

THE CALEDONIAN HOTEL - MITCHELL STREET BOURKE

The Caledonian Hotel, a prominent two-story brick structure on Mitchell Street between Glen and Wilson streets in Bourke, NSW, has a rich history marked by resilience, tragedy, and community service.

Built in 1883 by Charles Warren, the hotel was initially named the "Turf Hotel." It replaced an adjacent hotel owned by Warren that had burned down the same year. Tragedy struck again with Warren's sudden death in 1884, leading to Edward Warmoll taking over the establishment. By 1887, the hotel was renamed the "Royal Exchange" by new owner Edward Fry, signifying a new chapter in its history.

The "Royal Exchange" experienced a tragic incident in December 1889 when Miss Abigail McKay, a beloved barmaid, died in a riding accident. Her sudden death deeply affected the community, and her funeral saw a large turnout, highlighting the hotel's integral role in local life.

In 1893, John McLoughlin purchased the hotel, renaming it the "Harp of Erin." Just two years later, in 1895, Donald Shaw acquired it and gave it its final name, the "Caledonian," under which it would remain until its decommissioning. Subsequent owners included William Peter in 1897, Mary Anne Whittaker in 1900, Roy Marsh in 1902, Henry Moxham in 1906, William Sander in 1913, Albert Maxwell in 1914, and Mary Rice in 1916.

The Caledonian faced significant challenges over the years. In 1903, a large fire in Mitchell Street threatened the hotel, destroying five wooden bedrooms and ten shops and buildings on the eastern side. Heroic efforts saved the main building despite several close calls where upstairs bedrooms caught fire but were extinguished in time.

In September 1906, a cyclonic storm caused severe damage, toppling the brick parapet and sending tons of bricks crashing through the upper floors. Miraculously, the licensee, his family, and a boarder survived despite the extensive damage.

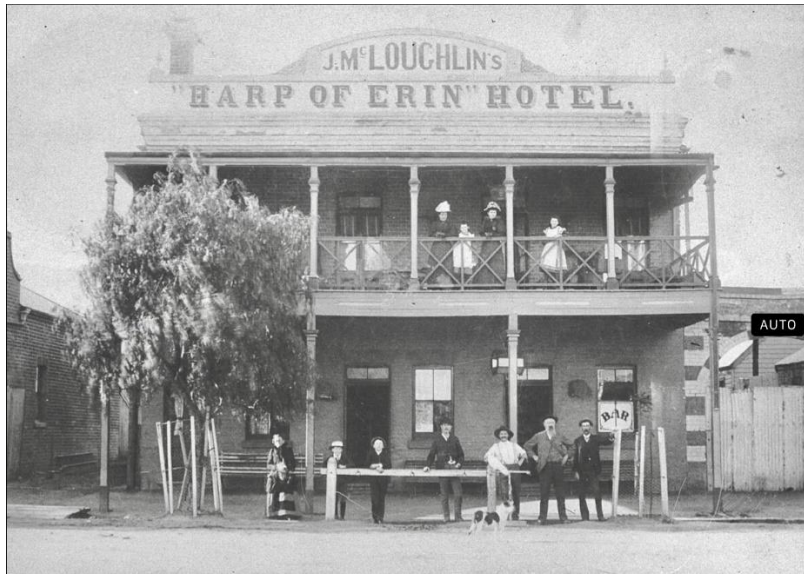
In February 1912, Mr. Arnott, a chemist residing at the Caledonian, had a narrow escape when he sleepwalked off the upstairs verandah. He awoke mid-fall and grabbed a water pipe, breaking his wrist but avoiding more serious injuries. This incident highlighted the hotel's vibrant and sometimes unpredictable life.

The Caledonian also had legal troubles. In July 1912, licensee William Sunderland was fined for serving alcohol to an on-duty constable, reflecting the challenges of running such an establishment in a small town.

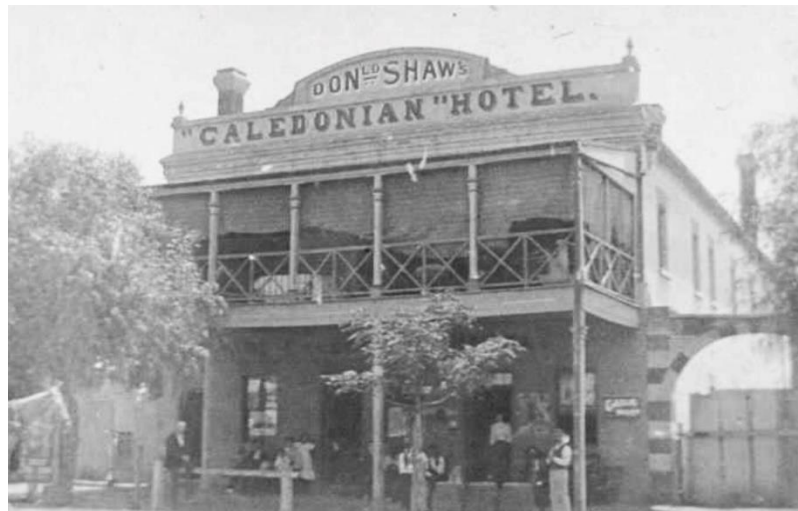
Another dramatic event occurred in March 1913 when a man named William Collins, staying at the hotel, drowned in the river after heavy drinking. This incident caused a sensation in Bourke, emphasizing the darker side of the hotel's history.

In 1924, Bourke was shocked by the Government Licensing Reduction Board's decision to de-license seven hotels, including the Caledonian. This decision marked the end of an era for the hotel. The Bourke Municipal Council purchased the building for use as temporary council chambers after a fire destroyed the previous chambers. The Caledonian served the council until new chambers were completed in 1934.

After serving Bourke for about fifty years, the old Caledonian Hotel was demolished in 1935. Its legacy, however, lives on as a testament to the resilience and spirit of the Bourke community, reflecting the highs and lows of life in this historic town.



The Harp of Erin 1893 -1895



The Caledonian Hotel -Donald Shaw 1895-1897



The Caledonian sometime after the 1906 Cyclone that destroyed the parapet