici who was an Italian religious educator and honoured as a saint by the Catholic church.

Desenzano Boarding House consisted of two houses - Clio from 30 Rome Street and Nuzella from 18 Rome Street in Toowoomba.

In 1956, the Ursuline nuns purchased Clio at 30 Taylor Street that was initially owned by Robert and Sybil Hogarth.

The Hogarths built Clio in 1922 to replace another home on the allotment, also called Clio, that had been destroyed by fire.

In 1923, Clio was sold to well-known Toowoomba dentist, Thomas Andrew Margetts. Thomas Margetts died in 1953 and the property passed to Margetts' dental nurse, Miss Hilda Maude Washbourne, before it was purchased by the Ur-

suline nuns.

Then in 1957, 16 Rome Street was received as a gift from relatives of one of the nuns and sold for removal. Clio was moved to 16 Rome Street and renamed Desenzano.

By 1973 the nuns realised that Desenzano needed expansion. The 18 Rome Street residence was purchased and a common room was built to join it to Desenzano next door. Consequently, 16 Rome Street was then affectionately known as Deso and 18 Rome Street as Zano.

In 1980 the house system for boarding was introduced with three houses named after significant places in St Angela's life, Brescia, Desenzano and Garda. Each house was made up of vertical groups with girls from Years 8 through 12 in each.

In 2002, to make way for the Salo Centre project, Desenzano boarding house was sold for removal. Deso went to Mt Mee and Zano to Highfields.

The Zano home is now known as Desenzano.

'A home away from home'

Desenzano Homestead

BY MARTIN BUNYARD

ITS beautiful mix of colonial style and French provincial is what makes Desenzano Homestead so inviting.

Current owners, Peter and Sarah Warner, moved to the property only 18 months ago with their two young daughters.

"We were immediately drawn to the style of our homestead with all its old features," Mr Warner said.

"When we first saw Desenzano, we knew it was the home for us to raise our family in," Mrs Warner said.

"This home just envelopes you in the rich cultural heritage of Toowoomba and is truly representative of the Edwardian era with the timber construction and heritage features such as the original pressed metal ceilings.

"It really has an old world charm about it and makes for a very homely feel."

The Warner family previously lived down the Toowoomba range in Withcott before moving to their new country home.

Desenzano Homestead is set among the leafy country area of Highfields, just north of Toowoomba.

The century-old gable residence was renovated by its previous owners to reinstall all the character and charm of the original homestead. The previous owners were Rob Murphy and Dell Murphy-Brice, who said they were struck by Desenzano's warm character.

The country residence features four bedrooms, three living areas, two bathrooms, a country-style kitchen, double street access, double ga-

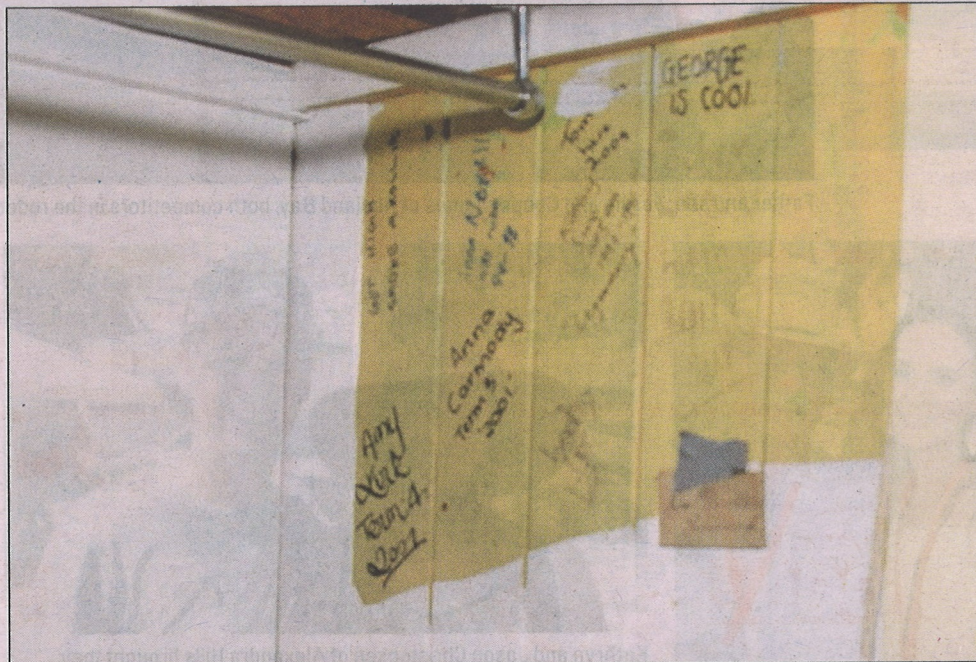


Peter and Sarah Warner with their two daughters, Elizabeth and Violet, at their home Desenzano.

rage, and more than 40,000 litres of rain water storage.

But the most interesting feature of the home isn't revealed in its ornate ceilings or homestead fixtures, it's contained in one of the bedroom cupboards where signatures still remain of girls who boarded at St Ursula's school.

Not only was Desenzano one of the area's most historic and mobile homesteads, it has a very unique past of being a 'home away from home' for thousands of school girls. The original house was purchased by St Ursula's College 60 years ago in 1956, before they relocated it to 16 Rome Street in 1957 where it became the Toowoomba school's first boarding house.



Some of the old St Ursula's College boarding girls signatures in one of the home's cupboards.

DESENZANO TIMELINE

1902: Century-old gable home is built

1921: Home burns down in a fire

1922: New home built to replace the one destroyed in the fire and called 'Clio'

1923: Clio sells to well-known Toowoomba dentist Thomas Andrew Margetts

1953: The property is passed to Margetts' dental nurse after his death

1956: The Ursuline nuns buy the home

1957: 16 Rome Street in Toowoomba is gifted from relatives to one of the St Ursula nuns and the house is sold for removal

1957: Clio moved to 16 Rome Street and re-named Desenzano.

1973: Desenzano is expanded with the purchases of 18 Rome Street in Toowoomba. A common room is built to join it to Desenzano at 16 Rome Street. Consequently, 16 Rome Street was then affectionately known as Deso and 18 Rome Street as Zano. A tree is planted on the front lawns of Zano in memory of Boarding Captain, Debbie Real, who had died in a car accident.

1980: New boarding system introduced with the three houses named Brescia, Desenzano and Garda. Each house is made up of vertical groups with girls from Years 8 through 12 in each.

1994: Both houses are moved down Rome Street in Toowoomba to 10 and 12 Rome Street to make way for Brudazzo Block. Debbie Real's tree is transplanted into Brudazzo courtyard and Deso is elevated to allow for a common room underneath.

2002: The St Ursula school's Salo Centre project begins and Desenzano Boarding House is sold by the college.