

# The history of the Carrington Hotel, Surry Hills

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**John W. Ross**

**Cover photograph:**

- Carrington Hotel ([www.thecarringtonsydney.com](http://www.thecarringtonsydney.com) website).
- Dog Friendly sign (author photo).
- Quoit set ([www.koskela.com.au](http://www.koskela.com.au) website).

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## Foreword

Sydney prospered from the time of gold discoveries in the 1850s until the drought of the late 1880s and the subsequent Great Depression. The long economic boom and population explosion resulted in a large number of hotels being constructed in the 1870s. Among them was the Criterion Hotel (later to become the Carrington), constructed in 1877 by the Irish immigrant Thomas Whitty on the busy corner of a main road in Surry Hills. In 1885, the former Test cricketer Nat Thomson took over the licence, renamed the pub Thomson's Family Hotel, and organised a series of quoits tournaments, a popular game at the time.

A running track, the Carrington Athletic Grounds, opened across the road in 1886, and the pub took advantage of the crowds of thirsty runners and spectators, even renaming it the Carrington Grounds Hotel in 1888. After the running field was subdivided for housing and factories, the hotel name was changed in 1903 to its modern name the Carrington Hotel. It was purchased by the large brewer Tooth and Company in 1924, but not substantially modified, despite its age and Tooth's penchant for remodelling the hotels it acquired.

The pub saw a series of changes in the modern era, starting in the 1980s with the opening of Annie's Bar, featuring drag shows. This became the Encore Bistro until new owners in 2011 transformed the interior into a successful Spanish-themed tapas restaurant called Beba y Cene. This morphed into the Chica Linda restaurant with Latin American food until the pub closed in 2014. New owners relaunched it in 2015 with a more muted décor, good comfort food, and an award-winning dog-friendly approach. The Carrington has returned to its origins as a traditional corner pub, highly valued both by the locals and by the tribes of fans making their way to and from sporting events in nearby Moore Park.

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## Timeline

- September 1877: The **Criterion Hotel** opened with Thomas Whitty as owner and licensee.
- c1881: Thomas Whitty erected a shop next door, leased by the bootmaker Robert Hardwick.
- July 1884: Licensee Patrick Knowles changed the name to the **Athboy Hotel**.
- March 1885: Former Test cricketer Nat Thompson took over the licence and renamed the pub **Thompson's Family Hotel**.
- December 1886: The Carrington Athletic Grounds opened across the road from the hotel.
- November 1888: The hotel was renamed the **Carrington Grounds Hotel**.
- 1903: The bootmaker's shop was incorporated into the hotel, which was renamed the **Carrington Hotel** following the closure of the athletic field.
- 1924: The hotel was purchased by Tooth & Co.
- 1980s: Annie's Bar opened, featuring drag shows.
- Early 2000s: Annie's Bar was converted to the Encore Bistro.
- July 2011: The Spanish-themed Beba y Cene tapas restaurant opened.
- May 2014: Chica Linda opened with Spanish and Latin American dishes, but closed in August.
- 2015: The hotel reopened with traditional pub comfort food.
- May 2017: The hotel was awarded the *Time Out* Dog Friendly Award for Sydney pubs.



## Nineteenth century – a pub for sports

### The 1870s – the pub-building decade

A sample of nearby pub construction dates:

- Cockatoo Inn (later Hopetoun Hotel) – 1846
- Exchange (later Clock) Hotel – 1864
- (former) Pembroke Castle (later Athletic Club) Hotel - 1865
- Albion Inn (later Beresford Hotel) – 1870
- Rifle Butts (later Flinders) Hotel – 1870
- Criterion (later Carrington) Hotel - 1877
- Palace (later Local Taphouse) Hotel - 1878
- Cricketers' Arms Hotel – 1879

The discovery of gold near Bathurst in 1851 propelled Sydney into its first “golden age”. Thousands of hopeful diggers arrived at Sydney, the gold was sent to Sydney for export, and the failed miners drifted back to Sydney, many of them permanently. All this movement of people and goods stimulated economic activity in the town. Sydney’s population exploded from just under 40,000 in 1851 to about 150,000 in 1871 and then to nearly 500,000 in 1901. Wool, meat and minerals joined gold as the major exports in the latter part of the nineteenth century.

But a drought from the mid-1880s, followed by a banking collapse in 1893 and the subsequent Great Depression, caused a downturn in the manufacturing and construction industries by the late 1880s<sup>1</sup>. This rapid economic expansion followed by stagnation was reflected in the rise and fall of hotel construction during this period. The result is that the nineteenth century pubs that survive to the present day were mostly constructed in the 1870s, with very few pubs built from the 1880s onwards. The Carrington Hotel is an example of a pub that was built to cater for the boom in demand at this time.

### Thomas Whitty – the builder

Thomas Whitty left Liverpool in the immigrant ship *Vocalist* and arrived at Sydney in October 1856 as a single assisted passenger. He was 20 years old and was born in Carlow in Ireland<sup>2</sup>. By the 1860s, he had moved to Rockhampton in Queensland, where in 1863 he married Sydney-born Sarah Bradford, the daughter of James Bradford, formerly of Belfast<sup>3</sup>. Some years later, they moved back to Sydney.

