



**HERITAGE
COUNCIL**
OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

REGISTER OF HERITAGE PLACES

Removed Entry

The Minister for Heritage Directed that this Interim Entry in the State Register not be made permanent on 11 December 1998. Notice of this decision under the Heritage of Western Australia Act 1990 appeared in the Government Gazette on 8 January 1999.

1. **DATA BASE No.** 2991
2. **NAME** *Kalgoorlie Brothel (Club 181)*(c. 1940; 1995)
3. **LOCATION** 179-181 Hay Street, Kalgoorlie
4. **DESCRIPTION OF PLACE INCLUDED IN THIS ENTRY**
Lot 88 the subject of Diagram 88640, being the whole of the land comprised in Certificate of Title Volume 2054 Folio 913.
5. **LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA** City of Kalgoorlie/ Boulder
6. **OWNER** Mary-Anne Kenworthy
7. **HERITAGE LISTINGS**
 - Register of Heritage Places: Interim Entry 12/ 12/ 1997
 - National Trust Classification: -----
 - Town Planning Scheme: -----
 - Municipal Inventory: -----
 - Register of the National Estate: -----
8. **CONSERVATION ORDER**

9. **HERITAGE AGREEMENT**

10. **STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE**

Kalgoorlie Brothel (Club 181), a single-storey, timber framed building, clad with corrugated galvanised iron and flat fibro-cement lining, has cultural heritage significance for the following reasons:

the place is one of three remaining brothels in Hay Street, Kalgoorlie and as such, it is an on-going reminder of Kalgoorlie's long history as a male dominated, working mining town; and,

the place represents a way of life in frontier settlements and contributes to Kalgoorlie's and the wider community of Western Australia's sense of place.

11. ASSESSMENT OF CULTURAL HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

The criteria adopted by the Heritage Council in November, 1996 have been used to determine the cultural heritage significance of the place.

11.1 AESTHETIC VALUE

11.2. HISTORIC VALUE

Kalgoorlie Brothel (Club 181) is one of the few remaining brothels in Hay Street, Kalgoorlie, and as such it is an on-going reminder of Kalgoorlie's long history as a male dominated, large, working mining town. (Criterion 2.1)

Kalgoorlie Brothel (Club 181) was established c. 1940 at the height of the containment policy in Kalgoorlie, designed to regulate but not abolish prostitution. In Western Australia, the continued implementation of the containment policy, over such a long period of time, is unique to Kalgoorlie. (Criterion 2.2)

11.3. SCIENTIFIC VALUE

11.4. SOCIAL VALUE

Brothels in Hay Street, Kalgoorlie, such as *Kalgoorlie Brothel (Club 181)* have attained a level of notoriety, as evidenced by their inclusion in souvenir material, tourist maps, museum exhibits and general literature, that contributes to Kalgoorlie's, and the wider community of Western Australia's sense of place. (Criterion 4.2)

12. DEGREE OF SIGNIFICANCE

12.1. RARITY

Kalgoorlie Brothel (Club 181) is one of three remaining brothels in Hay Street, Kalgoorlie. The distinctive 'starting stalls' of *Kalgoorlie Brothel (Club 181)*, added in the 1960s, together with those of the other two brothels make a distinctive and identifying feature along the south side of Hay Street. (Criteria 5.1 & 5.2)

12.2 REPRESENTATIVENESS

Kalgoorlie Brothel (Club 181) is representative of a long tradition in Kalgoorlie in the provision of entertainment and companionship.

12.3 CONDITION

Kalgoorlie Brothel (Club 181) is in poor condition. Exterior and interior materials have deteriorated and maintenance has been of a patch-work nature.

12.4 INTEGRITY

With its continued use as a brothel, *Kalgoorlie Brothel (Club 181)* has a high degree of integrity.

12.5 AUTHENTICITY

The place has been extensively extended and altered over a period of years and the place retains little original fabric. *Kalgoorlie Brothel (Club 181)* retains a low degree of authenticity.

13. SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

The documentary evidence has been compiled by Julia Ball, Historian. The physical evidence has been compiled by Kelly Aris, Conservation Architect.

13.1 DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

Kalgoorlie Brothel (Club 181) is a single-storey timber framed building constructed c. 1940 to provide residential/ brothel facilities in Hay Street, Kalgoorlie.

Gold was discovered in Kalgoorlie in 1893, a year after similar discoveries in nearby Coolgardie. News of the finds spread rapidly and Hannan's Find, as it was originally named, attracted large numbers of men seeking their fortunes. The townsite developed during the 1890s and in 1895, Kalgoorlie was declared a municipality. As the prosperity continued, permanent buildings replaced the hessian tents.

One of the characteristics of Kalgoorlie is its geographical isolation. The vast distances that had to be travelled meant that during the early settlement and development of Kalgoorlie, men usually travelled alone, leaving their wives and families behind until they had established themselves. Combined with a large single male population, the men were largely isolated from women. A small group of women did go to the goldfields with their men and an even smaller number went to the goldfields to practice their 'trades', mainly nurses, barmaids and prostitutes. The result was a concentration of hard-working men with financial resources and little or no contact with women, and it was under these circumstances that prostitution in Kalgoorlie flourished.

During the 1890s, prostitution in Kalgoorlie operated on several levels of organisation and disorganisation. French and Japanese syndicates brought in workers while a smaller number of brothels employed English and Australian prostitutes.¹ The more discreet brothel operators used shopfronts to disguise their businesses. At this time, the location of choice in Kalgoorlie was the main business area, notably Hannan and Maritana Streets, although brothels also operated along Brookman, Egan and Wilson Streets. English

¹ Davidson, R. 'Dealing with the 'Social Evil': Prostitution and the police in Perth and on the Eastern goldfields, 1895-1924' in Daniels, K. (ed) *So Much Hard Work: Women and Prostitution in Australian History* Fontana, Sydney, 1984, p. 166.

and Australians favoured Egan Street while other nationalities favoured Brookman Street.

The *Police Act 1892* did not make prostitution itself an offence and thus allowed prostitutes to operate alone from their own homes. By-law No. 77 enacted on 15 April 1901 by the Kalgoorlie Town Council provided for the suppression and restraint of brothels, disorderly houses etc. However, neither the Roads Board nor Council actually implemented the by-laws.

The years between 1895 and 1920 in Western Australia saw a gradual move away from a consciously abolitionist approach toward a more regulatory one. This was not the result of legislative change but rather a change in the attitude of local government and police authorities.²

In Kalgoorlie, there was a dramatic change between 1901 and 1906 in the way the Town Council approached its regulation of prostitution, as the town began to forge a more middle-class, stable family image. After the turn-of-century there was a general decline in profitability on the goldfields. Population numbers became more stable and the gender balance began to even out as men either married or brought their wives and children to Kalgoorlie to join them. As a result, there was more pressure on Council to gain control over the sex industry.

The first proposal to create a 'red-light' district in Kalgoorlie was presented at a meeting of the Kalgoorlie Town Council on 28 October 1901. It was not passed but formed the basis of the future containment policy. In addition to this, in 1902, the name of Brookman Street, between Lane and Throssell Streets was changed to Hay Street, thus delineating the proposed 'red-light' area further.³

It was during the period 1905-10 that the first segregated 'vice' area was set up. This desire to separate and contain Kalgoorlie's brothels is evident in the debate of the Town Council in 1905 where it was moved:

That in the interests of public morality as well as in the interests of the city generally it is desirable that all brothels east of Wilson Street should be removed, and that steps be taken by this Council to secure reform in the direction indicated.⁴

The establishment of Hay Street, as a 'red-light' area was not achieved easily and the proposal received opposition from the surrounding neighbourhood.⁵ It appears from the Minute Books that the Council did not proceed officially with the move to Hay Street. However, by enlisting the assistance of the police, the Council was able to achieve their objective. The police were instructed to prosecute only those women outside the condoned area and

² *ibid.*, p. 165.

