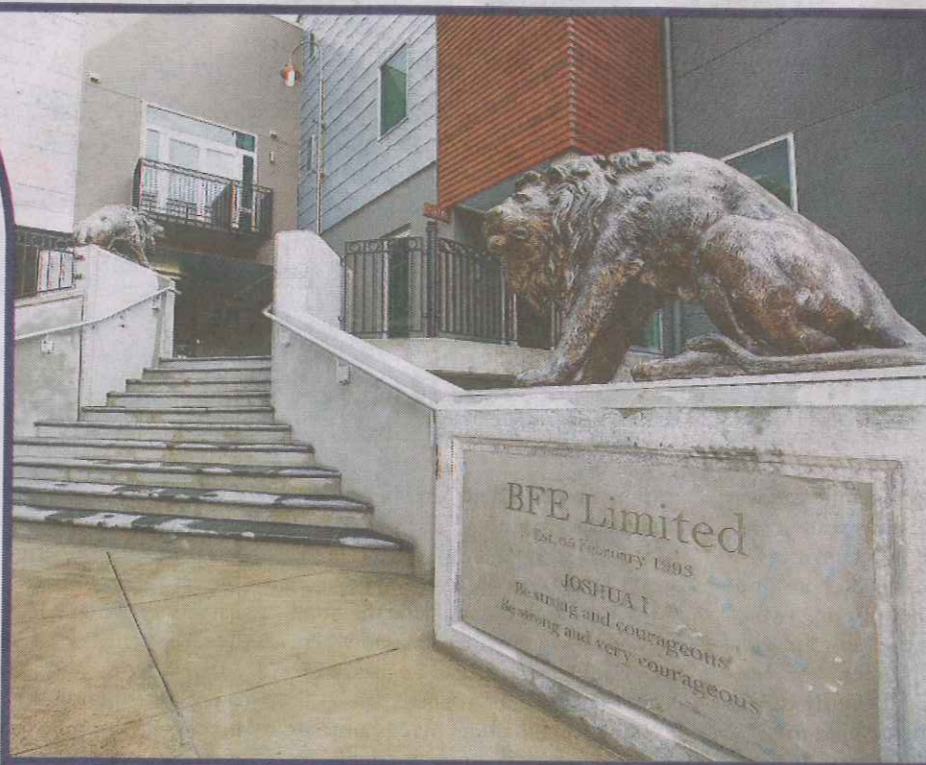


K&Q KING & QUEEN HOTEL SUITES

Photos by Mark Dwyer



Stories by Mike Shaw

Two lifesize lions in cast bronze are a particularly suitable symbol in the surroundings of New Plymouth's new King & Queen Hotel Suites.

Lions are a traditional heraldic element for royal families around the world. So there's an obvious connection to the name of the boutique hotel development - set as it is on the corner of King and Queen streets in the inner city.

There's a more personal family connection in the placement of these lions, however, reveals the developer and project manager for the King & Queen development, Aaron Boddington.

"My wife has family over in Australia, in Noosa," Aaron explains. "We try to get over there with the family once a year."

That's been happening for some years now and each time they've taken the

reflect the investment of family in this development in the city.

While it's taken shape in the past year or so, the investment here actually began 20 years ago with a vision for family, says Aaron. "My dad (Russell) set up four

Dad set up 20 years ago.

"It was derelict then, but over time the building was developed into a wholesale kitchen for the Macfarlane's cafe businesses. The coffee roasting operations have now grown to the point they have taken over the whole building."

Substantial land in front of the buildings provided car parking for most of that time, but eventually Aaron proposed developing that site and bought the land off Luke for the development.

Careful study suggested the construction of a hotel on the site.

"We sat down and looked at what was the best economic model for the site. There

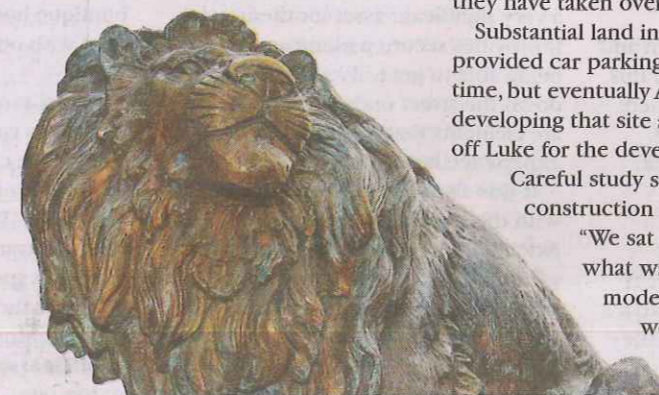
were several things to consider ... it was not just the

and Egmont streets. "It (the hotel) would be the centrepiece."

For Aaron, the civic benefit of bringing more people into this area is an important complementary focus to the business advantages. "It might sound it, but it's not corny," he says.

"Taranaki as a province, and New Plymouth as a city, deserves this kind of development." Creation of a feel-good area encourages people, he says. They like being there and thus they feel like coming back.