It is not known what Thomas did for a living, but in the 1870s he was able to purchase a large block of vacant land on the corner of Bourke and Arthur Streets, Surry Hills. In May 1877, while living in Marshall Street, Surry Hills, he called for tenders by bricklayers<sup>4</sup> to build a hotel on the corner part of the block.

### The Criterion Hotel

In September 1877, Whitty became the first licensee of the Criterion Hotel<sup>5</sup>. In 1880 he transferred the licence to John Mitchell<sup>6</sup>, but retained ownership for most of his life<sup>7</sup>. In about 1881, Thomas Whitty constructed a shop on the vacant part of the block and leased it to the bootmaker Robert Hardwick<sup>8</sup>, who worked there until the shop was incorporated into the pub in 1903<sup>9</sup>.

In 1882, John Mitchell staged professional wrestling matches in the yard behind the hotel. The first match in June was between William Hudson, the New Zealand lightweight wrestling champion, and

J. Frahar of Sydney for a prize of £10<sup>10</sup>. The next month, the wrestling championship of New South Wales was staged there between William Hudson and J. Hayes of Victoria for a prize of £30<sup>11</sup>. Hudson was touring Australia at the time and taking on the locals at various venues, including George Cowan, the New South Wales champion, at the Sydney Hippodrome in Pitt Street South<sup>12</sup>.

Hotels in the nineteenth century were required to host inquests into the death of any person who died nearby under certain unusual conditions. This included people who were unidentified, or who may have been the victim of a crime, or whose cause of death was not clear. The body would be stored in the cellar (the coolest part of the hotel), the Coroner would quickly assemble a twelve-man jury and call witnesses, then conduct the inquest to determine the probable cause of death. Pubs were commonly used for this purpose until the introduction of morgues in Sydney from the late 1880s. An example at the Criterion was in May 1883, when an inquest was held “on the body of” John Towell. The verdict was death by a natural cause, that being heart disease, in bed at home<sup>13</sup>.

In July 1884, the Water Police Court granted licensee Patrick Knowles permission to change the hotel’s name to the Athboy Hotel (it was called Athpoy in the newspaper notices<sup>14</sup>, but Athboy in Sands’ Directory<sup>15</sup>). Presumably this was to commemorate his home town of Athboy in Ireland. It is not clear if the hotel was actually changed to this name, as it was never mentioned in the newspapers. In March 1885, the former NSW and Australian Test cricketer Nat Thomson took over the licence, and renamed the pub to Thomson’s Family Hotel<sup>16</sup>.

### **Nat Thomson – the sportsman**

Nat Thomson (his name was often spelt Thompson in the press) was born in Surry Hills with the exotic name Nathaniel Frampton Davis Thomson in May 1839<sup>17</sup>. He was the son of William Thompson, a blacksmith from County Down in Ireland and Jane (nee Macfarlane), from Ayr in Scotland. The couple and their five children had migrated from Greenock in Scotland in the ship *Duncan*, arriving at Sydney in June 1838. William was one of many tradesmen on board the ship that were to be engaged on colonial government projects<sup>18</sup>.

Nat Thomson, who married Elizabeth J. Haigh in 1861 at Sydney<sup>19</sup>, began his long cricketing career with New South Wales in the 1857-1858 season, playing until the 1879-1880 season. At his peak, he was good at everything: batting, bowling, fielding and wicket-keeping. He was initially picked for his fielding, but his batting gradually improved and he scored NSW’s first ever intercolonial fifty in the 1867-1868 season.

Thomson was reputed to be “not only a natural batsman with a free and elegant style, but also one of our first round-arm bowlers, his fair and easy style being almost as elegant as his batting”<sup>20</sup>. After his death, it was mentioned that “some round-arm bowlers had brief careers, but Nat Thompson (sic) had a long one, and was the surest and most workmanlike bowler in the colony”<sup>21</sup>. Many of the successes of the New South Wales team in the early intercolonial matches were due in part to Nat Thomson who, with the brothers Dave and Ned Gregory, formed a trio that were dreaded by their Victorian opponents<sup>22</sup>.

When an English cricket team arrived in Melbourne in 1877 to play the first ever Test matches, Nat Thomson was selected, and opened the batting in the first Test alongside Charles Bannerman. Thomson was bowled by Allen Hill for 1, making him the first ever Test dismissal. The Australians recovered to be all out for 245, of which Bannerman made an outstanding 169 (his innings only

ending when his thumb was broken). Australia won the match by 45 runs - cricket tragics will recall that Australia also won the Centenary Test in 1977 by exactly the same margin at the Melbourne Cricket Ground, despite Derek Randall's valiant 174 in the second innings.



Figure 1 Nat Thomson (*Australian Town & Country Journal*, 13 August 1887)

Thomson made a valuable 41 in the second Test in Melbourne a fortnight later, adding 88 for the first wicket with the captain Dave Gregory. He was offered a spot in the Australian team to tour England in 1878, but declined as he had started a business, thus finishing his very brief two-Test career. On his retirement the next season, he had played in 27 first-class matches, scoring 705 runs at an average of 14.09 (top score 73) and taking 23 wickets<sup>23</sup>.

