

## Collingwood

The hotels described on this website were or are located in the former City of Collingwood. This area, comprising the suburbs of Abbotsford, Clifton Hill and Collingwood, was created as the municipality of East Collingwood in 1855. It became part of the City of Yarra in 1994.

The first land sales in this area had taken place in 1838-1839. The land was sold in large blocks of up to 25 acres and much of the area was not further subdivided for many years to come. It was the gold rush in the early 1850s that gave the first great impetus to development. A lot of building took place in Collingwood in the 1850s; as it was outside the area controlled by any building regulation there were many ramshackle little two room wooden houses; many people lived in tents. Among the more substantial buildings built were hotels, which along with churches were more likely to be built of bluestone or brick.

### The role of hotels

In early Melbourne pubs (public houses) served important social and community functions in the absence of other venues and institutions. The nineteenth-century community was largely based on face-to-face relationships in the local neighbourhood (in streets, shops, pubs, clubs, lodges, churches, volunteer fire brigades etc). Hotels were central to a lot of what went on in Collingwood life; not only was the pub a place where you went for a drink, but they were also used for activities such as council meetings, friendly society meetings, the local brass band and political meetings. Hotels were important as social and political centres, with the publican functioning as an oral source of news and political comment. Before the advent of town halls and other public halls, hotels were often the only venue for a large function. They were even the site of polling stations. For many years Collingwood Council usually included at least one publican.

Inquests were generally held at a hotel, and the dead bodies taken there, but this was one of the least popular duties of a publican. In 1879 a terrible house fire in Stafford Street caused the death of three little children:

*Great disgust was manifested when it became known that Mr. Dobbs, of the Retreat hotel, refused to allow the bodies to be placed in his house. After some difficulty Mr. Scholtz, of the Yarra hotel, permitted the police to place them in an outhouse, at the rear of his premises. The inquest was held on Monday, at two o'clock, before C. Candler, Esq., at the Yarra hotel.*

Lodges and friendly societies served an important role in the nineteenth century; as well as providing support in times of sickness and death, they enabled the many recent immigrants an opportunity to develop contacts within their new neighbourhood. Each lodge met in a lodge-room at its chosen hotel, and a publican was usually a member of at least one lodge. After the formal lodge meeting drinks were taken while public affairs and business matters were discussed. Through membership of a lodge, a merchant would make business contacts, while masons and contractors would hear about work opportunities.

Apart from offering a place where people could meet and drink, hotels often offered those recreational facilities which were permitted under the licensing legislation, such as billiards. The artisan's cottage, often consisting of two rooms and a lean-to kitchen, was likely to afford a man a powerful motive to forsake the 'home comforts' of his crowded house for those of the convivial public house.

Hotels were also used as depots where business could be transacted, tender documents collected, contractors interviewed, lost items returned, etc. The newspapers were full of

advertisements ending 'apply at XX Hotel'. This ad may be one of the more unusual:

*Strayed, two yellow or red cows, with one heifer calf. The finder, by applying Gasometer Hotel, Smith-street Collingwood, will be rewarded.*

*The Argus* 9 December 1862

Not only did hotels serve many important functions in themselves; they were also used as reference points in a time when addresses were rather vague and street numbering non-existent or inconsistent. Advertisements for items for sale, land and houses for sale, and jobs available, often described the location in relation to a nearby hotel.

Funeral notices such as this one in *The Argus* 23 January 1869 were commonplace:

*The Friends of the late Mr. JOSEPH WESLEY BENNETT are respectfully invited to follow his remains to the place of Interment ... The funeral to leave his late residence, Vauxhall cottage, near the Royal George Hotel, Hoddle-street Collingwood, THIS DAY .... WILLIAM GEORGE RAVEN, undertaker.*

### **Numbers and location**

The only hotel so far discovered in Collingwood in 1851 and 1852 is the Studley Arms. The amazing population increase which followed on the heels of the gold rush led to a rash of hotel building. In 1853 there were 11 hotels. These had more than doubled by 1855 when 24 hotels dotted the streets. Another big increase occurred around 1865, when 53 hotels were licensed. Numbers increased steadily until reaching the maximum: 87 in 1878. Numbers remained in the 80s until the end of 1908.