Plans for the hotel were firmed up, with Chapman Oulsnam Spiers architect Jeff Salisbury coming up with the design for the striking four-level building that has risen on the corner site with a feature curtain of vertical bars along the King St





opportunity to take their photos with the children in front of the lions that sat outside a shop in Noosa.

Until a recent trip, that is, when they found the lions gone and the shop closed. The signs of removal seemed fresh and Aaron made inquiries about the statues. He found the former owner of the shop and discovered the bronze beasts were stored in a warehouse.

A short and satisfying negotiation later, the lions were on their way to New Plymouth and a place in the King & Queen development.

They sit above and below the steps that link the new hotel to the Ozone Coffee Roastery and cafe part-owned by Craig and Kate Macfarlane, Aaron's sister and brother-in-law. It's a personal touch that seems to



economics,

It's a building that offers different views and finishes depending on the angle you see it - from King St, from Queen St, or from the Ozone Roastery courtyard. "Jeff Salisbury had to get them to blend together and harmonise with the area we are in ... it was no small feat."

The kinetic energy of the vertical bars, the modern take on the White Hart balcony, and the courtyard around Ozone is a successful combination, he says. "It all fits in."

Construction of the hotel was carried out by Fletchers Construction. "They have done an amazing job; we commend Fletchers and all the sub trades for an amazing job and their attention to detail and quality in achieving this magnificent building."

The setting of the building is unique in its outlook, he adds. "It's one of the few streets in New Zealand with a view that takes in 160 years of architecture; so from an architectural point of view, that made it great in itself."

The balcony along Queen St is a special place, he says, because of the many aspects available from it, taking in the clock tower, the White Hart next door, the eventual Len Lye Centre and Govett Brewster Art Gallery across the road, and the view down towards the Cenotaph and sea. "It's one of the best vantage points in the city."

Partitions that divide the balcony incorporate opening panels that allow the three areas to become one long balcony connecting three rooms. That option would be ideal for weddings or other gatherings.

companies - one for Mum and Dad and one each for all the children (Aaron, Kate and Luke). The idea was that the children would have the opportunity to take their companies in any direction they wanted and he would oversee them - while we were teenagers."

Aaron chose a farming focus, Kate and Craig opted for the hospitality industry, and Luke followed a path into adventure tourism.

"I was farming for 20 years and then for various reasons decided to sell my farming interests and this project saw the joining of my company with Kate and Craig's company to create the hotel."

Luke also was involved in the lead-up to the project - his company then owned the corner property, which had earlier been purchased by their father as a resource for the future. "Dad's always been a visionary like that ... he always saw this would be a prime area one day."

"It's very satisfying after 20 years, that two companies which have always been independent have joined forces and taken advantage of the skill centres in those companies. It's the completion of what

but also the area, what was in it then and what was planned for the future."

What stood out, according to Aaron, was people - facilities such as the Govett Brewster Art Gallery, the recently redeveloped historic White Hart Hotel and its Snug bar, and the then-proposed Len Lye Centre were about people wanting to be there.

"So it was important we did something that would bring people here, that would work in with what was planned, that would work in harmony with the upgraded White Hart and the proposed Len Lye Centre."

A study with neighbours and architects Chapman Oulsnam Spiers identified the area as the arts and culture focus for the city. "And this particular development was right bang in the dead centre! It needed something that brought people in and kept them here ... and that denotes accommodation."

It was also perfect from the family's point of view - at the centre of their operations that embraced Cafe Govett Brewster, The Snug and Ozone, as well as Fredericks, down at the corner of Queen

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King & Queen Hotel Suites has enjoyed a prompt acceptance on New Plymouth's accommodation scene.

That's not surprising. The four-level boutique hotel is impressive - 17 suites of high-quality, finely detailed accommodation, set in the centre of the arts quarter of the city, backing on to the historic White Hart Hotel and across the road from the Govett Brewster Art Gallery, with outlooks that variously capture sea and city views.

The hotel opened a week ago with a low-key open day for invited guests and participants in its development and construction. The buzz of approval as the official visitors strolled in and out of rooms and along the hallways was proof that the Boddington and Macfarlane families behind its development had done well.

Its first guests have already been and gone - including a full house from this past weekend's influx of people here for the All Blacks-France third test.

"We've had really good feedback," reports project manager Aaron Boddington.

That feedback has been widely focused, he says, with different areas impressing different people. And that's not surprising again, considering the wealth of unique detail in the hotel's construction and decor.

It starts with the architectural detail

special features for a romantic getaway; two Queen Victoria Suites with separate lounge and bedroom areas, larger balconies and full kitchens; and two King Henry Suites offering two bedrooms each and the most luxurious stay for guests of this hotel.

Visitors have been obviously curious about pricing, and that ranges from \$200 a night for a business suite to \$575 for a night in one of the King Henry suites. General consensus seems to be that represents value for the package of space, features and service.

Accommodation includes lock-up basement parking for guests' vehicles, Aaron Boddington points out.