The tradition when a distinguished player retired from first-class cricket was to hold one or two fund-raising events for the player, partly to show appreciation for their contribution to the game, but also to help them start a business or otherwise assist in providing a livelihood for life after cricket. A benefit match was held for Nat Thomson at the Association Ground (now the Sydney Cricket Ground) in April 1880<sup>24</sup>, and in October, £400 was raised at a testimonial dinner. It was mentioned in the press that by then Thomson had a serious illness that would probably prevent him playing cricket again<sup>25</sup>.

The business that he started after cricket was Nat Thomson's Cricketers' Cigar and Tobacco Depot at 93 Oxford Street. The shop imported wood pipes and Havannah cigars, and advertised that it would post a telegram on the fall of every wicket during intercolonial matches<sup>26</sup>.

### **Thomson's Family Hotel**

Nat Thomson continued his involvement with cricket after retirement from the game: in April 1885 he and the former Test opening batsman Charles Bannerman played for the tobacconists' team in a cricket match against a police team<sup>27</sup>. In addition, the Surry Cricket Club regularly held meetings<sup>28</sup> and social events at his hotel<sup>29</sup>.

He became a very good quoits player after retirement from cricket, and soon commenced a series of quoits tournaments near the hotel<sup>30</sup>. He took advantage of a large vacant block across Bourke Street to turn part of it into a quoits field that he called the Metropolitan Quoit Ground<sup>31</sup>. He created both a clay pitch and a grass pitch. Each quoit tournament lasted for several weeks and featured preliminary rounds followed by final rounds, and culminating in a grand final. The matches were reported enthusiastically in the press. The contests played there generally used nine pound metal quoits and an eighteen foot pitch<sup>32</sup>, and were run as handicap matches.

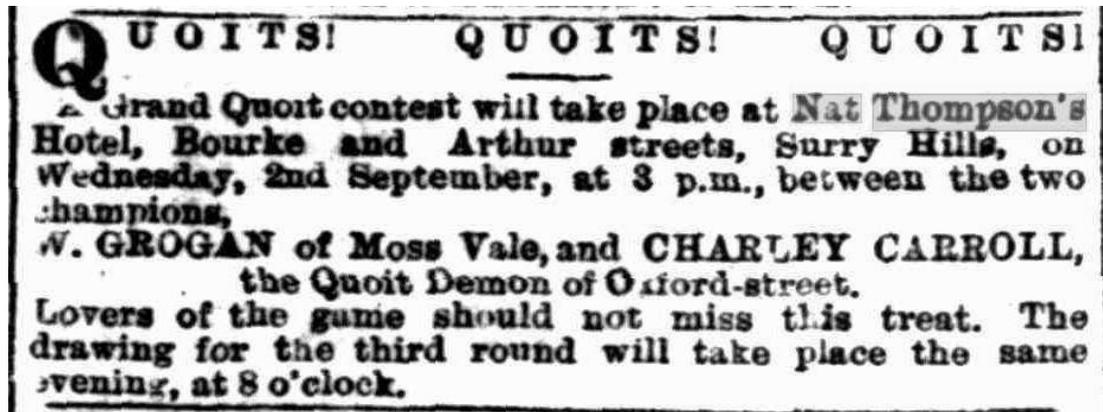


Figure 2 Quoits! Quoits! Quoits! 1885 (*Evening News*, 1 September 1885)

Thomson frequently entered his own competitions, and in a Grand Handicap quoits tournament in March 1886, it was reported that he “again added to his reputation as a first class player by defeating his opponent by ten points”<sup>33</sup>. It is not known if he ever found himself in the awkward position of having to present a prize to himself in his own tournament.



Figure 3 Sea Breeze Hotel, 1930 (Noel Butlin Archives, ANU)

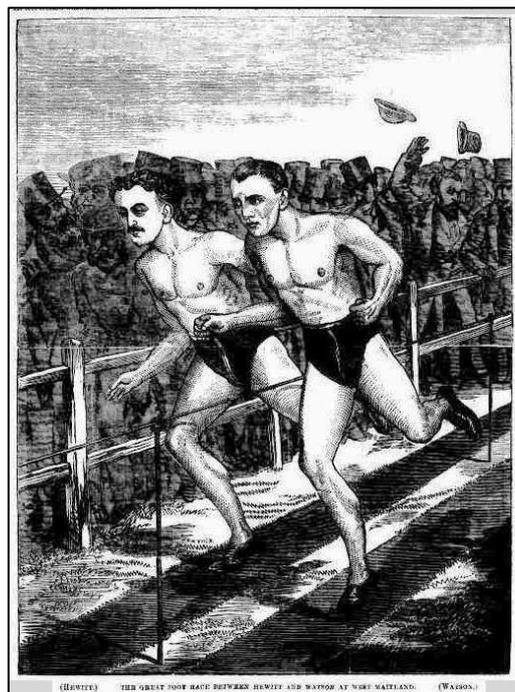
After leaving the Thomson’s Family Hotel at the end of 1888, he took over the licence of the Sea Breeze Hotel at Tom Ugly’s Point in present-day Blakehurst, where he attracted visitors and tourists with boating and fishing from the hotel<sup>34</sup>. Still the entrepreneur, he organised sailing regattas for boats of all sizes on the George’s River<sup>35</sup>. After leaving this hotel in January 1890<sup>36</sup>, he managed a poultry farm in the Hurstville area until retiring to his home in Burwood<sup>37</sup>. He died of heart disease at home in September 1896, aged 57<sup>38</sup>.

