

**Elephant & Wheelbarrow, formerly European Hotel, British Family Hotel, British Hotel, Victoria Hotel, Cricket Club Hotel and The Ritz 1854 -**

169 Fitzroy Street, corner Princes Street, St Kilda

MEL: 58 B8



British Family Hotel, 1850s

With the decidedly European-sounding Alphonse Beauvais as publican in 1854, this hotel began life as the European Hotel, a simple timber building. New licensee Thomas C Stanborough in 1855 brought a new name and probably a new cultural identity - the British Family Hotel.

While it originally advertised itself as a family inn, by 1858 publican Alfred Tollit abbreviated its name to the British Hotel. The same year he tendered for extensions, perhaps in response to the construction of two grand hotels, the Terminus, also on Fitzroy Street, and the New Bath on the Esplanade. The British Hotel was renamed the Victoria Hotel in 1863 under JJ Miller.

The *Argus* reported an incident at the Victoria Hotel on 15 February 1872. Alfred Cooper rented the hotel from landlord Mr Mason for £100.0s.0d a year and sublet it to Oriel Lee for £2.6s.0d a week to be paid on production of a receipt to Mr Mason confirming the rent had been paid. When Cooper refused to produce the receipt, an argument ensued; Lee struck Cooper with a whip and was fined £2.0s.0d. Cooper then sued Lee for £49.0s.0d in damages, but lost the case and had to pay £2.0s.0d in costs.

The Victoria was renamed the Queensland Hotel from 1881 until 1887 when it became the Cricket Club Hotel. In 1914, the City Sanitary Inspector, armed with serious complaints from local residents, deemed its sanitary conveniences, particularly the urinals, inadequate. A police report of that year asserts that large crowds retiring to the hotel after football matches on the nearby St Kilda Cricket Ground created 'a quagmire, with urine running across the footpath'. Faced with the

threat of action by the Licensing Inspector, then owner Smerdon agreed to make extensive alterations to the building.



Smerdon's Hotel, 1870s

On 18 July 1915, publican Ernie Browne wrote to the St Kilda Council requesting permission to have a loaded revolver on the premises because of two occasions where 'one or more persons' attempted to enter the Cricket Club after closing hours. It only took the Council four days to firmly, albeit politely, reject his claim!

The current building was constructed in the 1920s with a classic freestyle design informing its curved corner, bay windows and arched openings.

In 1970, entrepreneur Sammy Lee brought the famous Sydney drag troupe, Les Girls, to perform at the Ritz Hotel. It was the first official drag performance ever staged in Melbourne and their arrival caused a sensation. Because they were officially classified as 'male', the performers required police permits to appear in female attire while travelling to the show, and were forbidden to 'be on the street' dressed as women at all.

In 1999, The Elephant & Wheelbarrow replaced the Ritz. Popular as a backpackers' venue and particularly aimed at those from Britain (echoed in its name, reminiscent of a traditional English pub), the pub hosts a special weekly 'Meet the Neighbours' night where punters can mix with the stars of their favourite soapie.



Elephant and Wheelbarrow, 2004