



TREASURE CHEST: Stony River Hotel owner Sarah MacGregor and her daughter Mia (2) look over the mystery safe.

Photo: MARK DWYER

Hotel revamp turns up cast-iron case for probe

TDN 9.8.2005

By GLENN McLEAN

WANTED: A safecracker to do a legal job.

If that sounds like you, the owners of the Stony River Hotel will welcome you into their pub with open arms.

The hotel's new owner, Sarah MacGregor, is desperate to open a safe that was discovered by builders renovating the 120-year-old premises.

The in-ground safe, with a number dial combination, is concreted into the floor of one of the old rooms.

Its origins are a mystery to Mrs MacGregor.

"None of the locals seem to know where it's come from.

"There are plenty of stories about

this place, as you can imagine, like guys riding their horses up the stairs, but nothing about the story behind the safe," she said.

A few phone calls to security firms around Taranaki has failed to unearth anyone able, or willing, to open the safe.

The offer by a few locals to use a couple of sticks of dynamite on the safe has also been turned down.

"It's pretty hard to find safecrackers listed in the Yellow Pages," Mrs MacGregor said with a laugh.

She is, however, considering offering a top-shelf bottle of single-malt whisky to anyone who could lift the lid on the Great Stony River Hotel Mystery.