His untimely death prompted several glowing obituaries in the Sydney press, and he was still being written about a few years later. In 1900, the *Daily Telegraph* published reminiscences of Nat Thomson, writing that “on the whole, he may be regarded as the best all-round cricketer of his time in New South Wales, if not Australia. He was for many years one of the mainstays in the intercolonial matches, trained many a good young batsman, and probably did more for local cricket than any other player of that time”<sup>39</sup>.

### **Pedestrianism – professional running**

Professional running and walking (then called pedestrianism) began in Australia during the gold mining days of the 1850s when miners would race each other for a gift of a gold nugget, offered by the local publican or mine owner. The Stawell Gift, a professional foot race held each year in a former gold-mining town, continues to this day. Various sprinting distances were used, usually with a handicapping system, but the main race was over the traditional Sheffield Handicap distance of 130 yards. From the 1860s, big money began to creep into race meetings, which took on a carnival atmosphere with big crowds flocking to see local champions.

Rich prizemoney and heavy betting attracted talented athletes, but also an array of shady characters. By the early 1890s, professional running was in crisis, with athletes competing under false names, hiding past performances to improve their handicap, corrupt officials, as well as other controversies. In Victoria, the Victorian Athletic League was formed in 1895 as a controlling body to formulate rules and regulations and clean up the sport<sup>40</sup>. The equivalent body in New South Wales was formed in 1903<sup>41</sup>.



**Figure 4 Hewitt vs Watson, W. Maitland 1876 (*Evening News*, 13 May 1876)**

In the late nineteenth century, the main running tracks in Sydney were Lillie Bridge at Forest Lodge (later the Harold Park Raceway), the Sir Joseph Banks Hotel grounds at Botany, The Royal Agricultural Society showgrounds at Moore Park, and Frederick Willich’s field next to his Gladstone Hotel at Arncliffe<sup>42</sup>. The enterprising Willich, with fellow promoter Alexander McGrory, was a typical

example of a publican who exploited the commercial possibilities of sporting events to attract customers to his pub<sup>43</sup>.

### Carrington Athletic Grounds

In June 1886, a new company was formed in Sydney to conduct professional Sheffield Handicap running events. A suitable piece of land was found in a vacant block between Bourke and Dowling Streets, bounded by Arthur Street to the north. The block, which was the former lot D27 of the Riley Estate owned by the Burdekin family<sup>44</sup>, had been an undeveloped swamp for years. The publican Nat Thomson was using the Bourke Street end as a quoit ground. At 212 yards long and 53 yards wide, it was suitable for foot racing, and tenders were called to level the rest of the land and surround it with a 10 foot iron fence. Four cinder tracks were laid, a main gate was constructed on Bourke Street and a grandstand at the Dowling Street end<sup>45</sup>.

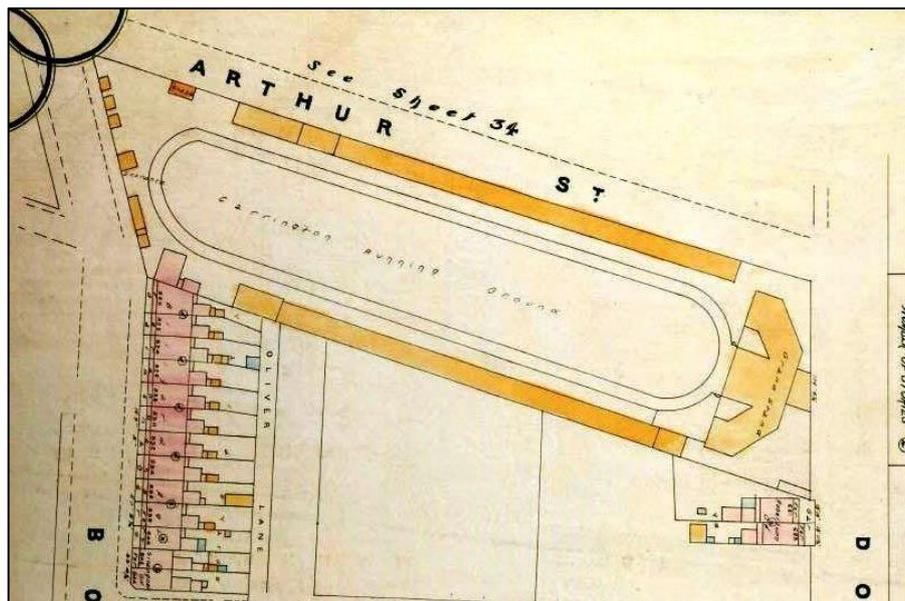


Figure 5 Carrington Athletic Grounds (Rygate & West 1888 map, City of Sydney Archives)

The Carrington Athletic Grounds opened six months later with Lord Carrington (Governor of NSW 1885-1890) as patron. The prizes were reportedly the highest in the country at the time<sup>46</sup>. Nat Thomson often presented some of the prizes, for example £25 and a trophy to the second place-getter of the Grand Centenary Handicap in January 1888<sup>47</sup>. The first athletics meeting under lights was held in February 1887, attracting a large crowd to watch sprint running in the evening<sup>48</sup>.