³ *Government Gazette* 27 June 1902, p. 2,795.

⁴ Public Records Office of Western Australia, AN 308/ 1, Kalgoorlie Municipal Council, Acc 1333. Item 13, Minute Book, 1905-06, p. 7.

⁵ *ibid.*, p. 22.

thus a gradual move of prostitutes into Hay Street was achieved.⁶ By 1910, all of Kalgoorlie's remaining dozen or so brothels were located in Hay Street.⁷

The issue of containment in Perth was slightly different. The push to contain brothels to Roe Street was not directly initiated by either the police or the Perth City Council.⁸ The combination of a police policy to clean up the city and expanding commercial pressures on streets adjacent to the main shopping block forced many prostitutes out of the more central locations to areas such as Roe Street. It was not until around 1914-15, when the effects of war were being felt, that the police moved in, to localise and regulate Perth's prostitution to Roe Street.⁹ By the early 1920s, the transition toward regulated prostitution in Perth was almost complete.

By World War Two the containment policy was in full swing in Kalgoorlie. Brothels were by now concentrated in Hay Street and workers were required to present for fortnightly medical examinations. Yet, despite its ban of brothels outside Hay Street, Japanese brothels are known to have operated outside on Brookman Street.

The 1960s could be viewed as Hay Street's 'Golden Era'. Kalgoorlie's brothels settled into a period of stability unparalleled in the rest of Australia. It was removed from the sort of police interference that closed Perth's 'red-light' district on Roe Street in 1958 and Kalgoorlie's brothels and containment policy survived.

Features of the containment policy, confirmed to have been enforced by the police in the 1960s, and none of which were written down, included: brothels must be located on Hay Street, between Lane and Lionel Streets; brothels, madams and workers must register with local police; brothels must be owned and managed by women; workers must be at least 21 years of age; workers must have weekly medical examinations; workers must live on brothel premises; no worker may visit the town centre, hotels, cinema or swimming pool.¹⁰

To a large extent, it was the successful implementation of the containment policy that led to the notoriety that was attached to these brothels:

The brothels were an important social institution for the miners who patronised them, offered a constant source of amusement and casual source of income for young boys in the town and proved an eternal source of fascination and hushed gossip for the rest of the townsfolk and tourists.¹¹

At the height of their prosperity, during the 1960s, the brothels in Hay Street were described as custom-built corrugated iron brothels accommodating up to six workers in individual bedrooms and with separate lounge and dining rooms. Workers' bedrooms were arranged alongside each other in a row

⁶ Davidson, op. cit., p. 171.

⁷ *ibid.*, p. 172.

⁸ *ibid.*

⁹ *ibid.*, p. 178.

¹⁰ Kenworthy, M. & McKewon, E. 'Draft Manuscript on Hay Street and Kalgoorlie', (1996), chapter 4.

¹¹ *ibid.*, chapter 3, p. 6. The casual source of income for the young boys involved carrying out jobs such as delivering newspapers to the brothels, picking up the cool drink bottles and stacking or cutting firewood.

facing onto Hay Street. Each bedroom generally had two doors. The back door accessed the rest of the house, while the front doorway connected to a small corridor which led to the footpath on Hay Street. Workers were expected to be on duty, or 'on the door' by five or six every evening and work through until at least the early hours of the morning.¹²

Kalgoorlie Brothel (Club 181) is one of three remaining brothels in Hay Street, Kalgoorlie. A fourth brothel was closed in the early 1990s and the building is now used to provide backpacker/ homestay accommodation. The continuing success of the containment policy and the perceived need for such places is perhaps reflected in the continuing dominance of a male, young, working population in the eastern goldfields region.

In June 1994, males made up 54.1% of the Goldfields-Esperance region's population, ranking it second after the Pilbara which had 55.4% males. In general, the data show that the further north and east the region is from Perth, the higher the ratio of males in the population.¹³ The age structure of the region's population is also heavily biased towards people of working age, and in particular, the 20-34 year age group.¹⁴

In 1995, there was a relaxation of the containment policy in Kalgoorlie. The policy now allows workers to live off-site, the minimum age for employment has been reduced to 18 and brothels are now able to provide an escort service.

