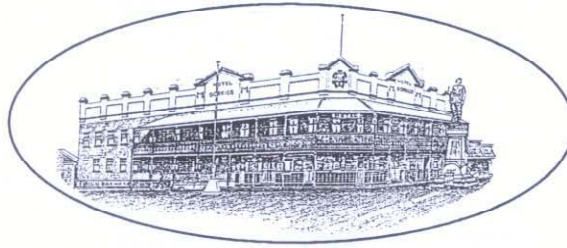


Historic Hotel Dorrigo



Historic Hotel Dorrigo is a national trust listed building. Erected in 1925, it is a classic example of Australian hotel architecture of the 1920s.

The 1920's was a period of significant hotel construction, due to buoyant economic conditions, and readily available loan funds.

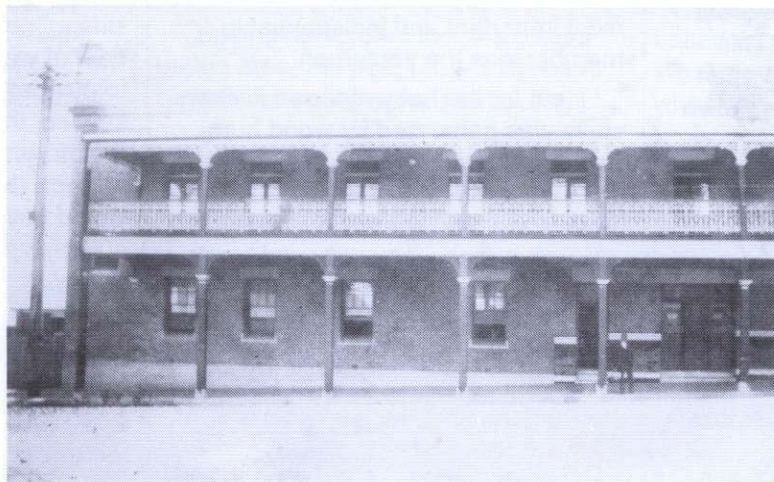
The major breweries, such as Tooth & Co., provided bank guarantees to publicans wishing to build hotels. In return, the hotelier agreed to sell the particular brewery's beer.

This financial arrangement was termed the 'tied house system'. It meant that the 'hotel/house' was tied legally to the brewer providing the guarantee. The hotel could then only sell the guaranteeing brewer's beer.

Hotel Dorrigo was built under this arrangement, with Tooth and Co., and Michael Feros, the hotel's first publican.

On opening in 1925, the Hotel Dorrigo was the most modern hotel between Newcastle and Brisbane.

The hotel originally had 28 bedrooms, 10 downstairs and 18 upstairs. Because of its success, in 1936 the hotel was expanded by the addition of



Hotel Dorrigo before extensions in 1935.

16 bedrooms.

This extension was carried out on the part of the hotel that does not have a verandah. The slightly different coloured bricks bears evidence to the extension, which can be clearly seen by viewing the hotel from the Post office. The photograph (No. 1), which would have been taken from the post office in the early 1930's, shows the hotel without the extension.

This extension retained the high standard of the hotel, and all the new bedrooms had hot and cold water. Prior to this, the amenities in each room were a jug and wash-basin, and a commode.

The hotel operated with two dining rooms, one upstairs and one downstairs. Both had a seating capacity of 60, and provided a silver service, with 4-5 course menus.

The distinguishing architectural features of the hotel are its wrought iron verandah, parapet and richly-coloured tiles. The bricks for the building came from Armidale, and stained timbers were used throughout the hotel.

In a quest for "modernisation" of the building in the late 50's and early 60's, a substantial part of the downstairs timber-work was painted.

Those were the days when buildings had to be 'modern American' in style to remain in vogue. There was no ethos or appreciation of Australian cultural heritage, or more particularly, an understanding of how to restore the design and architecture of Australian buildings.

The upstairs section of the hotel was not changed, and retains its original woodwork. The feature of this yester-year woodwork is the polished timber ceilings in the halls and bedrooms.

