

Owners think big for former NP club

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By LYN HUMPHREYS

THE new owners of New Plymouth's historic Club Taranaki building intend restoring the building to its former glory.

Partners Dennis Brown and Janet Ingram recently bought the 80-year-old building from Club Taranaki. "We want to try to put it back to the original and try to get the colour back. It's been deteriorating for quite some time," Mr Brown said.

The couple will first open an upmarket cafe, specialise in weddings and conferences and later build accommodation in the extensive rear carpark area.

The 20-luxury-bed development was estimated to cost more than \$1,000,000, Mr Brown said.

"The development should be very good for New Plymouth and tourism," he said.

However, any development would be dependent on resource consent and Historic Places Trust approvals, Mr Brown said.

The owners have renamed the building Dolphins on Queen after buying three carved wooden dolphins by Collingwood sculptor Daryl Gray.

Former Aucklanders, Mr Brown and Mrs Ingram sold their luxury lodge - Omaru Lodge - on Waiheke Island three years ago.

They had since travelled over most of New Zealand before falling in love with both the building and New Plymouth, Mrs Ingram said.



MAKING WAVES: Mark Ingram (left), Dennis Brown and Janet Ingram with one of three carved dolphins after which the new venture at the former Club Taranaki is named.

Photo: TREVOR READ

"We were looking for something to do, plus a challenge," she said.

The proximity of the sea, the weather and the people were all major deciding factors for them both. The adjacent new coastal walkway had strong appeal.

"We love the sea. We love the wild look.

"We will have a very nice cafe here and beautiful weddings. This place lends itself to it. And if there's not enough weddings, we'll do divorce parties!" she joked.

The cafe will take full advantage of those sea views and will be extended, featuring glass folding doors and outside dining, subject to New Plymouth District Council approval.

The major plus for the New Plymouth shift was Mr Brown's architect brother, Tse Taranaki and Associates Ltd owner Gary Brown,

who has lived in the city for 22 years.

He has been the design architect for many buildings in the city including the New Plymouth District Council.

"He will be assisting with the development," Mr Brown said.

The owners are not wasting any time. Functions manager Jackie Doyle already been appointed and the first wedding was held on Saturday.

Mrs Ingram's son Mark has moved from Barwon Heads, in Victoria, Australia, to join the venture. "He's indispensable," she said.

As a keen surfer he has already tasted the waves and approved the coastal breaks.

The owners are about to lodge plans with the council for approval of the overall plan, and the cafe

would therefore not be functioning fully until next summer.

The 1922 building overlooking the New Plymouth waterfront was designed by noted architect Thomas Bates. It was purpose-built as an exclusive men's only club. Originally named the Taranaki Club, it was commonly known as the Gentlemen's Club.

It has a B listing under the Historic Places Trust.

In recent years, the club had operated under the name of Club Taranaki after the Taranaki Club combined with the local commercial travellers club.

Club Taranaki president Graham Harris said the club would continue to operate and was still looking at its options.

It could take at least six weeks to make a decision about where it would be housed in future, he said.