Over the years, the brothels in Hay Street have achieved a high degree of notoriety. In 1997, Hay Street features on local tourist maps (under Arts & Entertainment heading); the brothels (No. 143 & *Kalgoorlie Brothel (Club 181)*) feature on a range of post cards and tourist souvenirs such as car stickers, fridge magnets and drink holders, available at the Kalgoorlie-Boulder Tourist Centre and Museum of the Goldfields. The Museum (a branch of the WA Museum) also includes a display on prostitution in Kalgoorlie featuring two brothel 'tokens' that were discovered. In addition, a drive along Hay Street at night is often included in organised tour packages.¹⁵ The successful containment of the brothels along Hay Street over a long and continuous period of time combined with the distinctive physical nature of the brothels with their 'starting stall's' where the prostitutes are visible to the public has seen the Hay Street brothels become a well-known and notorious feature of Kalgoorlie-Boulder, both locally and in the wider community of Western Australia and Australia.

Site History

¹² *ibid.*, chapter 4, pp. 2-3.

¹³ Department of Commerce and Trade and the Goldfields-Esperance Development Commission *Goldfields-Esperance People and Population: A portrait of the population of Western Australia's Goldfields-Esperance Region* Kalgoorlie, August 1996, p. 9.

¹⁴ *ibid.*, p. 10.

¹⁵ Conversation with Leigh Beswick, Manager Club 181, 26 May 1997.

Lot 325 & 326 was first granted to Rebecca Greening, married woman, in May 1899.¹⁶

It has been established that a dwelling was on the site as early as 1903, the street number at this time being 225.¹⁷

The parcel of land changed hands a number of times, in 1904 it was transferred to Julias Nickel of Coolgardie, Butcher.¹⁸ In 1915, it was transferred to Lillian Watson of Kalgoorlie, (spinster)¹⁹ and in 1921 it was transferred to Murial Bennett, Hay Street, Kalgoorlie, (spinster).²⁰

In 1922, Kalgoorlie Town Lot 325 was divided into two titles. Murial Bennett of Hay Street, Kalgoorlie (spinster) became the sole proprietor of the north-eastern moiety of the lot.²¹ At the same time, Lillian Watson, Hay Street, Kalgoorlie (spinster) became the sole proprietor of the south-western moiety of the lot.²²

The south-western moiety of Lot 325 was sold to Florence Mary Louisa Hewett in 1932.²³ Hewett died in 1933 and probate of her will was granted to John Poiner. He then died in 1939 and on 7 August 1939, probate of his will was granted to William Henry Poiner. Later in 1939, the south-western moiety was sold to Theresa May Mitting (married woman) and Ellen Chamberlain (widow).²⁴

It is believed that the original section of the present building (see attached site plan) was constructed in the late 1930s or early 1940s.²⁵ This is supported by information in *Wises Post Office Directories* which indicates that for a period between 1934-35 and 1941-42 there was no building on the site and then in 1942-43 there is a record of Ellen Chamberlain at 181 Hay Street.²⁶

In addition, a Kalgoorlie Municipal Council Sewerage System plan, dated February 1940, shows two buildings on the site.²⁷ The structure on the western side is believed to form the basis of the present structure, while the eastern building has been replaced with a transportable building, probably in the early 1970s.

¹⁶ Certificate of Title 170/ 98, 19 May 1898.

¹⁷ Public Records Office, AN 308/ 1, Kalgoorlie Municipal Council, Acc 1333, Rate Book Year ending 31 October 1903. It should be noted that: is not included in the earliest rate book (1896-97); the rate books for 1898, 1899, 1900, 1901 and 1902 are missing

¹⁸ Certificate of Title 170/ 98, 20 July 1904.

¹⁹ Certificate of Title 170/ 98, 14 June 1915.