"We see the basement parking as a very significant asset for the hotel. It provides secure parking as well as being able to get to Frederics dining down the street under cover. They are elements that add to the hotel experience here."

It was also a great way of dealing with the slope of the site and extending the value of it long-term, he says. "Parking is particularly important in the CBD. Guests can leave their cars here and know they are secure. Unless they need to go out somewhere, they can lock up their cars for their stay and forget about them."

already provide a high level of quality dining experience.

"Studies show that, apart from breakfast, most people staying in hotels decide to dine outside the hotel anyway. So we provide a system where the existing facilities can be used and charged back to the rooms.

"The mix and model here is fantastic and I'm sure we've done the right thing."

King & Queen general manager Daniel Fleming agrees. "And we still provide in-room dining if guests want that, from breakfast through to dinner."

The connection with the associated dining facilities is part of the hotel's point of difference, he says. "Being a boutique hotel, we can spend more time with our guests and make it work."

Daniel says he enjoys the prospect of a "GM's run" to Ozone at times to bring back coffee to guests. And he sees other options to fine-tune a stay for guests. "We could bring in a private chef ... arrange a helicopter tour or a specific experience that caters to them and nails their Taranaki experience."

That enthusiasm from Daniel is another asset for the King & Queen, Aaron says.

"I am absolutely thrilled that we are

Without the right opportunities in New Plymouth, people would move away in search of better jobs, he feels. "We are proud to have a product here that attracts people like Daniel back to the city, so they don't disappear."

Daniel welcomed the opportunity to put his experience gained from mixing with worldly travellers to good use back here in New Plymouth. "I wouldn't have travelled back for just any job or any hotel."

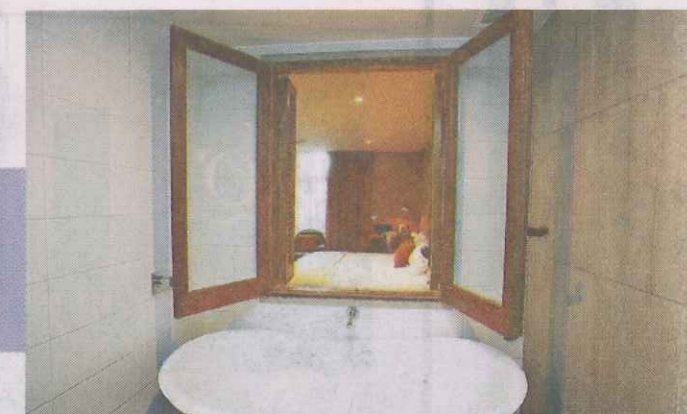
The biggest element in a hotel experience is service, both Aaron and Daniel emphasise.

"We know what we like when we travel," Aaron adds, "and if we can emulate that here, we know guests will have a memorable time."

That time will not be at the expense of other hotel businesses in the city, Aaron believes.

"There's so much happening in New Plymouth. We are very fortunate to have the resources of dairying, oil and gas, and engineering and off the back of that we are able to host events.

"We are roll-your-sleeves-up, get-stuck-in types of people ... we enjoy work and going to events at the weekend ... there's always something going on. People choose to live here for all the right reasons."



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It starts with the architectural detail of the exterior finishes and continues with the generous spaces of rooms and luxury touches of specially imported furniture and furnishings from Morocco.

Five styles of room, ranging in size from 44sqm to 65sqm, are available at King & Queen - business suites offering more space and luxury than a standard hotel room; premium suites adding private balconies and sea views; a one-off Anniversary Suite with a Romeo and Juliet balcony and other

special features for a romantic getaway; two Queen Victoria Suites with separate lounge and bedroom areas, larger balconies and full kitchens; and two King Henry Suites offering two bedrooms each and the most luxurious stay for guests of this hotel.

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What doesn't feature within the King & Queen facility is a restaurant.

"That was deliberately done," explains Aaron.

"Cafe Govett Brewster across the road is a sister company; it's part of the family. Frederics, The Snug in the White Hart and Ozone are all within a stone's throw. It would have been a mistake to create another restaurant; we couldn't justify the cost of building something new in competition with our sister companies when they

already provide a high level of quality dining experience.

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"I am absolutely thrilled that we are in a position to offer a job that attracts someone of the calibre of Daniel."

The 24-year-old general manager is from New Plymouth and received his hotel management training at the Pacific International Hotel Management School at Bell Block, graduating as class president in his final year there.

"Daniel had a fantastic opportunity with the Intercontinental Group he was working with in Wellington to go much further afield if he chose," Aaron says.

Without the right opportunities in New Plymouth, people would move away in search of better jobs, he feels. "We are proud to have a product here that attracts people like Daniel back to the city, so they don't disappear."

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It's no surprise growth takes place even in economic downturns, he says. "The decision to build this hotel was made in the middle of the worst economic crisis the world has ever seen. I had many people tell me 'Don't do it', but I believed in the province.

"This hotel was not built because in my own mind there was a lack of accommodation or the accommodation was poor, it was simply that I believed there was a lot happening in the area that justified doing it."



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