



What's old is new again at the Metro

Step inside the renovated Metropolitan Hotel and you'll find a warm, character-filled pub that's embracing its historic past.

"We don't want it to look like every other pub and we want to keep that link to Orange's past," says Publican Mark Murphy of their ongoing renovations.

Built as a general store by John Woodward around 1850 and originally known as Manchester House, the Metro is an iconic Orange's landmark. It has been continually operated as hotel for almost 150 years and has a character that drew Mark and his wife Joanne to purchase it almost five years ago.

"It is our kind of feel, we like that older style of pub," says Mark, who is himself a fifth-generation publican.

"There are taverns, bistro pubs... we wanted a 'pub' pub. We could see an opportunity here to put a mark on something that could be left for years."

Old pubs are not without their problems, however. And with sinking foundations needing structural repairs, Mark and Joanne took the opportunity to also give the hotel a facelift.

But where so many pub renovations look to modernise the interiors, Mark and Joanne have

gone in the other direction.

Paint has been stripped back to reveal original timber fixtures, render removed from walls to expose the hand-made bricks, antiques and old photos adorn the walls — the result is a clean new look, but one that's sympathetic to the pub's past.

"We've tried to keep it old," says Joanne. "We've taken the posts back to wood. We've exposed the brick and left them the way they are as we like that period look. We found an old fireplace that was in one of the other pubs sitting in a garage, so we have re-established that as ours. And we've got the old tools on display and a couple of things we found underneath the floor in the cellar."

"I've got some old gold sieves and pans to go up too," adds Mark. "Just to say this is the part of the history and evolution of Orange and... hopefully we do it justice."

Beneath the render on the stairwell wall, they even discovered the faint, painted sign advertising the old general store.

"This is the original writing, that was on the outside of the building, and it says 'Manchester



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House,' says Joanne.

Upstairs, the floor of the accommodation wing has been levelled and the rooms repainted. The shared bathrooms have also been fully renovated; again, with fixtures that give a nod to the age of the building.

"We've had all our rooms redone, redone all the toilets — they've all been renovated and are ready to go. It's cheap and cheerful budget accommodation!"

Renovating the Metro is still a work in progress as restoring old buildings takes time and comes with a hefty price tag.

But Mark and Joanne are proud to be caretakers of this slice of Orange's history and want to make sure the Metro remains for future generations.

"When people are travelling, they want to see a traditional pub. There are not too many left, slowly but surely they keep disappearing," said Mark.

"And people are interested. They come in and have a look and it's great to see people wander around and see these things, so we don't want to lose that part of Orange's history."



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