²⁰ Certificate of Title 170/ 98, 14 November 1921.

²¹ Certificate of Title 817/ 83, 13 November 1922.

²² Certificate of Title 817/ 82, 13 November 1922.

²³ Certificate of Title 817/ 82, 11 July 1932.

²⁴ Certificate of Title 817/ 82, 24 November 1939. Mitting's interest was transferred to Chamberlain in 1945 and a new Certificate of Title issued (1077/ 534).

²⁵ Conversation with Mary-Anne Kenworthy (owner), 11 June 1997.

²⁶ *Wises Post Office Directories* 1930 - 1949 (last year published).

²⁷ Kalgoorlie Municipal Council Sewerage System plan, 10 February 1940. (Plans are held by the City of Kalgoorlie-Boulder)

In 1947, Murial Bennett, sold the north-eastern moiety of Lot 325 to Charles William Landsdell, Hamilton Hill (Engineer).²⁸ Two months later, the land was transferred to Ellen Chamberlain, already owner of the south-western moiety.²⁹

On 12 October 1963, Ellen Chamberlain died intestate and letters of administration of her estate were granted to Thomas Augustine Hartrey.³⁰ The two parcels of land remained on separate titles.

It is believed that the 'starting stalls' were added to the facade during the 1960s.³¹

In 1983, Hartrey sold both pieces of land to Irene Valmai Forbes.³² In 1989, the land was sold to Pauline Margaret O'Neil and the current (1997) owner, Mary-Anne Kenworthy.

In September 1988, a building licence was issued to alter the lounge, increasing the size.³³ In 1989, a swimming pool, sauna and pergola were installed.³⁴

In 1995, the two parcels of Lot 325 and part of Lot 326 (C/ T 1242/ 2) were formerly amalgamated to become Lot 88, a total area of 1,518m².³⁵

In 1997, *Kalgoorlie Brothel (Club 181)* continues to function as a brothel.

13.2 PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

Kalgoorlie Brothel (Club 181) is a single-storey, timber framed building on the south side of Hay Street. The place is on the same block as *Questa Casa*, a brothel at 133 Hay Street, and another brothel at 143 Hay Street. All are on the south-eastern side of the street.

Kalgoorlie Brothel (Club 181) is sited on the corner of Hay and Lionel Streets but addresses Hay Street only.

Kalgoorlie Brothel (Club 181), together with *Questa Casa*, and the brothel at 143 Hay Street, form a precinct of brothels built along the south-east side of Hay Street. Hay Street runs SW/ NE and forms the northern perimeter road of the commercial precinct of Kalgoorlie. It divides the commercial and residential areas of the town. A former brothel, which now functions as a homestay and backpackers accommodation, is opposite at number 164 Hay Street. The three brothels are generously placed along Hay Street and built to the pavement

²⁸ Certificate of Title 1100/ 288, 27 February 1947.

²⁹ Certificate of Title 1100/ 288, 11 April 1947.

³⁰ New titles were issued in 1966, C/ T 9/ 200A (north-eastern moiety) and C/ T 11/ 201A (south-western moiety).

³¹ Conversation with Mary-Anne Kenworthy (owner), 11 June 1997.

³² Certificates of Title 9/ 200A & 9/ 201A, 14 January 1983.

³³ Building Application No. 3369, 30/ 09/ 1988, Town of Kalgoorlie. It should be noted that Building Application No. 469 which relates to this building is missing. In addition, no building applications prior to 1966 remain.

³⁴ Building Application No. 3527, outdoor area, 18/ 01/ 1989, Town of Kalgoorlie: Building Application No. 3512, swimming pool, 23/ 01/ 1989, Town of Kalgoorlie.

³⁵ DOLA Diagram 88640.

line. They are spread over a length of 280 metres and occupy the majority of the street block between Lionel and Lane streets.

Kalgoorlie Brothel (Club 181) comprises a complex of small structures that have been added to the site over a period of years in, what appears to be, an ad hoc manner.

