A Pub Crawl around Wollongong and suburbs.
by Carol Herben.

The hotels and inns of Wollongong district have been recorded in snippets throughout the newspapers and many publications. Following on from my first Monday in the month guest appearance on Wollongong’s VOX FM radio I decided to continue the early history of Wollongong. I thought it would be a change of pace to compile what history I have on the early licensed premises and where they were once sited. It is with tongue in cheek that I have named this segment “A Pub Crawl around Wollongong and suburbs”.

“Springhill Hotel”.
The first hotel recorded in our local history was situated on the western side of Springhill Road at Port Kembla. In fact the site can still be located at the Transfield Depot as a large Fig Tree marks the site. Built about 1825 by George Tate as an Inn and it was licensed between 1829 and 1832. Charles Waldron Captain in the late 39th Regiment eventually took over the promise of the grant in September 1832. When Charles Waldron died in January 1834, under controversial circumstances, his grant was officially given to his widow Jemima Waldron in June 1835. By then the building was known as Spring Hill House.

It was a building typical of the earliest settlers slab timber construction. The house built on the rise faced east, with French doors opening onto an east facing verandah. Most of the estate was retained in the Waldron family until 1920 when sold to the Public Works Department. The building was demolished some time around 1940.

“Royal Oak Hotel”.
Was situated in Corrimal Street just north of Crown Street next to where the Comelli building now stands. Of wooden construction it was opened in July 1836 by a man named Mossop. It was taken over by Henry Bate, his son-in-law, after only 2 years. Mossop drowned whilst onboard the “Swan” on its way to Sydney. After approx 2 more years of trading under a man named Taylor nothing more has been recorded about the hotel. From around 1840 nothing is known of this hotel.
“Brown's Inn”.
Once located in Church Street, Wollongong, in the area of MacCabe Park where the War Memorial now stands it was then known as Baxter’s paddock. George Brown arrived free in 1822 and built and operated Brown's Inn from 1827-1834.
In 1834 George Brown moved out to Brownsville area and built a flour mill and the Ships Inn. The Ships Inn burnt down around 1843 and Brown then built on site a new two storey hotel he named “Lake Illawarra Hotel". After the death of George Brown his eldest son George William Brown was then granted a Publican’s General Licence for the hotel then known as “Illawarra Hotel". In around 1889 the name changed to Brownsville Hotel and it traded under that name until 1937. The building is located in Prince Edward Drive. Today it remains a private residence with flats attached.
Note: Brownsville was named after George Brown.

“Governor Bourke”.
This hotel was built around 1835 in Market Street on the most easterly portion just off Harbour Street and was owned and operated by Hugh Kennedy. From 1848 it was renamed the “Seaview Boarding House”. It was demolished around 1900. Today the site is vacant and is part of St Francis Xavier Church grounds.

“Brighton Hotel”.
A two storey building that was situated on the corner of Harbour Street and Cliff Road, Wollongong, and operated as the Waterloo Stores from around 1839 until 1854. The building was then taken over by William Howell and licensed it to operate the “Black Swan Family Hotel”.
In March 1856 Edward Johnson purchased the hotel and it was renamed the “Brighton Hotel”.

A long serving licensee, Neil McAra, who was also a cabinet maker and undertaker, took possession of the hotel in the 1860s. It was during Neil McAra’s time that the hotel was extended to Cliff Road.

George Osborne, hotelier of Dapto from 1870-'73, advertised his business in June 1873 in the Illawarra Mercury. He thanked the
inhabitants of the Illawarra District for the kind support he received during the past three years at Dapto. George Osborne also informed his patrons that he has now opened commodious premises in Harbour Street known as the "Brighton Hotel" trusting to receive continuous favours. The Wines, Beers and Spirits will be found to be of the best quality. He also advertised the operations of his Undertaking business from the Brighton Hotel Wollongong.

John Patrick Galvin purchased the premises at auction in December 1880 and soon set about extending the back of the premises as well as placing an upper and lower verandah on the section known as the bond store as well as filling in part of McAra's extension facing onto Harbour Street. The Brighton catered for the travelling public who arrived by steamer at Wollongong Harbour. The licence was finally surrendered in 1919, 2 years after the death of J P Galvin.

