

Prince of Wales Hotel 1862 –

29 Fitzroy Street, corner Acland Street, St Kilda
MEL: 57 K9

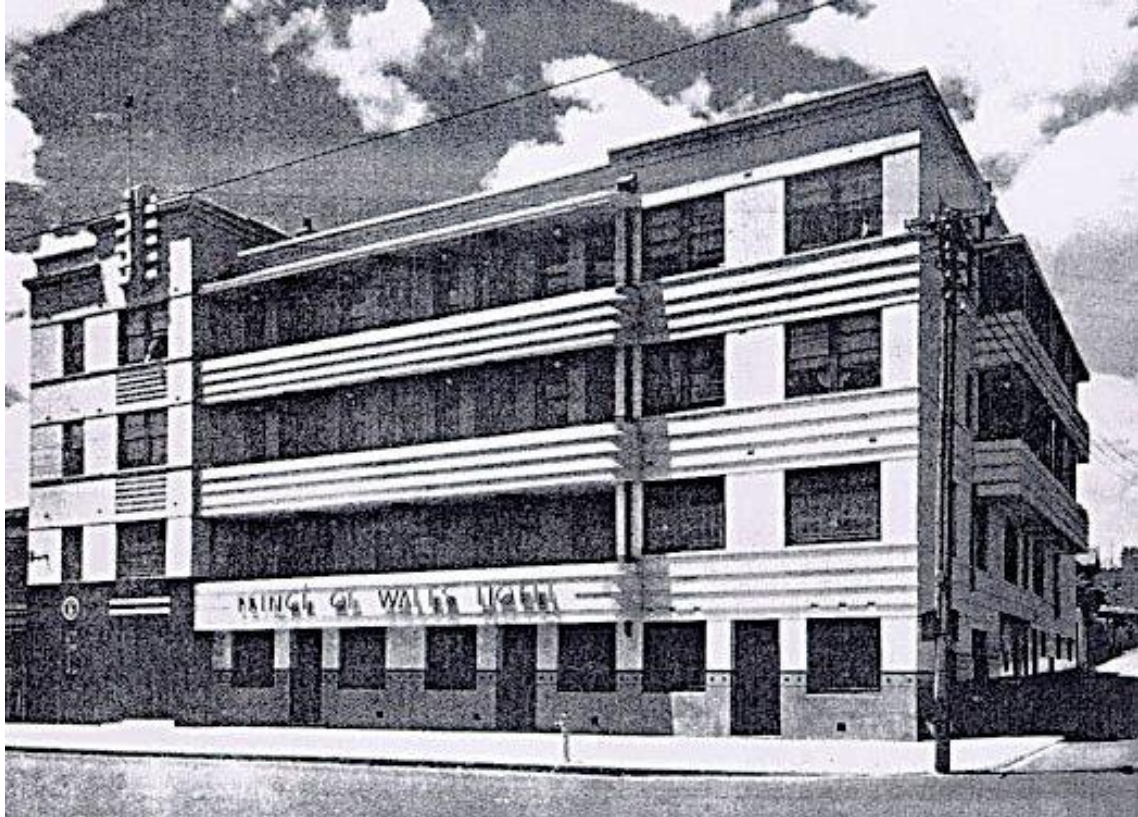


Prince of Wales Hotel, 1920

The Prince of Wales Hotel opened as a guesthouse in 1862, but its reputation as one of Melbourne's grandest hotels did not come about until rebuilding in 1936 by Hansen and Yuncken to the specifications of the architect RH McIntyre. Before that, architects Twentyman and Askew designed a new front in 1886 and architect T Anthoness called for tenders for alterations and additions in 1889. While it has undergone several renovations, notably the recent creation of the Prince Complex in September 1999, the *moderne* style building still cuts an imposing figure on the corner of Fitzroy and Acland Streets. McIntyre's style, while restrained, significantly re-envisioned the role of the hotel, which had previously depended on bar trade. The inclusion of lounges with log fireplaces, easy chairs, carpets, private rooms for parties and a dining room with an attractive menu, signalled a changing assessment of the needs of punters and can perhaps be seen as a precursor to the bar culture that has since gained currency in Australian social life. In addition, its ornate decorative style – particularly the etched-glass windows featuring the triple feathers motif, the symbol of the Prince of Wales, which was created by noted theatre designer Loudon Sainthill – has been of particular interest to architectural historians.

The Prince of Wales was very popular amongst American soldiers stationed in Melbourne during the Second World War. An officers' club was established there to cater to the many officers from Base Section Four Headquarters at Port Melbourne, under the command of Colonel Galloway, who were billeted at the residential side of the hotel. A vacant block beside the hotel was even bulldozed by the United States Military to convert into a court where the officers could play volleyball, a sport previously foreign to St Kilda. The presence of the Americans attracted a large

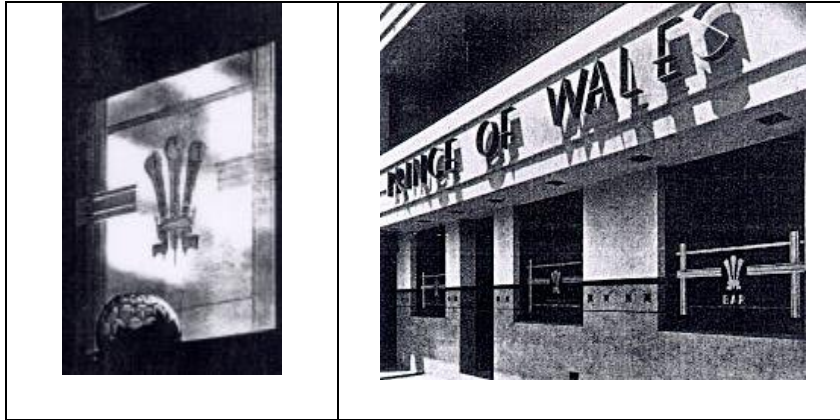
number of Australian women eager to engage with these exotic newcomers whose style and manner was seen as far more desirable than that of the local men. It therefore gained a reputation as a venue for meeting and mating.



The new Prince of Wales Hotel, 1940

The Second World War had an impact even on the smart set who favoured the hotel. Regulations endured during wartime prevailed after 1945 and there are reports of long queues that formed in Acland Street in 1947 as people waited to buy unrationed supplies of wine sold on Saturday mornings from the Prince of Wales.

In 1970, the drag show Pokeys, an offshoot of the Les Girls shows at the Ritz, was held every Sunday night. Gradually the night became a meeting place for Melbourne's gay population - men and women - and from here, the Melbourne gay scene spread to nightclubs and hotels.



Details of Prince of Wales Hotel

Resembling the George Hotel (then the Seaview), the Prince of Wales became a major venue for the alternative music scene in the late 1970s.

In the 1980s, the hotel featured jazzmen like Mike Murphy and the Tony Gould Trio, and became the home of an FM radio station – 3PBS-FM, under the direction of John Maizels. With the support of seven hundred subscribers, the station opened its studios there in February 1980. In September 1999, the Prince Complex was opened, constituting a boutique hotel and health spa.



Prince of Wales Hotel, 2002