For extra entertainment, the aeronaut Harry Henden took off from the Grounds in a hot air balloon during the same month<sup>49</sup>. The Pembroke Castle Hotel, a stone's throw from the Criterion on the corner of Arthur and Alexander Streets, was renamed the Athletic Club Hotel in 1886, no doubt to attract thirsty runners and spectators from the athletic grounds.

Despite its reported popularity, the Carrington Grounds fell into disuse for a few years after November 1891<sup>50</sup>. Fillis's Circus and Menagerie took over the field for a season, opening in November 1892<sup>51</sup>. The owner of the land, Mr N. Burdekin, advertised the grounds for rent in December 1893. Foot racing resumed there in September 1894 after it was leased by Mr M. J. Moroney<sup>52</sup>, a Newcastle promoter. Dougal McDougall, licensee of the Carrington Grounds Hotel,

continued the pub's tradition of presenting the prize money and a gold medal to the winner of the Carrington Handicap<sup>53</sup>. No more athletics meetings were held there after August 1895<sup>54</sup>.

By 1904, the athletic ground had been subdivided for residential and commercial use, and terrace houses were erected along the south side of Arthur Street. Wilson's Steam Laundry constructed a new building at the Bourke Street end and moved from the Collins Street location where they had operated since 1882<sup>55</sup>. The laundry eventually closed in 1947 due to an acute shortage of labour and materials in the post-war period. It was the largest in Sydney at one point, with 80 staff and an estimated business of £1,000 a week, processing half a million articles a year. The laundry building has since been converted to the Surry Mews apartment block.

### **The Carrington Grounds Hotel**

In November 1888, Nat Thompson transferred the hotel licence to John Ahearn<sup>56</sup>, who renamed it soon afterwards to the Carrington Grounds Hotel<sup>57</sup>. The new licensee was keen to continue the tradition of quoit-playing at the hotel, and in January 1889 started a new quoits tournament<sup>58</sup>. Ahearn presented a medal to the winner of the fifth Carrington Handicap of 800 guineas at the athletic grounds the following February<sup>59</sup>.



**Figure 6 Quoits match, late 1800s (Australian National Maritime Museum)**

In 1903, the hotel was expanded by incorporating the adjacent bootmaker's shop<sup>60</sup>, which serves as the front bar today. By this time, the Carrington Athletic Grounds had ceased operating, so the new licensee Dougal McDougall renamed the hotel to its present name of the Carrington Hotel<sup>61</sup>.



## **Twentieth century – Tooth & Co ownership and renovations**

### **The Licences Reduction Board swings the axe**

The early Australian colonies were modelled to a large extent on British society, in which alcohol consumption was universal and the pub played a central role in everyday life. Rum was either smuggled in or distilled locally, and was used as a currency for some time. Early Governors tried but failed to stem the trade in illegal spirits. The 1830s was the decade of peak alcohol, when Australian colonists were consuming four times as much spirits as the British. Early temperance groups were formed to grapple with widespread public drunkenness, initially using persuasion and example to guide individuals towards sobriety.

By the 1850s, the focus of temperance campaigns had changed from promoting voluntary abstinence to lobbying governments for better regulation of access to alcohol. By the 1870s there were several thousand hotels operating in the Australian colonies, and the temperance alliances began to advocate for a reduction in the number of licensed premises. A system called Local Option was tried, in which people could vote during general elections to reduce or eliminate altogether the number of liquor licences in their electorate. But numerous Local Option polls over several years resulted in only a small reduction in licences, at great expense to taxpayers in compensation, and usually not in the inner-city areas with the highest concentration of hotels. The voters/drinkers in suburbs like Surry Hills invariably voted to keep all of their pubs, much to the frustration of temperance advocates<sup>62</sup>.

A more efficient and less expensive method of closing hotels was needed. The Victorian Government set up a Licences Reduction Board in 1907 to cut a swathe through the dodgy pubs in that State<sup>63</sup>, and managed to close down 311 hotels by 1910<sup>64</sup>. This stunning success prompted the New South Wales Government to follow suit in 1920 with its own Board. All pubs with licence violations during the previous three years were inspected, and the owners and licensees were called to licence deprivation hearings to show cause why they should not be delicensed<sup>65</sup>.

By early 1924, 25 of the 62 pubs (40%) in Surry Hills had lost their licences. Most of the former hotel buildings are still standing, but none ever regained a liquor licence. The majority accepted their fate and soon became boarding houses, or a combination of retail and residential use. The Carrington Hotel was called before the Licences Reduction Board in September 1920<sup>66</sup>, but survived, possibly because it was on a main road and could rely on a large volume of passing trade.

