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Giving the grand old Duke a new lease of life

Russell | Northland

The streets of Russell are lined with history, and perhaps none more so than The Strand – which has been home to the iconic Duke of Marlborough Hotel since 1827.

In the nearly 200 years since it was granted New Zealand's first ever liquor licence, 'the Duke' has built its own special allure, and its own unique history. So when its owners decided to undertake a large-scale renovation – adding 13 rooms, and almost doubling the footprint of the 1426 m² property – holding onto that history was vital.

"We wanted to expand on the Duke's iconic status," says one of the hotel's co-owners. "We didn't want the building to look like it had just been built."

Whangarei builders H E Harnett Building Company rose to the challenge. "Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga had to sign off on the look and feel of the building, and archaeologists and local iwi monitored the entire build process," says Hayden Taylor, the construction manager responsible for bringing Salmond Reed Architects' vision for the Duke to life. "Every time we had to put a spade in the soil, the ground had to be inspected first, in case we came across anything historically important."

For the team, holding onto 200 years of history meant doing things the old-fashioned way. From the doors to the decking, every part of the build – barring the electrics – was made of high-quality timber. "Connecting the old to the new was a challenge," says Hayden. "But if you look at it now, you can't tell where the old building stops, and the new part starts."

"We wanted something the town could be proud of," says the co-owner. And from the looks of it, this chapter of the iconic building's story has started off with a bang. 🇳🇿

NZCB Member / Howard Harnett

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