In addition to licensed hotels, there were a number of licensed grocers, who also had to apply every year for renewal of their licence. These have not been described in this research, nor has much been discovered about the many 'sly grog' outlets which are rumoured to have existed in considerable numbers.

At present (2011) there are 27 hotels, although several have changed from the traditional format, functioning as bars open only in the evening (and often into the early hours of the morning). There are 16 in Collingwood, nine in Abbotsford and two in Clifton Hill.

Grace Darling Hotel, which opened in 1854, has the main claim to fame after 158 years of serving drinks in the same building, but a few others are not so far behind: Robert Burns and British Crown (152 years), Gasometer (151 years). If we look at the hotel as an institution rather than a building, long-serving hotels which retained the same site and name, but were re-built, are the Glasshouse (159 years) the Yarra (157 years), Sir Robert Peel and the Yorkshire Stingo (154 years).

The area between Smith and Wellington Streets was densely packed with hotels, because that was the area heavily settled in the early Collingwood years. By contrast much of Abbotsford was not subdivided until much later than the early pattern of settlement along the main roads and the river. The establishment of hotels, obviously enough, reflects the historical pattern of subdivision and building construction: Collingwood had 73 hotels, Abbotsford 24.

Clifton Hill shows a less dense pattern of hotel development with only four hotels because, with the exception of some early settlement associated with quarrying and contracting, it remained largely undeveloped until later in the nineteenth century. The first two hotels, built in 1869 and 1875, were located in what was then Heidelberg Road (now Queens Parade), an important transport route for those going to Heidelberg and beyond. By 1878

they had been joined by the United Kingdom Hotel, strategically sited where the road split into two for maximum exposure. The lone hotel in East Clifton Hill, the Royal in Spensley Street, did not make its appearance until 1890, following the generally later housing development on that side of Hoddle Street.

Hotels tended to be located on transport routes, main thoroughfares and shopping strips. It is therefore no surprise that Victoria Parade/Victoria Street had a total of 13 hotels, Smith Street had 12, Johnston Street 11 and Hoddle Street eight. What might puzzle the modern-day reader is that the thoroughfare that had the largest number of hotels was Wellington Street, with a grand total of 16 hotels, of which 13 were in the section between Victoria Parade and Johnston Street. This is because Wellington Street was an important commercial street in the mid-nineteenth century, although Smith Street eventually overtook it in popularity. Streets such as Peel, Stanley and Otter, which led from Wellington Street to Smith Street, also provided well-located sites for hotels.

The general pattern for the location of pubs makes those that do not conform to the pattern all the more interesting. Why were there five hotels in insignificant Perry Street? What sort of clientele patronized the 'backstreet' pubs such as the Caulfield Arms, the Grosvenor, and the Harp of Erin?

### **The reduction of licences**

Liquor outlets always faced a certain amount of opposition from temperance organisations, whose activities reached a peak in the 1880s and again in the early twentieth century. The 1885 Licensing Act shortened opening hours and gave residents the right to reduce the number of hotels in their suburb: an option certainly not taken up in Collingwood!

Further temperance campaigning led to the 1906 Licensing Act which established a Licenses Reduction Board which could force the closure of hotels deemed to be in excess of needs as determined by a formula related to population. The high concentration of pubs made the inner suburbs the target of close investigation by the Board, which also conducted hearings as to the financial situation of each hotel to establish how much compensation should be paid as reparation for the loss of income resulting from the licence privation.

Fifteen Collingwood hotels had been closed down by the end of 1908. In 1914 another eight were deprived of their licences. In 1925 a further six hotels were closed: the Earl of Zetland, the Londonderry, the Royal George, the Somerset and the Star. A typical amount paid in compensation was £1400 for the owner and £350 for the occupant (publican).

The last stage of licence deprivation took place in 1936, when it was announced that the Council Club Hotel and the Willow Tree Hotel would close at the end of the year. It was noted that the number of hotels remaining in the district was still higher than the prevailing average for an estimated population of 22,000 in the Collingwood section of the licensing district.

