

THE TRAGIC CLUB HOUSE HOTEL

The Club House Hotel in Bourke, New South Wales, stood proudly on the northwest corner of Wilson and Hope streets from the late 19th century to the mid-20th century. Though a single-story brick building, it had an intriguing history that matched the town's reputation for fascinating tales.

Dating back to around 1885, the hotel quickly became a prominent fixture in the town. Bourke was a bustling hub during those times, and the Club House Hotel was a lively place where locals and travellers alike would gather to share stories and experiences. But little did they know that this establishment would bear witness to several tragic and mysterious deaths over the years.

In 1899, a man named Mark Shields, known as the pub groom, met a tragic end. His lifeless body was discovered under a tree in the hotel yard. The oppressive summer heat and a sudden fit were deemed responsible for his untimely demise.

Two years later, in 1901, the publican of the hotel, Thomas Hand, passed away at the age of only 47. His death sent shockwaves through the community, leaving many to wonder about the circumstances surrounding his passing.

Then, in 1903, the hotel experienced another grim event when a resident named John Martin was found hanged in the stable within the pub yard. The authorities ruled it as a suicide, but the locals speculated about what might have driven him to such a desperate act.

As if the hotel were cursed, 1906 brought yet another tragedy. The lifeless body of Mr. J. E. Barton was discovered in his room, hanging from the bedpost by his own braces. He had also ingested poison, leading the coroner to conclude it was a clear case of suicide.

Shortly after Barton's death, the unfortunate trend continued. Samuel Webber, also known as "Sam Slick," a riverboat hand, was found dead in the hotel's outhouse. He had been drinking heavily before succumbing to what was believed to be a heart attack.

The repeated misfortunes and eerie occurrences became too much for the Club House Hotel. The once-vibrant establishment had gained a reputation for its string of tragedies, and the locals began to view it with apprehension. The hotel's business dwindled, and the owners decided to sell it.

In 1947, the Tancred brothers, proprietors of the town's abattoirs, purchased the property with plans to transform it into a boarding house. However, despite their intentions, the building's dark history seemed inescapable. A few years later, in 1948, the Club House Hotel was ultimately demolished, bringing an end to its storied existence.

The tales of the Club House Hotel continued to echo through the years, passing into local legend. Even now, long after its demolition, the memory of the hotel and its haunting stories remains a topic of fascination among Bourke's residents. Its legacy serves as a reminder of the transient nature of life and the mysteries that sometimes linger in the places we inhabit.



The Club House Hotel – The Cambridge Hotel LHS background