"Farmers Arms Hotel".
Little is known about this hotel except that it was located on the Dapto Road. One can only guess that its location was somewhere on the Princes Highway near Kembla Grange. William Lindsay was granted a licence for the Farmers Hotel on Dapto Road in 1857. Its operation seems to have been over a twenty year period though little is known of the exact site.

"Mount Keira Hotel".
Hugh Higgins built and operated the Mount Keira Hotel, a single storey building on the highway at Figtree.
Higgins came under criticism in April 1857 in the Licensing Court before D W Irving JP for selling alcohol to an overly intoxicated man which brought about the man's death. The fact is the death occurred twelve months prior in April 1856. He was cautioned against the recurrence of such events.

By the 1870s the hotel was in the ownership of John William Clarke and the premises had a second floor added plus other buildings. After the death of John Clarke in 1882 his son George took over the running of the hotel business. By the 1920s Syd Rodd was the licensee of the hotel.
By this time all the building structures erected by the Clarke family were still on site. Sometime between 1920 to 1950 the buildings were demolished and the only remnants of the hotel left is the single storey building and the old Moreton Bay Figtree which still marks the site today. Situated south of the Hellenic Club on the Princes Highway at Figtree, the old hotel building is now operated by Ray White Real Estate Agency.

"Fig Tree Hotel".
This hotel was built around 1855 and named Hickman’s Hotel. It was later renamed Fig Tree Hotel and is still situated today on the Princes Highway opposite O’Brien’s Road. Early records show that John Lovett was the licensee in 1857 under the name Fig Tree Hotel. The building was of brick construction with a verandah with posts at the front. George Osborne later became the licensee and it was during his time that the building burnt down. A new building was erected. Around 1960 a more modern two storey building was constructed just north of the original site. Today, the hotel still trades under the name of Figtree Hotel.

"William Makin’s Inn".
Charles Throsby Smith and his wife Sarah sold Henry Gilbert Smith in 1837 the large block on the southwest corner of Corrimal and Market Streets, Wollongong. In 1856 William Samuel Makin, then a storekeeper purchased, the property from Henry Gilbert Smith which by this time had a public house and outbuildings. As soon as William Makin was listed as an Innkeeper he took a mortgage with Thomas Townsend of Fairy Meadow. The Makin’s Inn only traded for a couple of years and it is not known exactly when it was demolished although it is known that the block of land was vacant which William Makin rented out to travelling circuses. Today the newly completed Eclipse Apartment block stands on the site.

"Steam Packet Hotel".
This hotel was of a slab construction on the northern side of the Harp Hotel in Corrimal Street, Wollongong around 1840 and was known as the Steam Packet Hotel. It is unknown how long it traded as a hotel.
William Samuel Makin purchased the allotment in 1879 from William Simpson of Sydney. The Makin family resided in the building until after the death of Eleanor Makin in 1890. It is not known when the building was demolished.

“Wollongong Hotel”.
The first hotel to carry the name ‘Wollongong Hotel’ was built by Alexander Elliott around 1837 on the corner of Market Street and Market Place. In 1856 Thomas Garrett moved the operations of the first local newspaper the ‘Illawarra Mercury’ into this building. The Illawarra Mercury then moved into Crown Street in 1876. It is unknown what the building was used for after that although a two storey block of flats was constructed on the site around 1940.

“Harp Hotel, Harp of Erin, Harp Hotel”.
We all know where the Harp Hotel stands today in Corrimal Street. This was initially the site of a 4 roomed cottage which was purchased in 1839 by Bernard McCauley and opened as the Harp Hotel.

The building was leased to John Musgrove around 1843 and a new single storey Harp Hotel was built. When Bernard McCauley died in 1858 the hotel was left to his daughters Catherine Beatson and Margaret Davis and they renamed it the ‘Harp of Erin’. Catherine Beatson purchased her sister’s share, and later on changed the name back to the Harp Hotel.