Another impact, although minor, on the closure and/or demolition of Collingwood hotels was the growing retail enterprise of Messrs. Foy and Gibson. After commencing in 1883 with a shop in Smith Street, the first of their warehouse/manufactories in Oxford Street was built by 1895, to the design of William Pitt, architect and Collingwood councillor. From this time until the 1920s, the entire block bounded by Smith, Wellington, Peel and Stanley Streets, previously occupied by houses, small factories and hotels, was to undergo a transformation into an industrial landscape of woollen mills, clothing manufacture, hosiery, bedding, metal goods and cabinet manufacture on a scale unprecedented in Melbourne at the time. The Oxford Arms, the Cambridge Arms, and Massie's were replaced by Foy and Gibson buildings.

The number of hotels sat at 37 until an entirely different event brought about the closure of a number of Collingwood pubs. This was the widening of Hoddle Street which in the early 1970s cut a swath through shops, hotels and houses on the western side of the street. The Junction, Sir Henry Loch, Railway, Victoria Park, and the Town Hall hotels all 'bit the dust'. They had had a pretty good innings before they were summarily dispatched: Victoria Park/Highbury Barn Hotel 118 years, Town Hall/Victoria Hotel 115 years, Sir Henry Loch 107 years, Junction Hotel and Railway Hotel 101 years.

### **Names**

Many hotels were named after trades, industries and occupations, e.g. Bakers Arms, Brickmaker's Arms, Jolly Hatters, Butcher's Arms, Sawyers Arms, Tubal Cain, Quarryman's Arms, and Council Club. The largest category reflects the English, Irish or Scottish origins of settlers, e.g. Ayrshire Arms, Bristol and Bath, Glasgow Arms, Lancashire Arms, Albion, Shamrock, City of Norwich, Galloway Arms, Harp of Erin, Caledonian, Somerset, Surrey, Suffolk. In many cases these were names already used for pubs in 'the old country'.

Naming the pub after the owner was a simple choice: Barnard's, Clarke's, Fox's, Mac's, Massie's, Serle's, and Steeth's. Often some local landmark was referenced: Gasometer, Terminus, Weighbridge, Victoria Park, Railway, Tower, Courthouse and Town Hall. In many of these cases the construction of the landmark led to a name change. The Weighbridge on the other hand followed another pattern, that of changing its name to commemorate a well-known person in the news, in this case Sir Henry Loch, Governor of Victoria. Other famous people who were the cause of a name change were Baden Powell, Normanby, and Burke and Wills. Grace Darling remained firmly in place from the hotel's inception, as did Robert Burns and Sir Robert Peel. General Havelock, on the other hand, was dropped in favour of Victoria Parade, in another popular model: naming the hotel after its locality. The City Hotel was re-named the John Barleycorn in the early 1970s, this character from English traditional folk music and folklore referring to the hotel's function as a folk music venue.

Only two social or political events translated into hotel names: Federation and Eight Hours. Two very distinctive names are the Laird O'Cockpen (a song) and the Yorkshire Stingo (a North Country ale).

In recent years several hotels have reverted to their original names: the Smith Street Bar and Bistro is once again the British Crown; the Office Inn is now the Fox Hotel, in reference to its original naming as Fox's Hotel.

### **Hotels and Football**

Hotels were also sports centres, and not just for darts and billiards. Collingwood pubs sponsored football teams, which often played in nearby paddocks. Moreover, hotel function rooms were the normal venue for meetings of football clubs and other sporting bodies

The story of Collingwood's beloved Magpies was intimately intertwined with local pubs. In mid 1889 a meeting at Mrs Pryde's City Hotel in Johnston Street discussed the establishment of a senior football team. Local MLA George Langridge chaired the meeting which attracted a large attendance. It elected a Committee which met soon after at the Grace Darling Hotel with members of the Britannia Club, the district's premier junior football team. While nothing was settled at that meeting, before long the committee was successful in establishing a senior team. Meetings of the football clubs continue to be held in hotels

