

## The Greyhound Hotel

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Of the nine hotels established in Kew, the Skinny Dog Hotel, known for most of its existence as the Greyhound Hotel, was the seventh to be built sometime between 1873 and 1874. [1] It is, together with the Hotel Kew (Clifton Hotel) and the Harp of Erin, one of three survivors. The updating of the name of hotel to the Skinny Dog Hotel carries on a connection, perhaps unknowingly, to the hotel's earliest period, when its first licensee was a successful greyhound breeder and the hotel hosted regular meetings of coursing clubs.

In 1873, when James Bennett first applied for a license for a hotel to be named the 'Greyhound', his application was opposed, however after much deliberation the licensing board supported his application. Those opposing the application were unnamed in the press reports of the day. [2] Bennett was to die in 1881 [3], leaving a wife, five children, and many greyhounds. The latter presumably roamed the extensive yards of the hotel, which extended to Brougham Street. Kew Lass, Kew Maid, Kew Belle, Kew Lad, Kew Lily (winner of the Oaks), and Kew Lady as well as assorted puppies were advertised for auction in Kirk's Bazaar. [4] Mrs. Bennett was to manage the hotel for some months before selling the license to William Ambler.

The licensee between 1886 and 1891 was John Dougherty. In 1889, Dougherty was required to apply for a renewal of his license at the Metropolitan Licensing Court. The long report on the hearing is revealing about contemporary moral values, the relationships between citizens, and the supportive male networks that operated within a community such as Kew. [5]

Inspector Daly, who opposed Dougherty's application, argued that he was not a fit and proper person to hold a license as he was not of sober habits and possessed a violent temper. He also noted that Dougherty had five prior convictions. The defence while conceding these prior convictions argued that these instances of drunk and disorderly conduct, the use of insulting words, Sunday trading, and abusive language did not constitute 'drunken habits' or a violent temper. During the hearing, a crucial piece of the evidence cited by the objectors related to events occurring on 25 May when a Constable Bird heard Mrs. Dougherty screaming. She apparently ran from the hotel from her husband, who was drunk and abusing her, and fled to the Mayor's house with her children.

Against the Inspector's evidence and the constable's testimony was to be weighed the combined weight of the luminaries of Kew and Hawthorn. Dr. Watkins, the Superintendent of the Kew Asylum, stated that he had never known the applicant 'worse for liquor'. Dr. Wilson, a magistrate, testified that Dougherty was 'a very respectable man, who kept his house in very good order'. The notion of 'house' seems nicely ambiguous to us now. Was it intentionally so then? Councillor Gray, an ex-mayor concurred about Dougherty's respectability. The nail in the objector's coffin must have been the testimony of Councillor Kellett, the Mayor of Kew (1888–89). It was to his protection that Mrs. Dougherty and her children had fled, and now he would testify that he too had never seen Dougherty under the influence. He could not account for why Mrs. Dougherty had arrived on his doorstep, but 'he presumed it was because he was mayor at the time'. While John Dougherty kept his license, it was by all accounts soon to pass to others. Perhaps a price still had to be paid.

The first twenty years of the twentieth century seem to have been a remarkably stable period as far as four of the main hotels in Kew were concerned. Advertisements for the

Greyhound, the Council Hotel, The Prospect Hill Hotel and the Kew Hotel appear with great regularity in the local and daily newspapers. During this period, until her death in 1916, Mrs. Elizabeth Hodges was the 'proprietress', rather than the licensee of the Greyhound. Like the other four hotels, she offered a billiard room as well as the 'leading brands of ales, wines and spirits'. Her obituary in *The Box Hill Reporter* noted that she had been a businesswoman in Kew for 17 years. Her daughters were reported as continuing the management of the hotel. [6]

The hotel from its earliest days was located on an irregular block of land, as it is now. In 1901 the freehold of the hotel was put up for sale in two lots. Lot 1 included the 11-room hotel with a frontage to High Street of 56ft and a depth of 108ft. Lot 1 also included a 'shop and one room adjoining'. Lot 2 included 'land' with a frontage to Brougham Street of 150ft; land irregular. The advertisement happily noted that the hotel was 'situate on the tram route, with constant vehicular and passing traffic. The property has a large family trade, and is situate in the centre of a dense population'. [7] In 1928, when the hotel was auctioned for a third time, it was to be sold as one lot. While the width of the frontage remained the same, the depth of the block was conveniently described as 146ft 9 inches or Thereabouts. [8] The large yards of the hotel in 1928 were said to contain stables, garage etc.

While the upper part of the façade of the hotel remains remarkably intact, the Greyhound has been modified a number of times. The first occasion oddly was seven years after it opened [9]. There is a record of a proposal in 1928, which progressed as far as the submission of plans for the redevelopment of the ground floor. The plans were drawn up by the architect R. H. McIntyre, and were to cost 1,100 pounds. [10] Other changes to the fabric of the hotel have occurred since then, sometimes resulting from accidents such as when a bus crashed into the front of the hotel in 1935. [11]

The National Library of Australia's Trove website [12] includes digitised newspapers dating from the 1800s to the mid-1950s. Many of these include additional stories that illuminate the lives of the publicans and 'patrons' of the Greyhound Hotel (aka Skinny Dog Hotel). You can view a 'public list' [13] on Trove, which includes annotated newspaper references to the hotel between 1873 and 1955.

The information in the public domain about the Greyhound Hotel ends in 1955. If you have additional information about the hotel in the second half of the twentieth century, the researchers at Kew Historical Society would like to hear about it. Please contact us on [info@kewhistory.com.au](mailto:info@kewhistory.com.au).

## Notes

[1] The dates for the start and the completion of a building are always difficult to ascertain. A license was granted to James Bennett in June 1873 to operate the Greyhound Hotel. Barnard in 1910 wrote that the hotel began operation in 1874. The Tetlow Index at the State Library of Victoria incorrectly states that the license was granted in June 1872.

[2] *The Argus*, 12 June 1873, p.4.

[3] *The Argus*, 7 June 1881, p.8.

[4] *The Argus*, 17 June 1881, p.2.

[5] *The Argus*, 4 December 1889, p.4.

[6] *Reporter*, 23 June 1916, p.4.

[7] *The Argus*, 12 June 1901, p.2.

[8] *The Argus*, 26 May 1928, p.2.

[9] Reeves S 2012, *Thematic Environmental History, City of Boroondara*.

[10] *The Argus*, 13 November 1928, p.5.

[11] *The Argus*, 9 November 1935, p.28.

[12] Trove website, National Library of Australia.

[13] RobertABaker 2013, List: 'Greyhound Hotel, Kew', Trove, National Library of Australia.

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