FERNERY FAMILY BISTRO - OPEN 7 DAYS

An indication of the high standard of care and service provided at the hotel is seen by the fact that patrons could leave their shoes outside the door of their rooms in the evening as they retired, and they would be cleaned, polished, and left bright and sparkling outside their doors the next morning.

The hotel had internal toilets and its own sewerage system, which was unique in those days. The sewerage was run into a land fill area adjacent to the playing fields near the Bielsdown River. This system was abandoned in 1955, when Dorrigo obtained its own town sewerage system.

The hotel also had its own water supply, in addition to that obtained from a tank system. The water was pumped to the hotel from two springs. One was located in the park, near the tennis courts and swimming pool complex. The other spring was located in Dorrigo's recreation area, just below the police station. This water supply system was also abandoned when Dorrigo went on to town water.

Very few hotels at the time, which was thirty years prior to the town getting its own water supply, had their own water and sewerage systems.

Electricity in the town was not a problem, because Dorrigo had its own hydro-electric power system, which was one of the earliest systems of this type.

The hotel was built in 1925, at the time of the construction of the Dorrigo-Guyra railway. The economics of the hotel were based on the fact that there would be a large number of construction workers in the area for a number of years, while the railway was being built.

The onset of the depression, and the disbanding of the railway line, created enormous economic pressures for the operation of the hotel. The hotel's builder, and first publican, Michael Feros, had to borrow 20,000 pounds in 1925, on the only collateral he had - a block of land.

The hotel was kept afloat during this period due to the stoic labour and devoted service of Michael, who worked 16 hours a day, 7 days a week. He was ably assisted in this

task by his wife, Elene, whom he married in 1928.

Elene would rise at 6 a.m. every morning to ensure that breakfast was cooked and served, and travellers were assisted to proceed on their journeys. Michael would get up a little later in the day, and work through the afternoon and night, until the early hours of the next morning, to ensure that the comfort and needs of guests were catered for.

In those days the business was centred around the commercial travellers, who used to make Dorrigo their stop-over before proceeding on to Bellingen, which was the main town in the area at the time.

It was only in the 60's that Coffs Harbour became the commercial focus of the area, and the people stayed overnight there, radiating on to their various destinations the following day.

The hotel employed 17 staff. The most important and indispensable member was the yardsman.

Heat for the hot water and kitchen stove was generated by wood burners, and therefore it was necessary to have a yardsman who spent 3-4 hours each day, chopping wood, stacking it, and continually stoking the burner, which was affectionately called the 'donkey'. It was essential to have someone stoking the burner all the time, as it provided the fuel for the kitchen stove, fires, boilers and hot water.

Indeed, the need to keep the 'home fires burning' dominated the social life of the hotel. If the family was going on a outing on the weekend, arrangements had to be made to have someone there to stoke the 'donkey', or the outing had to be cut short, and they returned to stoke the fire themselves.

The little building housing the 'donkey' is still in the hotel grounds, and is situated outside Room 5, where it houses the gas hot water system.

The other staff employed at the hotel were:

- a cellarman
- 5 barmen (on busy days)
- a downstairs maid
- two upstairs maids

- two waitresses in the upstairs dining room
- two waitresses in the downstairs dining room
- a cook
- a kitchen assistant
- a laundress.

The hotel kitchen boasted of its fine cuisine. One cook, Anne, was a loyal employee for 25 years, and provided meals to travellers, consisting of soup (a favourite was Pea and Ham), the main course, and delicious sweets such as chocolate eclairs, trifles laced with wine, and 7-tier rainbow sponge cakes. The sad thing was that Anne ended up drinking more wine than she put into the trifles!

The reason for the large number of barmen is interesting. The bar of the hotel was extremely long, and there was more space behind the bar than there was for patrons on the other side. Consequently there was a great deal of walking involved in attending to customers. To provide adequate service, there was a barman serving at different sections of the bar. Photograph (No. 2) shows the bar as it would have been in the 1930's and 40's.

A feature of the bar was its leadlight canopy, sections of which still remain, and hang majestically over the public bar. Hooks down the side of the canopy provide resting-places for patrons' beer mugs, and inside the canopy, the wines and spirits were stored.