Under licence to Henry Hulbert in the early 1890s it was still a single storey building. In the late 1890s a new two storey building replaced the second building. The verandah at the front overlooking Corrimal Street had lace ironwork with cast iron verandah posts. Demolished around 1960 a new 2 storey red brick building replaced the third building. In recent years the Harp Hotel underwent a major facelift and has a Mediterranean appearance. This would have to be the longest that a hotel has traded under the same name in Wollongong on the one site.

“Commercial Hotel”.
This hotel was built some time before 1850 and operated by John Hetherington as the “Commercial Hotel” on the corner of Crown and
Church Streets, Wollongong.
It was a rather large two storey building of brick construction with lace work on the awning. In January 1857 John Hetherington gave a free ball and supper on the evening of the Wollongong Show Day. Only two months later John Hetherington drowned at Broughton Pass. One month after his death his widow Jane Hetherington was granted the licence to carry on the hotel business.
The Commercial Hotel was operated by Eliza Osborne by 1885, widow of Robert Osborne, and then by George Cochrane.

The rear of the hotel was the arrival and departure point of the Mt Kembla Coach Service. In fact it was reputed that the hotel had wonderful stable facilities for the horses belonging to the hotel guests.
The hotel continued to operate under the same name until the late 1950s when it was demolished. Today David Jones store stands on the site.

“The Hotels of Edward Elliott”.
Edward Elliott built a single storey hotel of wooden construction in Harbour Street opposite Market Square in 1833 and traded under the name of “Travellers Home”. By 1835 the building was replaced with a two storey brick building and renamed Royal Marine Hotel and referred to by some locals as the Royal Mariner. Elliott moved his business onto another site and built a new hotel in about 1840 on the south west corner of Crown and Corrimal Streets named it “Elliott’s Family Hotel”. He was still having his licence renewed for the Family Hotel up until 1860.

To continue the history of the two sites where Elliott had established his hotels.

“Royal Marine Hotel”.
Under Edward Elliott the Royal Marine Hotel continued to trade up until around 1840. A Samuel Russell took occupation and became the licensee in 1845. During his time Samuel Russell advertised regularly as the Marine Hotel Wollongong. The hotel boasted that the ‘patrons will find in his house all that they can desire, having been expressly fitted up with an adjoining cottage, for their use. The views from the verandahs are most enchanting, Mount Keera and Kembla in front, and the sea and Five
Islands in the rear. Wines and English Bottled Beer of excellent quality at low prices. Visitors from Sydney may reckon on always finding accommodation in his house, there being six sitting rooms and nine bedrooms formed into 6 suites. Ponies will be kept during summer season for amusement of children, also saddle-horses and carriages on hire. Single persons entertained at two guineas per week'.

He operated the business for a further 10 years before closing the doors in 1855 through insolvency. The site was advertised “for Let or Sale”.

In March 1858 Miss Randall, who had been operating a private school on the Wollongong Harbour side of the hotel, moved into the Royal Marine and operated a boarding school under the name of “Denison House Academy”.

It was not until 1873 that the Sisters of Good Samaritan purchased the premises and turned it into a convent. Today a small portion of the old Royal Marine Hotel still exists on the site and is still in use now known as St Mary’s Star of the Sea College.

“Joseph Makin’s Royal Hotel”.

Before Joseph Makin took over the hotel it was trading under the name of “Royal Hotel” as early as 1864 under licence to John Hukins.

Joseph Makin took over the hotel on the corner of Crown and Corrimal Streets adding a third storey. The building was a two storey brick construction with upper and lower verandah around both sides with ornate ironwork. Due to the anti-liquor referendum in 1911 the hotel lost its licence. This led to the retirement of Joseph and Rebecca Makin.

Their son George Frederick Makin opened the hotel as the Oxford Hotel in August 1916. The third storey was removed due to termite damage and the lacework surrounding the verandahs was replaced with fill-in. It is not known when the Makin family association with the hotel ceased although by 1930 the verandahs were all removed and the building took a new art deco appearance.

