

## FLEECE INN, 143 CHARLESTON ROAD, EAST BENDIGO

### Images



*Fleece Inn 143 Charleston Road, Bendigo, showing earlier part of building on the right*



*Fleece Inn, 143 Charleston Road, detail of front verandah*

### Description

The Fleece Inn, formerly known as the Golden Fleece Hotel is located at the edge of the city in an area noted for its industrial activities and close to the railway line. The early origins of the Fleece Inn can be recognised in the part of the building with the verandah.

The long frontage addressing Charleston Street comprises two distinct parts that have been constructed at different times from 1862. A two storeyed verandah section of the building set back from the street frontage comprises a rendered masonry ground floor and a painted brick work upper floor. The window size and placement is consistent with a building from the 1860s. A two storey cast iron verandah of recent construction but complementary design completes this part of the façade.

It appears likely that the large extension to the hotel was undertaken in the 1920s under the ownership of the Cohn brothers of the Victoria Brewery. This two storey section doubled the size of the hotel and is constructed to the street frontage. This part of the building is consistent with an early twentieth century addition and has a plain rendered façade with string course, and pedimented parapet bearing the name of the hotel in moulded lettering. The ground floor is painted brick. The windows have tripartite panes and there is a central doorway.

Further extensions to each side of the building have also been undertaken whilst the whole building has been converted to provide student accommodation and no longer operates as a hotel.

### History

*City of Greater Bendigo framework of historic themes*

This place is associated with the following historic themes taken from the *Greater Bendigo Thematic Environmental History (2013)*:

6.0 Building towns, cities and the Greater Bendigo area

8.0 Building Greater Bendigo's community life

#### Place history

The Fleece Inn Hotel at 143 Charleston Road, East Bendigo is located to the east of Napier Street and occupies Crown allotments 51-54, Section 20 in the Parish of Sandhurst. Physician James Boyd acquired the four allotments at Charleston Road (called 'Charlston' in early texts) on 22 July 1862, which was valued at £110 later that year (RB2907). The 1862 Rate Book

evaluation describes a building at the address as a 'house', however; the substantial property valuation in comparison to typical houses in the area suggests the hotel was under construction, if not complete, at this time (Butler & Assoc. 1993 vol. 4:86).

The Hotel is a two storey commercial building constructed in a mid-Victorian colonial style, situated in a prime location within Bendigo's former industrial precinct opposite the municipal cattle yard (S&Mc cartographic material c1896). Its original name, the 'Golden Fleece Hotel', first appeared in the 1864 Rate Book where it was valued at £75 (RB5202). In 1872 Boyd made improvements to the Hotel with the addition of a 'garden' at the rear of the property, which ceased to appear in rate book descriptions after 1895 (RB7339).

Whilst Boyd retained ownership up until 1904, he leased the property to several different publicans who were named in directories and rate books as the building's occupant and licensee.

Dr James Boyd was a prominent figure in the Bendigo community as Mayor of Sandhurst's first City Council and an active philanthropist involved with a number of local organisations, including the Bendigo Benevolent Asylum, Art Gallery and Hospital (*Bendigo Advertiser* 25 September 1909:10). He was also chairman of the Commercial Permanent Land and Building Society, now known as Bendigo Bank, for 28 years (*Bendigo Advertiser* 25 September 1909:10).

Bridget Valli purchased the Fleece Inn from Boyd with her husband in 1904. Bridget Valli (nee Carrig) was an Irish migrant whose husband Antonio Valli died shortly after purchasing the establishment, leaving Bridget and their five daughters to manage it (Immigration Place Australia 2015; *Bendigo Advertiser* 9 November 1904:2). After Bridget's death in 1911, her daughters took over the Fleece Inn for a short time until it was leased to a new occupant in 1913 (*Bendigo Advertiser* 18 March 1911:10; S&Mc 1913).