From 1892, when the Collingwood Football club was established, the club allowed a liquor booth at Victoria Park. This was operated at first by JR Bremner, publican of the Yarra Hotel and also Club vice-president. In 1898, Collingwood council took over management of the

ground, and in 1903 gave up the difficult task of managing the liquor booth. The tendency for spectators to leave at half-time for the more convivial atmosphere of local pubs became even more pronounced, and the length of the interval was increased (those who remained were entertained by various diversions put on by the Club). The prohibition remained in force until 1922. Depending on which gate a spectator used for egress, there were four particularly popular pubs for Collingwood barrackers: the Railway Hotel and the Sir Henry Loch in Hoddle Street, and the Early Bird Hotel (later the Studley Park Hotel) and the Yarra Hotel in Johnston Street. Most of the hotels posted the Magpie results quarter by quarter, so there was often no urgency for thirsty barrackers to return to the game. Because of proximity and historical connections the Yarra was the most popular hotel with Club supporters prior to World War 1: it was close to the back gate, and had served as the team's first dressing room. Between the wars the Railway surpassed the Yarra in popularity. Just over the railway line, it was the Club's choice for accommodating country recruits and providing meals for players. The licensee in the early 1920s, William Green, subsequently became a Football Club committeeman. His successor, John O'Connor, was a very active Club member and recruiter; he also coached Abbotsford, the team that served as feeder to the Collingwood seconds. In 1925 George Connor, Club secretary, testified in the licensing court concerning the value of the Railway Hotel in providing meals for Victoria Park patrons.

### **Women publicans**

Looking at lists of publicans, it is not long before the researcher begins to note the large number of women publicans. In some years, they were probably in the majority in Collingwood. Claire Wright has written a very detailed examination of this issue in *Beyond the ladies lounge* and it is recommended reading for anyone interested in following up this topic. (See Sources and Further Reading)

Some women ran a hotel in conjunction with their husbands, and continued alone after his death. Two examples of very long-term owner-publicans were Mrs Mary Maher at the Star Hotel and Mrs Davison at the Sir John Franklin Hotel. More recently, Katherine Hackett reminisced about her time at the British Crown Hotel, which she and her brother took over when their aunt died:

*Last orders ... after 74 years*

*I started in the bar when I was 21. Women never sat in the bar, they sat in the parlour. The other bars used to be really crowded. The men's behavior was wonderful. They always apologized if they swore in front of me. Honestly, I was treated with great respect. If they were drunk, we'd go around and take them out quietly and Jack would walk them home or I'd take them home in the car. We had so many regulars it was more like a club. As far as the bar goes, it hasn't changed much over the years. The customers are still gentlemen, they treat me with respect.*

*The Melbourne Times, 18 August 1982, pages 1, 7*

### **Sunday trading**

Under nineteenth and early twentieth century legislation, liquor was allowed to be supplied only to hotel residents and bon fide travellers on Sundays. Judging by the many cases brought to court, Sunday trading was ubiquitous in Collingwood. The following newspaper report shows the length to which a wily publican would go:

*SUNDAY TRADING AT CALEDONIA HOTEL, STANLEY ST*

*At the East Collingwood Police Court, William Sharp appeared for selling liquor on a Sunday at the Caledonia Hotel. The defendant was described from the witness box as the keeper of a shanty, but the police seemed to find it difficult to catch him tripping, in the way of Sunday trading, from the fact that it was the practice on Sundays to view the customers through a small hole, cut in the door and glazed, before giving them admission. Sergeant Fenton had seen a woman enter the house with a jug under her apron and come out again, whereupon he entered.*

*Sergeant Fenton, on Sunday last, managed to get in without undergoing this preliminary survey, and found three men in the parlour drinking beer and two in the bar, the landlord behind the bar. For the defence, it was sworn by one of the three men that the whole of them were lodgers and that they did not pay for the beer, as it was given to them with their lunch. There was no evidence to show that the other two men were drinking, so the Bench dismissed the case, although, as they said, they had no doubt in their own minds that the drinks were sold and paid for.*

*The Argus 8 October 1870*

### **Architecture and Architects**

Many Collingwood hotels dating from the 1850s and 1860s were constructed in bluestone or timber, with brick structures less common. There were 11 wooden hotels altogether, built between 1854 and 1868. The Post Office Hotel, the Exchange, the Good Samaritan and the Sawyers Arms were relatively short-lived, while the Wattle Tree, the Beresford Arms, the Early Bird and the Tubal Cain survived in their old buildings until the early twentieth century. The Galloway Arms, Village Belle, and the Weighbridge Hotel were re-built in more substantial materials. It was not only wooden hotels that were replaced; brick (usually stuccoed) became increasingly popular through the course of the nineteenth century and the dark, solid bluestone of the early hotels fell out of favour. During the late 1870s and 1880s, Collingwood participated in the building boom along with the rest of Melbourne, leaving a legacy of striking Italianate buildings such as the Sir John Franklin, the Yarra, the Friendly Societies, the Bristol and Bath, the East Collingwood Hotel and the Clifton Hill Hotel. Others such as the Engineers Arms that were re-built in the 1880s were later demolished.