Kalgoorlie Brothel (Club 181) is approached across a lawned verge and a concrete pavement. The building is timber framed and roofs and walls are clad in a variety of materials, including corrugated galvanised iron and flat fibro-cement linings painted white.

The original building, what is believed to have been a small residence, has over the years been enlarged with various additions. The place now comprises a structure, almost three times the size of the original residence, including a small and separate structure behind, connected by a roof covering, a sauna on the east side of the main building, a series of transportable structures at the rear, behind which is a shed, four caravans and a carport to the southern most section of the site.

The original building is single-storey with a hipped-roof approximately 7.5 metres long and 5 metres wide. An additional structure now adjoins the original building on the eastern side with a gable roof.

The hipped and gabled roofs are covered with blue painted, corrugated galvanised iron. The roofs of the buildings are connected by a separate roof that extends across the facade of the original building and adjoins the broken back roof of the adjoining structure. An extension to the roof covers a concrete footpath across the front of the site. The roof cantilevers to the boundary with decorative cast-iron brackets to appear as supports.

The exterior of the building features 'starting stalls', with regularly spaced stall gates across the facade. This is a distinctive, identifying feature of the Hay Street brothels. The doors have timber panels to the lower sections and are open above. The open sections are protected by metal screens which are removed when the brothel is in use. The screens are highlighted in a blue colour, matching the roof.

When the brothel is in operation, prostitutes sit on stools behind the stall gates where negotiation takes place with clients. A linoleum section of floor covering, approximately 1 square metre, marks the standing area immediately behind the stall gates. Behind the stalls and the space containing the standing area is a corridor, 3 metres wide, running the full length of the building.

In the main building there are eight prostitutes' work rooms, an office, a lounge, two bathrooms and a kitchen toward the rear. The quarters for the prostitutes are provided in two transportables each containing five rooms. A wash house and store room are in a timber framed outbuilding behind. The four caravans at the rear of the site provide additional accommodation.

A sauna, housed in a separate, timber plank-clad structure, an outdoor spa and a kidney-shaped fibre-glass swimming pool are grouped on the eastern side of the main building. These facilities are connected by brick paving,

pergolas, hanging pots and outdoor seating. The grounds between the remaining structures are sparse with the occasional lawned area, hard standing for vehicular movement and some trees.

Another distinctive feature of the brothel is the presentation of lighting. Red fluorescent strips are mounted on brackets above the roof, and alternating red and blue spot lights are under the roof overhang above the stall gates. A distinctive lighting pole, within the site, which advertises the brothel, is approximately 12 metres high with different coloured spot lights in a staggered arrangement up the pole. The interior of the building contains subdued downlights apart from small 'disco' balls in the corridor space.

The interior of the building, like the exterior, is inconsistent. Walls and ceilings are generally lined with flat fibro-cement sheeting, with cover mouldings over joints. There are various plain colours and paint patterns, carpets finishes are various and there is a variety of different ceramic floor and wall tiles in wet areas.

All the decoration within the building has been done with minimal expense and no conscious effort has been made to provide a consistency in the use of materials nor for provision of quality within the building.

The poor condition of these structures is a result of insecurity of tenure and as a result, any work carried out to the place is to provide facilities at a basic cost and with little or no maintenance.

In 1995, as a consequence of a ram raid, the starting stalls and the majority of the two rooms at the front of the building, were substantially reconstructed.³⁶ The front rooms with a central passage, formed the original residence. Apart from some ripple iron ceilings, a few metres of timber skirting board and a small proportion of fibro-cement wall linings, no fabric remains from the original construction. Due to the ad hoc additions to the place, it is difficult to determine whether the structure on the eastern side of the site, shown on the Kalgoorlie Municipal Council Sewerage System plan 1940, forms part of the current structure or has been demolished.

13.3 REFERENCES

Kenworthy, M. & E. McKewon, 'Draft Manuscript on Hay Street, Kalgoorlie' 1996.

13.4 FURTHER RESEARCH

³⁶ Conversation with Leigh Beswick, Manager Club 181, 26 May 1997.