Operating today as the Oxford Tavern, with an extension on the site of the old Temperance Hall, the building has also a number of small businesses such as an Ice Cream Parlour, etc.

It is a shame that such an old building such as the Oxford is also earmarked for demolition to give way to high-rise development.
(Note: in 1882 the local paper reported that part of the hotel would be occupied by the Post and Telegraph Office. No doubt that would have been during the addition of a second storey to the Post and Telegraph Office in Market Street (today known as Illawarra Museum).

"Fairy Meadow Inn".  
This hotel was once known as 'Lysaghts Inn' and was situated on the site where Wollongong High School is now situated, Lysaght Street, North Wollongong. The building would have to date back to the early settlement of the area or else it was one of those building erected with unskilled hands. It was reputed to be the home of Andrew Lysaght, Member of Parliament, although one would consider that may have been the case in his younger years certainly not in his days as publican or local representative. The building was still standing in the 1950s.

"The Sportsmans Arms Hotel".  
The Sportsmans Arms was under licence to Robert Trickett Hayles in 1857. A small two storey building on the south east corner of Crown and Corrimal Streets. (Best known as part of Dwyers Car Yard vacated in 2006). The building had the usual two storey verandahs and lacework railings. The hotel became known as the Cricketers Arms and Roxby’s Hotel. Taken over in the 1890s by Rebecca Makin, wife of the owner of the Royal Hotel across the road, operated the hotel as a boarding house and tea rooms. Quite modest accommodation for those who preferred to stay in boarding house style rather than hotel accommodation. The building was demolished approx 1920.

"Cottage of Content".  
A wooden building operated by a man named Scott. After his death his widow married Benjamin Thackeray. By 1894 the dwelling was occupied by Mr Budgen and operated as a butcher shop. Today the site of the Cottage of Content is three doors east of the Commonwealth Bank in Crown Street west of Keira Street.

"Robert Osborne’s Hall/Hotel".  
Robert Osborne’s Hall or Hotel used to be situated in Market Place, Wollongong and was the home of Matthew Devenish Meares the Church of England incumbent from 1839 to 1857. When Rev Meares left
Wollongong the house was purchased by Robert Osborne in 1857 and converted into a hall or hotel. By 1864 little is known of the operations of the business. Today a modern apartment block stands on the site.

"Settlers Arms, Royal Alfred Hotel and Royal Hotel".
This hotel was situated on the north east corner of Crown and Keira Streets, Wollongong. It was a two storey construction, with lace ironwork railing, and a somewhat colourful early history.

Up until 1857 the Settlers Arms was under licence to Mrs M Scott. James Hetherington applied for the licence in 1857. When he took possession he was cautioned against allowing great number of carts and teams to obstruct the thoroughfare of the intersection.

Under much controversy and opposition from Senior Sergeant Sheridan the application of John Makin came before the licensing court in 1872. The licence was granted and John Makin changed the name of the hotel from the "Settlers Arms" to the "Royal Alfred Hotel". Whilst John and Sarah managed the business the police officer had much to deal with such as disorderly conduct from the patrons, alcohol being sold illegally and patrons leaving the hotel at all hours on a Sunday. In 1873 when John Makin made an application for the renewal of his licence Senior Sergeant Sheridan strongly objected despite the court granting the application. In October 1873 John and Sarah Makin left Wollongong for Sydney where they were to write a chapter in Australian legal history as mass murderers.

The next licensee was G Duffy followed in 1876 by Michael O’Brien. The hotel was under the O’Brien family until 1910 when it was purchased by Tooth & Co Ltd for $4,700 following the death of Bridget O’Brien the widow of Michael.

In February 1930 the Royal Alfred Hotel closed and part of the building was demolished and the awnings removed. The hotel underwent a facelift and reopened with a new name - "Royal Hotel". The doors finally closed for trading on Friday May 15th 1970. Demolition took place not long after to make way for the construction of Crown Central shopping centre.