### **The Athletic Club Hotel – a sad case**

This former hotel was constructed nearby on the corner of Arthur and Alexander Streets in 1865 by the builder Thomas Phelps, who named it the Pembroke Castle Hotel after the most famous castle in his home county of Pembrokeshire in Wales. In 1886, it was renamed the Athletic Club Hotel to attract custom from the Carrington Athletic Grounds in Bourke Street.

In 1921, the Licensing Court notified the licensee that because of the old and dilapidated state of the building, his licence would only be renewed if the hotel was completely rebuilt. But before rebuilding began, the Police Licensing Inspector George Mitchell warned the licensee that if the Licences Reduction Board asked for his opinion, he would testify that the hotel was not wanted, due to the number of other nearby pubs and its back street location. He advised the licensee to get some advice before embarking on a rebuilding project. The owner, Victoria Allen, decided to ignore this

warning and to undertake the great expense of demolishing and rebuilding the hotel. This was completed in July 1922<sup>67</sup>.



Figure 7 Former Athletic Club Hotel (timegents.com website)

A few months later in October, as a result of a licensing violation against them in 1921, the Licences Reduction Board called the parties from the hotel to defend their licence. Despite the brand new building and furniture, the Board's decision in December 1922 was to delicense the hotel<sup>68</sup>. The closure of a newly constructed hotel can be seen as very unfortunate, as the owner thought she did everything necessary to retain the licence, but in the end it was probably its location in a back street that counted the most against it. The Athletic Club Hotel is still known to older residents as "the pub that never opened". Today the building is used as apartments.

### **Joining the Tooth & Co stable**

In 1924, Thomas Whitty sold the Carrington Hotel to Tooth & Company, the giant brewery established by John Tooth in 1835 as the Kent Brewery on Broadway. The original Victorian tiles were replaced<sup>69</sup>, but no significant changes were made to the exterior above the awning. The building must have been in good condition, as it was very unusual for Tooth's to take over a hotel that was nearly fifty years old and not remodel the exterior. Tooth's undertook major renovations to many other pubs in the vicinity, such as the Dolphin, The Courthouse and the Hopetoun, which now look very different from their original Victorian architectural style (or Georgian in the case of the much older Hopetoun, built in 1846).

### **Pistols galore and purple beer**

An incident in July 1931 at the Carrington that was widely reported in the press is an indication of the problems that publicans in a rough area like Surry Hills had to deal with in those days. One Saturday afternoon, a well-dressed man with a pleasant manner was having a few drinks at the pub, while openly admitting that he had been an inmate of Callan Park Psychiatric Hospital. While talking to some men playing dominoes, he got into an argument and suddenly drew a pistol and pointed it at them. There was an immediate stampede for cover, but a couple of drinkers grabbed the man while the pistol was taken from him. They took him to the door and told him to leave.

About five minutes later he returned to the bar, and Jack James the licensee politely urged him to leave again. The man drew another pistol from his pocket, but the redoubtable Mr. James grabbed

his wrist and held it above his head while a couple of drinkers took the gun off him. The man was pushed out of the bar a bit less politely this time and was seen getting into a motor car. But a few minutes later, he returned yet again and was met this time by the licensee's wife. He told her he wanted his guns back, and in any case he had another one, and showed the startled Mrs. James a third pistol. He then left the hotel, claiming he had plenty more of them. At press time the police were still searching for the man and his alleged arsenal<sup>70</sup>.

Until 1939, it was not unusual for pubs to reuse beer from the drip tray under the taps in order to reduce wastage. It would have been flat, warm, a murky hybrid of lager and ale, and probably unhygienic. The New South Wales Government (and presumably many drinkers) thought this was bad practice and enacted legislation to stop it. Pubs were required to colour the beer in the drip tray with methyl violet, a purple dye obtainable from pharmacies<sup>71</sup>. A doctor was asked what the effects were of consuming methyl violet, and he said, not very reassuringly, that it would cause "violent reactions", but otherwise it was harmless!<sup>72</sup>.

Sydney councils gave the publicans a month or so to get their heads around the new requirement and to obtain a supply of the stuff, and then sent the inspectors out on a compliance blitz. Ten city and suburban licensees were fined for having no methyl violet in their drip trays, including George Brereton of the Carrington Hotel, whose wallet was lighter by £5 following the raid on his pub<sup>73</sup>. Prosecutions across the State were reported in the press for decades, and even the remote Wilcannia Court of Petty Sessions was fining several errant publicans in 1953 for failing to add the purple stuff to their drip trays<sup>74</sup>.



Figure 8 Christmas at the Carrington, 1953 (*Truth*, 4 January 1953)

### **Annie's Bar**

A two-storey addition was built in the rear yard in the 1980s, which became Annie's Bar and nightclub, featuring drag shows in the late 1990s<sup>75</sup>. Two of the shows are recorded in the Australian Live Performance Database, featuring the drag artists Verushka Darling, Clair de Lune and Madelaine von Mantrap:

- *Lady Penelope's Baby* (2000), loosely combining the TV series *Thunderbirds* and the film *Rosemary's Baby*, and
- *Whatever Happened to Cio-Cio San* (1999), loosely drawn from *Madam Butterfly*, *The Mikado* and *Whatever Happened to Baby Jane*<sup>76</sup>.