The Hotel remained in Valli's executors' ownership and let to hoteliers until it was purchased by Cohn Bros. Co. Ltd. in 1925 (Butler & Assoc. 1993 vol.4 :86-87). The Cohn brothers owned Bendigo's Victoria Brewery and a number of other hotels at this time, and had in 1854 constructed Sandhurst's Criterion Hotel, which still stands today (English 2010). Carlton United Breweries acquired the Fleece Inn in 1930, having taken over Cohn Bros. in the mid-1920s (Butler & Assoc. 1993 vol. 4:86-87). The property's title certificate indicates changes in ownership several times throughout the twentieth century prior to its current use as hostel accommodation (July 2015).

## References

*Antonio Valli* (2015), Immigration Place Australia.

'Bendigo Licensing Court' (1904), *Bendigo Advertiser*, 9 November 1904:2.

Butler & Associates 1993, *Eaglehawk & Bendigo Heritage Study: Vol. 4 Significant Sites*, prepared for City of Greater Bendigo Council.

City of Bendigo Municipal rate books (RB).

English, Bruce (2010), *The Brewers of Australia*, Ancestry.com.

'Obituary' (1911), *Bendigo Advertiser*, 18 March 1911:10.

Sands & McDougall directories (S&Mc).

'The Late Doctor James Boyd' (1904), *Bendigo Advertiser*, 25 September 1904:10.

## Comparative assessment

Bendigo is particularly rich in hotels with some exceptional examples such as the Shamrock, Goldmines and Rifle Brigade as outstanding examples. 52 hotels are recorded on the Heritage Overlay. Hotels as a building typology rarely survive unchanged, and tend to have been altered more than once during their lifetime. Most have quite substantial renovations and additions, and even those that appear authentic in their nineteenth century verandah splendour have often been substantially restored. Consequently the Fleece Inn is typical of many hotels in Bendigo and suburbs that are composed of a mixture of periods and styles.

There are several comparable examples of typical hotels already on the Overlay, including:

- City Family Hotel (HO143) 33-39 High Street – a two storey Victorian hotel built in two parts and located mid-street.
- Court House Hotel 116 Pall Mall Bendigo (HO230), early twentieth century two storey corner hotel with some stylistic similarities to the later wing of the Fleece Inn.
- Weighbridge Hotel 12 Lockwood Road Kangaroo Flat (HO517) 1875 , pre 1884 and much altered in its external appearance
- Foundry Arms Hotel 2 Old High Street Golden Square (HO451), single storey corner Victorian hotel
- Park View Hotel 244 Park Street Bendigo (HO279), a typical Victorian two-storey corner hotel.

The many examples of hotels throughout greater Bendigo provide a range of types, periods and architectural styles, and as a group of commercial buildings hotels are particularly emblematic of goldfields cities that comprise distinct localities built around mining activity.

## Statement of significance

### *What is significant?*

The Fleece Inn, 143 Charleston Road Bendigo, formerly known as the Golden Fleece Hotel, and built in stages from 1862 is significant.

### *How is it significant?*

The Fleece Inn is of local historic and aesthetic significance to the City of Greater Bendigo.

### *Why is it significant?*

The Fleece Inn is historically significant as a place built on land owned by prominent Bendigo physician, philanthropist and Mayor of Sandhurst's first City Council, Dr James Boyd, from 1862 until 1904. Boyd's later activities included being chairman for 28 years of the Commercial Permanent Land and Building Society, the forerunner of the Bendigo Bank. Boyd was actively engaged in improvements to the hotel in 1872 with the addition of a garden to the property. The hotel's history follows a similar one to many other hotels that by the 1930s were bought by Carlton and United Breweries. The example of the Fleece Inn shows that Carlton and United took over from Bendigo's Victoria Brewery owned by the Cohn brothers, who had purchased the property in the 1920s. (Criterion A)

The Fleece Inn is a landmark building in its location at the edge of the city where many changes have taken place. Whilst much of the historic urban context has been changed, the Fleece Inn is a tangible reminder of the locality's past. Architecturally, the Fleece Inn reflects its 1860s origins through its two story form, verandah, and Victorian sash windows (Criterion E). The major additions undertaken in the 1920s reflect a more representative hotel form, being built to the street line and comprising a parapet with central arched pediment. (Criterion D)

The nineteenth and early twentieth century character of the building has largely been retained externally through the conversion of the hotel to student accommodation.