(Note: Many images incorrectly identify that the four storey building next door in Crown Street was the Royal Alfred Hotel.)
"Queens Hotel".
Queens Hotel was built in the early 1850s and operated as a boarding house. It was a two storey building with lacework railings. On the upper floor French doors opened onto the front verandah. In 1855 Robert Haworth purchased the building and in 1862 was converted into a hotel which carried the name Queens Hotel. Advertisements in Sydney papers during 1865 gave an impression that it was the best hotel in Wollongong. Available for guests at the hotel were a Billiards Table, a Ballroom and water closets while the ground floor contained 30 rooms and a superior kitchen. The second floor had 20 bedrooms, 3 bathrooms and the rear of the premises had excellent stables, horses and saddlery for the guests' use.

Extended on the western side with the carriage way passing under the extension. In the 1880s whilst under the licence to Robert Trickett Hayles the mail coach departed from that point carrying mail and passengers to Appin and Campbelltown to board the train to Sydney. A large underground water tank serviced the hotel complex.
In 1886 the premises was sold at auction. There has been much recorded that the building also served as a hospital.

Sometime around the late 1920s a façade was placed around the front giving it a Mediterranean appearance. Above the façade the old building roof line could still be seen. The whole site was renamed Queens Hall Flats. The building was purchased by the Roman Catholic Church and demolition was due to take place in 1970. It came to light that a ghost was present in the hotel. A local newspaper reporter was anxious to see if the story had any basis. Whilst waiting in the still of night he claims to have seen a ghostly image appear at a window. His departure was rapid from the scene as he chose not to stay around and get to the bottom of the story.

Today it is part of St Francis Xavier’s Church grounds. Remnants of the sandstone wall can be seen lining the driveway into the grounds next to Illawarra Museum.
"Cabbage Tree Inn"
Cabbage Tree Inn or Townsend Inn was owned by Thomas Townsend in 1856 and operated by him until his death in 1858. The hotel was then operated by George Beadle well into the mid 1860s. It was situated on the Princes Highway Fairy Meadow opposite Cabbage Tree Lane intersection. The building was a single storey wooden structure with a verandah and it was set low on the bank of Cabbage Tree Creek. As far as can be recalled, after the short life as an inn, the building was turned into a private residence. By the 1940s little could be seen of the building below the roof line with the road build up. The sad old building was demolished in the early 1950s and units now stand on the site.

"Hotel Victoria, North Wollongong Hotel".
The Hotel Victoria was situated in Flinders Street North Wollongong near the intersection of Bourke Street opening for trading in 1864 under the ownership of Carl Theodore Bode. Constructed as a small two storey brick building with verandah posts continued through to the upper floor. The verandah was surrounded by cast iron lacework. French doors opened onto the upper verandah. The central piece of the hotel was the magnificent staircase to the upper accommodation level. The hotel remained in the management of Bode until his death in 1912 then his widow managed the hotel for some years until she passed away in 1923 when the management was taken over by their son George. In 1933 the hotel was sold to a man by the name of O'Neill. In 1937 O'Neill sold the hotel to Arthur Jones who named it "North Wollongong Hotel". Christina (Chrissy) James became the manageress in 1949 and it was during her time that the hotel changed dramatically. The upper French doors were removed and smaller windows installed. The building was extended on the northern side with a remarkable match to the original section. The iron lacework was replaced with wooden railings. At sometime an iron roof was installed although Chrissy James had that replaced with red tiles and the verandah posts which had been single posts from then appeared in pairs.
In recent years the hotel has undergone a dramatic change again with a modernised upper floor and a large outdoor decking at the rear. Known locally as the "North Gong Pub" in fact, it no longer resembles the hotel that was the pride of the Bode family for some 60 years.
"Caledonian Hotel, Freemasons Hotel, Flinders Inn".
The Caledonian Hotel was situated on the northwest corner of Crown and Keira Streets, Wollongong, was built some time prior to 1870. A two storey hotel with verandahs surrounding both sides with lace ironwork railings, the change of name took place in June 1878 to the Freemasons Hotel due to the lodge meetings being held there.