Figure 9 Whatever Happened to Cio-Cio-San, 1999 (Verushka Darling Instagram)

Annie's Bar was converted to the Encore Bistro in the early 2000s. After gambling machines were installed in the inside bar, most of the outside windows were enclosed, to screen the machines from the view of passers-by. This resulted in the bar being very dark, restricting daytime trade. The original upstairs bedrooms were altered to operate as an apartment, tenanted by hotel staff. One room was used as a plant room for the hotel's air conditioning<sup>77</sup>.

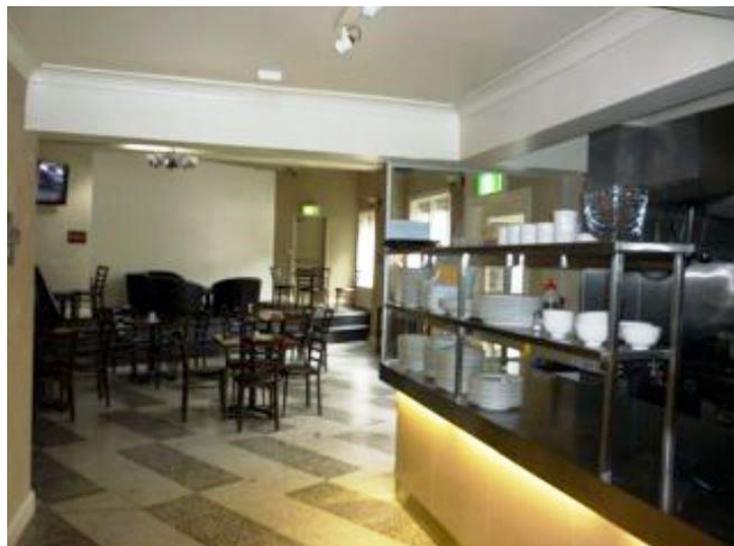


Figure 10 Encore Bistro, 2011 (Heritage Impact Assessment, 2011)

## Twenty first century – a gastropub for locals

### The Carro gets a Latin beat

The hotel was purchased by Greg Magree and John Ibrahim in 2011<sup>78</sup>. Extensive renovations were undertaken to create the Spanish-themed Beba y Cene tapas restaurant, operated by the Drink 'n' Dine Group. It was very successful, and in a few months expanded to the first floor to cater for the demand<sup>79</sup>. The restaurant was reviewed by the *Good Food Guide*, which gave it the highest rating for a pub restaurant in Sydney in 2011<sup>80</sup>.



Figure 11 Beba y Cene (Pedestrian.tv website)

The poker machines were removed as part of the restaurant conversion, and the external windows were again opened up, brightening up the whole interior<sup>81</sup>. However, a fairly poor retiling job was done on the outside walls, with new Victorian-patterned tiles simply glued onto boards covering the original tiles. Many of them subsequently warped, cracked or fell off entirely<sup>82</sup>. The restaurant was changed to Chica Linda in May 2014, serving Latin American food, but the hotel closed in August<sup>83</sup>.



Figure 12 Chica Linda Restaurant, 2014 (Heritage Impact Assessment, 2015)

### Back to comfort food and a local pub

The Carrington reopened in 2015 with new owners Luke Butler and Roger Gregg. The menu was changed to hearty comfort food<sup>84</sup>, and the first floor was returned to residential use. The dodgy 2011 tile job was abandoned, the original 1924 tiles removed, and new tiles fixed in their place. A Locals Card was instigated to encourage patronage from the surrounding area, entitling holders to discounts and occasional badge draws.



Figure 13 Cary Grant and his poodle (author photo)

A dog-friendly policy was introduced, winning the Carrington the *Time Out* magazine's Most Dog Friendly Pub award in 2017<sup>85</sup>. The menu has two dishes for the furry friends to enjoy in bowls while their human companions partake on the table above, and a set of doggy behavioural rules is displayed for canine perusal and observance. The walls are covered with many dog-themed photographs, interspersed with mug shots of notable underworld characters from the area, such as Kate Leigh, Frank Green, Guido Caletti and Charles Devine (husband of Tilly).



Figure 14 Dogs galore at the Carro (*Time Out*, July 2017)

The pub's earlier fame as a drag show venue has not been forgotten, and on Tuesday nights the drag queen Hannah Conda conducts Turbo Trivia competitions from the stage of the old Annie's Bar (now called the Garden Bar). The pub caters enthusiastically for spectators travelling to and from the sports grounds in Moore Park by decking the place out in club colours for the local teams of the different football codes. Big-screen television sets in every bar keep the drinking sports fans up to date with the action on the field. The upper two floors have been converted to four separate offices with a shared conference room. They are accessed by a private stairway in Arthur Street.