Near the door were situated two small ladies lounges or parlours, which had little windows on which the ladies could knock if they required service. The windows were opened, and their drinks served to them, without their privacy being invaded.

One of these lounges is now the gaming lounge, and the other provides the location for the serving area of the bar.

A number of factors impacted on the hotel's operations in the late 1950's and early 1960's.

The development of Coffs Harbour as the commercial centre of the district, and particularly the development of motels there, over this period, took away the commercial traveller

trade from the Hotel Dorrigo.

The bar trade was affected by the decline in the timber industry, and the development of the licensed club industry during the 1950's. In that period, Dorrigo went from two fully operational liquor licenses to four.

In spite of this decline in business, Michael Feros refused to change his hotel. Other than the removal of the leadlight canopy in the bar, which occurred in the early 1950's, the hotel remained in its original state until his death in 1969.

Whilst this meant that the hotel was not providing the facilities required by patrons, it did mean that the hotel was not grotesquely "modernised", as happened with many of Australia's classical hotels in the 1960's. It was really in a 'time warp' for fifteen years.

Since 1969, the hotel has been owned by Michael Feros' children.

During this time, the motel units were added, more space was made available for bar patrons, and the Bistro eating area was established.

The spacious bar was created by contracting the area behind the bar. The downstairs bedrooms were converted into the back lounge. The Bistro was created by covering the back garden between both wings of the building.

These renovations have been carried out, as far as possible, to retain the character of the 1925 buildings.

The restoration techniques have become easier as the years have passed, as more knowledge has been gained on how they should be done.

One example of an error in the restoration is the ceiling height in the back lounge. This was constructed at a 1970 ceiling height, when it should have been at the 1925 height. Consequently the ambience of the room is not consistent with the ceiling height 'openness' of the dining room or the main bar.

Having completed the downstairs eating area, the next project will be to restore the upstairs bedrooms.

Colour Scheme

In 1925, the building finishes were presented in their natural state. The doors and woodwork were either stained or polished timber.

The window sills, lentil and parapet were unpainted render. The only paintwork was the verandah posts and the wrought iron. Research indicates that the posts were green in colour, and the verandah and wrought iron was cream.

Whilst to the 80's 'eye', these finishes would appear 'unfinished', in 1925 they were the architecture of the day.

The painting of the outside of the hotel, particularly the parapet, occurred in the 1950's, and was done in blue and white.

The current colour scheme is based on making the building, including the parapet, a background against which the verandah can stand out as



Hotel Dorrigo's main bar pre-1950.

BISTRO OPEN 7 DAYS - BREAKFAST, LUNCH, DINNER

a feature. Therefore, the parapet has been painted a matching colour to the brickwork. The trim colour matches the mortar of the bricks and the trim on the tiles; and the other trim colour is also a match for the main colour of the body of the tiles.

THE STAFF REMEMBER

OLLIE GOODFELLOW

"I was 18 when I commenced working at Hotel Dorrigo, and at that stage was the youngest one there."

"I remember how Eunice (public dining room waitress) used to stand in the hall and beat the brass gong to summon the guests to come and eat."

"There were no washing machines those days. Everything was boiled in the copper, and the big wooden mangle in the laundry was used to press the sheets and towels. I used to iron "hundreds" of pillow cases, serviettes and tablecloths with a very heavy iron. The serviettes were folded a fan-shape, and placed in a drinking glass at each setting, with nice linen tablecloths, a beautifully cleaned cruet, and not forgetting the bowl of toothpicks. It was all first-class. The silver used to sparkle."

"I remember the wooden lift in the kitchen, pulled up by a rope, to take the meals upstairs".

Letter dated June, 1983.

Ollie worked in the hotel in the late 1920's.

THE PATRONS REMEMBER...

W.R. WEILEY

"As the Parliamentary representative of the Clarence Electorate, of which Dorrigo was a part, it was often my duty to visit Dorrigo on Parliamentary business, and stay at the really magnificent hotel, the "Hotel Dorrigo".