Some of the licensees were in 1880s Edgar Hulbert, 1890s James Gay, c1900 Andrew Lysaght, 1908 Frank Sceats. Around 1905 the awning was demolished during the time under licence to Andrew Lysaght and a new awning established which remained in place until the 1930s. In 1935 the hotel changed from the older style building - replacing the post and railng verandahs with cantilever awnings. When the hotel opened in March 1935 it became known as the "Flinders Inn". By March 1957 the hotel closed and eventually converted into shops. At present there are plans to demolish the building in the very near future to make way for a new shopping centre.

It will be a shame to see the last of the older hotels in the central business district go before the demolishers hammers.

"Terminus Hotel, Tattersalls Hotel, Dicey Rileys".
This hotel commenced operations in Crown Street, Wollongong, near the railway station around 1885 as the Terminus Hotel to cater for the railway workers and when the first stage of the Sydney/Wollongong railway opened in 1887 to cater for passengers. A two storey building with lace iron work railings and turned posts.

After 1904 a major facelift was undertaken on the building and the hotel then commenced trading as Tattersalls Hotel. In the mid 1990s the name was changed to Dicey Riley under which it still trades.

"Wollongong Hotel".
The second hotel to carry the same name was situated on the north east corner of Crown and Kembla Streets Wollongong. In 1900 Mr Fimister purchased the old weatherboard building trading as Meharg’s Shop. The demolition of the premises gave way for the construction of Wollongong’s largest hotel over three storeys with verandahs on two levels. No expense was spared with the elaborate cast iron work railings
surrounding the second storey verandah. The verandah posts on both levels were of cast iron.
The entrance to the bar was situated on the corner. The parapet extended with some of the finest and ornate trim any roof line could show. The centre of the roof line at the corner extended above the roof for another storey which hosted a giant flagpole.
The elaborate interior of the hotel was considered to be the grand hotel of Wollongong for accommodation. The sitting or drawing room had a piano and armchairs all arranged on the largest of carpet squares. The dining room was decorated by gas chandeliers. The tables, seating up to four persons, were set on wide carpet runners. The tables were decorated with starched linen tablecloths and serviettes.

George Clarke was the licensee in the 1920s. Although by the 1930s all the decorative trims had been removed from the building it was basically a square and uninteresting building with a cantilevered awning over the lower section. The hotel closed in the 1980s and was demolished. A new multi storey office block stands on the site.

“Bellambi Hotel”.
In 1886 William Wilson, Manager of South Bulli Colliery, purchased 16 acres of land at Bellambi. He built his home (now known as “Wilgendene”) now sited in Jones Place Bellambi and the hotel in Bellambi Lane a short distance away. When William Wilson died in 1896 his wife Lillian took control of his affairs including the hotel. Bellambi Hotel was built on a corner and like many hotels the attraction was the corner entry to the bar. The bar door had windows on each side which gave it its appeal. The upper verandah had lacework railings. It is unknown when changes were made although they had been dramatic and this building like many of the old buildings no longer carries the charm to represent buildings of such age. Still trading under the same name it is situated on the corner of Bellambi Lane and Brompton Road Bellambi.

“Mt Kembla Hotel”.
Built in the mid 1890s on Cordeaux Road Mt Kembla right in the heart of the mining village.
Operated under licence to John O’Halloran the two storey building of timber construction is in remarkable condition for its age.
“Balgownie Hotel”.
The hotel opened in 1904 to serve the mining village of Balgownie and is situated on the corner of Balgownie Road and Kembla Streets. It was a two storey brick construction with iron lacework and bull nosed iron roof on the upper verandah. The hotel consisted of a bar and lounge on the lower level and accommodation on the second floor. The feature of the hotel in the old days was the opening to the bar right on the corner with a wooden window on each side of the building forming the centre piece of the building. Right at the top of the second floor was an extension of the roof line which carried the name of the building and date erected. In 1963 the hotel underwent a modification; the corner door was closed off and the verandahs removed. The footpath in front of the cellar door on Kembla Street shows the wear of a century of rolling beer kegs to and from the cellar entrance. In recent years the verandah has been reinstated, although it does not have the charm that it did in bygone days. The upstairs now boasts a restaurant with dining on the verandah.

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