## Notes

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  - <sup>2</sup> Assisted Immigrant Shipping Lists, NSW State Archives and Records.
  - <sup>3</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 28 July 1863.
  - <sup>4</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 29 May 1877.
  - <sup>5</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 12 September 1877.
  - <sup>6</sup> *Sydney Daily Telegraph*, 14 February 1880.
  - <sup>7</sup> Rate Assessment Book, 1925.
  - <sup>8</sup> *Sands' Directory*, 1882.
  - <sup>9</sup> *Sands' Directory*, 1902.
  - <sup>10</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 27 June 1882.
  - <sup>11</sup> *Evening News*, 14 July 1882.
  - <sup>12</sup> *The Bulletin*, 26 August 1882.
  - <sup>13</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 11 May 1883.
  - <sup>14</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 18 July 1884.
  - <sup>15</sup> *Sands' Directory*, 1885.
  - <sup>16</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 10 March 1885.
  - <sup>17</sup> New South Wales Birth Death and Marriage registers.
  - <sup>18</sup> Assisted Immigrant Shipping Lists, NSW State Archives and Records.
  - <sup>19</sup> New South Wales Birth Death and Marriage registers.
  - <sup>20</sup> *Evening News*, 2 September 1896.
  - <sup>21</sup> *Daily Telegraph*, 20 October 1900.
  - <sup>22</sup> *Evening News*, 2 September 1896.
  - <sup>23</sup> Nat Thomson, Wikipedia.
  - <sup>24</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 21 April 1880.
  - <sup>25</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 5 October 1880.
  - <sup>26</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 23 December 1880.
  - <sup>27</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 9 April 1885.
  - <sup>28</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 29 July 1886.
  - <sup>29</sup> *Evening News*, 13 August 1886.
  - <sup>30</sup> *Evening News*, 21 March 1885.
  - <sup>31</sup> *Evening News*, 17 May 1886.
  - <sup>32</sup> *Evening News*, 14 September 1886.
  - <sup>33</sup> *Daily Telegraph*, 2 March 1886.
  - <sup>34</sup> *Daily Telegraph*, 25 January 1889.
  - <sup>35</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 19 January 1889.
  - <sup>36</sup> *Daily Telegraph*, 15 January 1890.
  - <sup>37</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 3 September 1896.
  - <sup>38</sup> *Evening News*, 2 September 1896.
  - <sup>39</sup> *Daily Telegraph*, 20 October 1900.
  - <sup>40</sup> Victorian Athletic League website.
  - <sup>41</sup> New South Wales Athletic League website.
  - <sup>42</sup> Davis Sporting Collection, Mitchell Library.
  - <sup>43</sup> *Referee*, 27 August 1902.
  - <sup>44</sup> Riley Estate 1844 map, City of Sydney Archives.
  - <sup>45</sup> *Evening News*, 21 June 1886.
  - <sup>46</sup> *Daily Telegraph*, 16 December 1886.
  - <sup>47</sup> *Daily Telegraph*, 20 January 1888.
  - <sup>48</sup> *Daily Telegraph*, 12 February 1887.
  - <sup>49</sup> *Daily Telegraph*, 14 February 1887.
  - <sup>50</sup> *Daily Telegraph*, 13 November 1891.
  - <sup>51</sup> *Daily Telegraph*, 29 November 1892.
  - <sup>52</sup> *Daily Telegraph*, 15 September 1894.
  - <sup>53</sup> *Evening News*, 29 September 1894.
  - <sup>54</sup> *Australian Town and Country Journal*, 17 August 1895.

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- <sup>55</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 27 April 1904.
- <sup>56</sup> *Australian Star*, 23 November 1888.
- <sup>57</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 21 December 1888.
- <sup>58</sup> *Evening News*, 14 January 1889.
- <sup>59</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 21 December 1888.
- <sup>60</sup> *Sands' Directory*, 1903.
- <sup>61</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 5 December 1906.
- <sup>62</sup> John W Ross, *Last drinks in Surry Hills*.
- <sup>63</sup> *Newcastle Sun*, 14 January, 1920.
- <sup>64</sup> Oz Sports History website, [www.ozsportshistory.com](http://www.ozsportshistory.com).
- <sup>65</sup> *Young Witness*, 6 February 1920.
- <sup>66</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 9 September 1920.
- <sup>67</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 26 July 1922.
- <sup>68</sup> Licenses Reduction Board, NSW State Archives and Records.
- <sup>69</sup> Heritage Impact Assessment, Carrington Hotel, March 2011.
- <sup>70</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 20 July 1931.
- <sup>71</sup> *Daily Telegraph*, 10 July 1939.
- <sup>72</sup> *The Sun*, 8 July 1939.
- <sup>73</sup> *The Sun*, 23 August 1939.
- <sup>74</sup> *Barrier Miner*, 12 November 1953.
- <sup>75</sup> Rough Guide to Gay & Lesbian Australia.
- <sup>76</sup> Australian Live Performance Database.
- <sup>77</sup> Heritage Impact Assessment, Carrington Hotel, March 2011.
- <sup>78</sup> *Daily Telegraph*, 8 July 2011.
- <sup>79</sup> Heritage Impact Assessment, Carrington Hotel, September 2011.
- <sup>80</sup> *Illawarra Mercury*, 2 August 2011.
- <sup>81</sup> Heritage Impact Assessment, Carrington Hotel, November 2011.
- <sup>82</sup> Heritage Impact Assessment, Carrington Hotel, June 2015.
- <sup>83</sup> Property Observer, September 2014.
- <sup>84</sup> Eat Drink Play website, July 2016.
- <sup>85</sup> *Time Out*, 12 May 2017.

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