

The Duke of Marlborough Business Limited

The Duke of Marlborough Business Limited is made up of two main companies – Duke of Marlborough Hotel and Charlotte’s Kitchen. The Duke as it more commonly known was purchased by 4 friends Anton and Bridget Haagh, Riki Kinnaird and Jayne Shirley in May 2010.

Since the purchase of the Duke there has been a lot of blood sweer and tears to develop it into the beautiful place it is today.

In December 2015 we launched Charlotte’s Kitchen in Paihia – a casual, fun restaurant smack bang at the end of the wharf. She has been a great restaurant and we enjoy being part of the Paihia community as well.

The four of us are actively involved in the businesses and are mainly based out of Russell. We have two other investors that have helped us over the years of building our organisation. Alongside this we have fantastic staff, great suppliers and amazing communities to work in. We love being part of The Duke and Charlotte’s Kitchen and are committed to make it a sustainable business for now and the future.

Duke of Marlborough Hotel - A place in History

The Duke of Marlborough began its life in 1827 as “Johnny Johnston’s Grog Shop”. The owner Johnny Johnston was an ex convict come good, he became fluent in Te Reo and was very well regarded with the local Maori. This relationship led to Johnny being able to purchase the freehold site of the Duke – which was one of the first land sales to a European in New Zealand.

In the 1830s, Russell or Kororareka, as it was known then, was the biggest whaling port in the Southern Hemisphere and turned out to be a bit of an eye opener for the missionaries. Up to 500 whalers at a time would arrive in Russell after twelve months at sea, with Russell having no effective law enforcement agency, the scene wasn’t ideal. Prostitution was one of the area’s largest industries and many local women frequently entered into 3 week marriages.

Johnny quickly changed the name of his hotel to the Duke of Marlborough, at the time the Duke of Marlborough was the world’s richest man, so the name sought to bring respect, elegance and opulence to the “Hell Hole of the Pacific”. By all accounts, Johnny was a well trusted man and assisted in the translation of the treaty of Waitangi to the Maori – it is rumoured he was worried that the Maori version did not quite equate to the English version (it still pays to listen to your publican!)

After the Treaty of Waitangi in 1840, New Zealand's first government was formed just down the road in Okiato, and started threatening to bring the famed lawlessness to an end. With Johnny being so well known in the local area, it is no surprise that he managed to swing the very first licence for his establishment (the colonial treasurer was a close friend), so after 13 years of serving Whalers, traders and prostitutes, Johnny the ex con was now all legal.

The licence now hangs proudly in a gold frame in the bar, where sharp eyed history buffs have pointed out a reference to the succession of Queen Victoria from her father.

The first Duke building was burnt in 1845 during the battle of Kororareka, but Johnny quickly rebuilt and his family retained the Duke of Marlborough to 1878.

From 1878 to 1923 the Duke passed through 8 different private operators.

Between 1923 and 1974 the Duke was owned and run by Hancock Hotels (these days part of the Lion Breweries Empire). In 1931 the second Duke building caught fire and burnt down, the third and current building was built in 1875 and housed the telegraph workers at Cable Bay, it was shipped down the coast and dragged into place by steam traction engine in 1932.

In 1974 a young entrepreneur, Wayne Young, managed to wrestle the Duke away from the breweries in exchange for several of his Taranaki bars. Wayne lifted service and food standards significantly and the business was near bursting at the seams, so in a controversial but commercially savvy move he built another building behind the Duke and managed to convince the authorities that his licence should cover his business across the road as well. This was the start of the truly golden Duke of Marlborough trading days.

In 1983, Wayne sold the lease of the Duke to Karl Andersen. The early 80s was all share market hype, where fun was easy and money no object to it. Karl took the Duke to the Auckland A Listers, with Dom Perignon and Crayfish lunches regularly being trotted out to customers arriving by Sea plane.

Karl set up the "Duke of Marlborough South Pacific Bill fish tournament" with over 500 anglers aiming to win over \$100,000 in prizes – for a 25 room hotel in a town of 800 people the guy was certainly aiming for the stars!