The only bluestone hotel which survived is the venerable Grace Darling. Other former bluestone hotels such as the Studley Arms, which appears to have been Collingwood's first hotel, survived for many years in the ignominious guise of a box factory, until it too made way for progress in the form of the Housing Commission's high-rise flats.

One very distinctive structure was Barnard's Hotel in Peel Street, built in the bi-chrome brickwork which was a notable element of the Collingwood Slope.

The early twentieth century saw another stage in the re-building process. We have seen that the 1906 licensing law caused the de-licensing of many hotels; it also led to pressure being brought to bear on owners to upgrade their facilities. In some cases this meant alterations and additions, but in the case of a handful of noteworthy hotels, complete re-building took place. The Bendigo, Yorkshire Stingo, and Sir Robert Peel were owned by Carlton and United Breweries, who employed architectural firm Sydney Smith and Ogg to design very distinctive Edwardian corner buildings, with Art Nouveau influences in the case of the Bendigo, and classical revival elements incorporated in the other two. All three featured corner towers. Sydney Smith and Ogg were associated with a number of Collingwood hotels; for example,

before taking Ogg into partnership, Sydney Smith designed the replacement for the original Laird O'Cockpen, and the firm was responsible for the 1920s additions to the Grace Darling.

Other architects known to have worked on Collingwood hotels were William Pitt, Alfred Watts and Sons, G D Langridge, James Wood, Alfred Kursteiner, Joel Eade, J B Denny and T A Kelly.

Another notable Edwardian hotel is the Glasshouse, bought by CUB in 1910 and re-built around 1917-18. A very different style is the Leinster Arms, whose clinker-brick and render Greek revival style replaced the original bluestone in 1930. The Leinster's design bore no relationship to the stylistic revolution sweeping through Melbourne in the interwar years. Art Deco or Modernism was to change Melbourne's skyline; in Collingwood it was the catalyst for the remodelling of many hotels, and the rebuilding of one: the outstanding United Kingdom Hotel in Clifton Hill, designed by James Wardrop. Hotels which were re-modelled include the Park, Baden Powell, Duke of Albany, Ivanhoe and Tower.

### **Collingwood hotels in the 21st century**

There are 27 hotels still operating. In addition a number of former hotel buildings remain standing, but are used for other purposes, including residences, café/restaurants, shops, offices and one brothel.

How do today's hotels compare with those of the nineteenth century? The central function is of course still as a place to meet friends and have a drink. Many have a reputation as a good place for a meal. Sporting interests are still served: pool and billiards tables remain popular, and drinkers can keep an eye on the progress of their football team, although these days via the medium of television rather than a runner bringing news from the oval. Instead of the illegal betting rumoured to have been rife in pubs, punters can watch horse races on television, and a few hotels have installed poker machines.

The association of hotels with amateur football teams re-surfaces from time to time; the Melbourne Pub Football League fields six teams including one from the Tote. A sign of the times is the inclusion of women in the teams.

Despite the availability of many other halls, the rooms in Collingwood hotels which were the location of many and varied meetings in the nineteenth century are still well used by local organizations including Collingwood Historical Society.

Some hotels offer live music, and a few famed far and wide as music venues, especially the Tote which has given many bands an opportunity to play to appreciative audiences. The gay scene has also been well-established in Collingwood and Abbotsford for more than 20 years, making for a lively late-night ambience.

Finally, there are still enough pubs left on enough corners so that most residents do not have to walk more than a few blocks to find a welcoming ambience and a cheering drop of ale. What's more, while there, they can reflect on Collingwood's long and varied tradition of hotel keeping.