

If walls could talk

There are homes which tell a story – those which have history embedded in their bones and offer a glimpse into what life once was.

The fresh faced Merivale Manor has a tale to tell of its own, the journey from grand residential home to boarding house to its recently completed refurbishment.

"She's effectively a brand new old lady," says Wayne Peat, operator of the luxury accommodation with wife Karen.

Wayne and Karen purchased the business a year ago, after many months of searching all over New Zealand for a suitable property. Wayne says it was the manor itself which drew them to Christchurch, and in doing so brought him back to the city in which he grew up.

The manor follows a square Italianate style, with a wide veranda wrapping around the lower floor and a small central balcony upstairs. Designed by architect Samuel Farr and built in 1882 for businessman Henry Webb, it was home to the Webb family for many years. Following Webb's death in 1901, the property was continually subdivided, eventually becoming a boarding house in 1911 and hidden away behind a brick house in the 1950s.

"It was basically brought back to life in 2004," says Wayne, with extensive work taking place to restore the property, including replacing the old brick house at the front of the property with eight modern spa studios.

It is this work which Wayne credits with allowing the building to ride out the Christchurch earthquakes relatively unscathed. Strategic planning meant that Merivale Manor



Karen and Wayne Peat

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was operational every day following the earthquakes, with repairs to the studios and the manor recently completed.

Restoration of the original plasterwork, fresh paint inside and out and re-piling, was carried out at the manor, along with extensive refurbishments to the entire site.



DESIGNED BY ARCHITECT SAMUEL FARR AND BUILT IN 1882 FOR BUSINESSMAN HENRY WEBB, IT WAS HOME TO THE WEBB FAMILY FOR MANY YEARS.



The result is quite simply a beautiful historic building which now provides accommodation unlike any other in the city.

The original marble and wooden fire surrounds remain, with strong links to local cultural history throughout the manor. Colonial and Maori artworks sit side by side, and historic images show what Christchurch

looked like in the manor's early days.

"Every suite is a little different," says Wayne, with all taking advantage of their location within the building and its leafy surrounds.

The suites are aptly named to link with the history of the building. Webb, and its Maori translation, Te Wepu are two of the manor's suites, along with Peacock, the maiden name of Webb's wife.

Te Wepu consists of two large bedrooms, a full kitchen, and dining and living space, with Wayne saying the spacious suite, and at times the entire manor, has proved very popular for wedding groups as they prepare for their big day.

Karen's touch is felt throughout the building, with the business providing the perfect opportunity to showcase her interior design talents. Everything inside the manor and the spa suites has been carefully selected by

Karen, including homeware, furniture and the abundance of fresh flowers.

"It's how you would like your home to be," says Wayne of the look and feel that they wanted to create.

For Karen and Wayne, Merivale Manor has brought them a new home and a change in lifestyle, from the busy corporate world which enabled the family to spend many years living and commuting across the globe, to working together in the role of full time managers with a two minute stroll to work.

Their love of hosting and travel is now shared with the many visitors from New Zealand and overseas who choose to stay with them.

"We want to share the history of this place - the highlights of Christchurch, Canterbury and the South Island," says Wayne.

For more information visit Merivale Manor on Facebook or at www.merivalemanor.co.nz.