"The Dorrigo Hotel is undoubtedly one of the best hotel buildings, and was the best conducted and successful hotels in the country districts of N.S.W. I can speak with some authority as I managed hotels in Moree and George Street, Sydney. But as a modern, well-appointed and handsome hotel, it was

the best country hotel I have had the opportunity of seeing in N.S.W."

"The magnificent hotel, incorporating every modern improvement, including electric light, refrigeration and sewerage etc., was one of the most modern hotels in N.S.W."

Letter dated 10th June, 1983.

MICHAEL FEROS

Builder and licensee of Hotel Dorrigo 1925-1969

Extract from "The Don Dorrigo Gazette" Wednesday, August 17, 1960

"Michael Feros was a migrant to Australia, arriving from the Greek island of Kytheria.

Kytheria is an island in the Mediterranean, situated at the southern end of Greece. In the Greek classics, Venus, the Goddess of Love, rose unadorned from the waters near Kytheria. Thus is the Kytherian claim.

The story is also told that when God made the world, he used a great sieve to distribute soil over the land. The rubble that was left in the sieve, God tipped into the sea off the end of Greece; and thus Kytheria, the stony island, was created.

As a 15 year-old boy, Michael left the port of Athens on February 25, 1911 for Australia.

Travelling by way of Suez and Bombay, he arrived in Sydney on June 12th, 1911, unaccompanied and friendless in a strange land, with but a limited knowledge of English as a stand-by.

However, he was lucky in as much that he met an old schoolmate of his father, who employed him in his restaurant at Circular Quay.

There young Mick worked from 6 a.m. to midnight, seven days a week for the magnificent of wage of 5/- a week. "Half day off" was on a Wednesday when the boy finished work at 4.30 p.m.!

Sydney was, in 1911, a city of 350,000 people and horse-drawn trams were the order of the day.

Mick's next move was to Boggabri where he worked in a refreshment room on the same conditions as Sydney, except that he earned 7/6 a week for 18 months.

He then returned to Sydney, and was employed in a restaurant opposite the Town Hall at one pound a week.

City life did not agree with our young adventurer and he soon "packed his traps" and headed for the North Coast.

He travelled by coastal ship to Coffs Harbour, and has vivid recollections of being hoisted in a basket onto the wharf there.

Yes, coastal ship was the passenger transport system along the coast.

Travelling to Bellingen by horse and buggy, he can recall that the journey took some ten hours, and that the driver broke his arm by putting it into the spokes of the wheel.

In 1919, with the experience gained, he sold his partnership in the Bellingen business and came to Dorrigo, where he conducted a refreshment room in Cudgery Street.

"Mick" prospered and brought the corner block on which his hotel now stands.

He applied for a license at Bellingen Licensing Court in 1923, and the doors of the hotel were opened to the public on August 13th, 1925.

Mr. Feros was married in Sydney on January 26th, 1929, to a native of Athens, Miss Helen Haniotos, and had four children.

He took a very prominent part in the growth of the town, and has numbered among his interests the following:-

- * Chairman, honorary secretary and treasurer of the Hospital Board. (During his tenure of office a brick appeal was launched and 2,000 pounds was raised which is held in the bank at a fixed deposit waiting for the new hospital to be built).
- * Member of the Urban Committee for many years.
- * Treasurer and committee member of the Dorrigo Bowling Club.
- * Chairman of the National Park Trust for 18 yrs.
- * Chairman of Recreation Ground Committee for 25 years.
- * Member of Parochial Council of the Church of England.
- * Assisted in putting every church in Dorrigo on a sound financial footing.
- * Was the first guarantor for Dorrigo Hydro-Electric Scheme. This scheme started building in 1922.
- * Chairman of Board of Directors of Dorrigo Motors.
- * Benefactor of the Dorrigo Football Club.
- * Life member of the Dorrigo Agricultural Association.
- * Benefactor to the Golf Club and Tennis Courts.
- * Was responsible for the transfer of 16.1/2 acres from the Lands Department to the Education Department through representations to the then Minister for Education, Mr. Dave Drummond, who came to the Plateau, to discuss the needs of Dorrigo."

MOTEL ACCOMMODATION – SINGLE and FAMILY UNITS (4 PERSONS)