Sadly with the share market crash a lot of people lost their businesses and Karl was one of them, the following recession along with the mass granting of new liquor licences in 1991 saw a big loss in revenue for the Duke of Marlborough and Russell in general.

The Duke was sold on to Dell Gifford and a few of her friends. They advertised heavily on radio and made the Duke famous for her Devonshire teas.

In 2003, a young Frenchman, Arnauld Kindt bought the Duke and renovated the accommodation areas significantly, adding a sprinkler system and en-suites to the all the rooms which lifted the star rating of the hotel. He came from a hotel background and focussed on improving the accommodation side of the business.

After falling in love with the Duke in their summer vacations from Otago University, your current Mein hosts (Jayne Shirley, Riki Kinnaird, Bridget Haagh and Anton Haagh) purchased the Duke from Arnauld in 2010 and have been busy bringing their view of what's great about Northland back to the Duke.

Being able to touch History

Russell is quite unique in New Zealand, in that you can still see and touch a lot of history.

Christ Church is New Zealand's first church. One of the first donations for its construction came from Charles Darwin, the father of the theory of evolution – who could not believe the “very refuse of society” that he saw in Russell. Walking around the grounds you will find the headstones of Tamati Waka Nene, who was one of the first chiefs to sign the Treaty of Waitangi, Hannah King Letheridge, the first white woman born in NZ, and also the graves of some of those who fell in the Battle of Kororareka.

The Church still shows the scars of the battle of Kororareka – with musket holes still clearly evident in its exterior walls.

Hone Heke's famous stands against the British, with the felling of the British Flag at Flagstaff, is up the hill, just a brisk 15 minute walk up the road behind the Duke.

Pompallier House is NZ's first Catholic mission and printing press, it is owned by NZ Historic places.

Russell Museum houses many relics from the battle and the whaling days and is well worth a look around.

The Dukes Logo

The Duke of Marlborough's logo is a mix of the original Duke of Marlborough's crest along with a few local points of reference – the word Kororareka refers to Russell's original name, it means sweet penguin and refers to an old story of a Maori chief who after being injured in battle asked for a broth of sweet penguin to restore his health. This also is the reason for the Penguin in the top right hand part of the shield. The bottom left shows a harpoon and skinning knife – so both the Maori and European history of Russell is reflected.

Charlottes Kitchen

Charlottes' Kitchen was established in late 2015 and is bought to you by the rascals and reprobates from the Duke of Marlborough Hotel. A totally different experience from the Duke which is steeped in history and tradition, Charlotte's Kitchen brings a social contemporary dining experience to the Bay of Islands – a funky fun atmosphere for casual dining and drinking. [Take a tour and see what you're missing!](#)

And if you're wondering - as many do – Charlotte's Kitchen was inspired by Charlotte Badger and some amazing [artwork by Lester Hall](#). And who is Charlotte Badger?

Well it's quite a tale and no one is one hundred percent sure of exactly who Charlotte Badger is and her fate but this is our version Charlotte Badger was said to be one of the first white women settlers in NZ – a criminal from the UK who stole a couple guineas and a silk handkerchief thereby finding herself sentenced to seven years' penal servitude in New South Wales at the Parramatta female factory. During her stay Charlotte became pregnant and gave birth to a baby girl.

Part way through her sentence she found herself heading to Tasmania on board a ship called The Venus to complete a lesser sentence of becoming a house servant. This daring lady decided (along with her friend Kitty) that the prospect of servantry was not to her liking and rumour has it incited the mutiny of the crew of the Venus by convincing the men to take over the ship, joining in the fun with a fray and pistol herself. How she convinced these men to do such a deed - well you can only imagine!

Having secured the Venus, Charlotte, Kitty and friends pirated another vessel for supplies and then The Venus, with Charlotte, her daughter and Kitty and her male friends set sail for the Bay of Islands.

This is where the tail of dear Charlotte gets a bit murkier – but it is said that she took up with a Maori Chef from and as with many historical stories the truth is not always clear – but what is clear is from all accounts, Charlotte Badger was a woman of interest, passion, strength, daring and just a little bit naughty all of which inspires us at Charlotte's Kitchen.