

Greyhound Hotel 1853 –

1 Brighton Road, corner Blessington Street, St Kilda

MEL: 58 C11



Greyhound Hotel, 1940s

Greyhound racing was a popular sport in St Kilda in the mid-nineteenth century and this hotel, opened in 1853, found an eager promoter of holiday race meetings in its first licensee John Broad. The second hotel in St Kilda to boast a painting of two greyhounds coursing a hare (the first was the Hare and the Hounds in Barkly Street), this hotel geographically marks the beginning of Brighton Road from St Kilda Road as it once separated it from High Street (now known as St Kilda Road).

Caroline Fraser held the license from 1865 until 1867 when she applied to transfer the license of the Greyhound to premises that she had purchased immediately opposite. The arrival of the new hotel, Inverness Castle, was heralded in the *Argus* (20/2/1867). The auction of the Greyhound Hotel took place on 28 August 1867. A license was refused for the premises on 3 May 1867. John Hyndman, perhaps a relative of hotelier Joseph Hyndman who later held the lease, was fined for assault on 22 December 1868, the second time in only a matter of days. The hotel was auctioned again on 18 October 1871, with furniture fittings and billiard table included.

In 1886, ex-St Kilda councillor and publican James Mason is said to have persuaded the St Kilda Council to build its new town hall opposite the Greyhound with a £1000.0s.0d donation towards a new organ for the building. Those familiar with the site of the St Kilda Town Hall can attest to the apparent success of his inducement!

Owner JW Ryan renovated the building in 1938 with cement rendered brickwork and tiles that are still evident today. This reconstruction was most likely in response to the development of classy upmarket hotels like the Prince of Wales and the George, as well as the erection of new apartment blocks in Blessington Street. Many hotels across Australia were renovated in the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s.

The seamy post-war reputation of St Kilda clung particularly to the Greyhound Hotel, given its proximity to the most prominent zone for sex workers. In the 1980s,

the 'two chefs' who prominently advertised on the façade of the building that theirs was the greatest pub fare in Melbourne redeemed its reputation! While its kitchen has since closed, its popularity as a venue for live music has not waned, and it has become legendary for featuring drag shows three nights a week. Since the recent renovation of the Prince of Wales, the Greyhound has attempted to gather the live music and gay crowds.



Greyhound Hotel, 2004