

brew for that trade for twelve months. It was stated at the annual meeting of the Castlemaine company in 1894 that Lanfear brewed 'bad beer', and his services had to be dispensed with, after which their own brewer, Frederick Bethell, took over Lanfear's role. Lanfear sued the Castlemaine Brewery for defamation, with unknown result.<sup>99</sup>

## 8. West End Brewery (1886–1913)

A new brewer's licence was granted in August 1886 to Albert Lanfear and George Bruce Nicol for premises at South Brisbane. These were the West End Brewery, recently erected at the corner of Merivale and Montague Streets.<sup>100</sup> The wooden brewery had no pretences to architectural grandeur. It was a roomy two-storey building with a four-storey tower, and amongst the cottages of the locality it was said to look like a large church.<sup>101</sup>

Official records show that the West End Brewery began working in September 1886. Indeed, the *Brisbane Courier* reported late that month that it had been occupied for a few weeks, and already had beer in the market. It was a light and bitter beer of an 'excellent quality', which 'should make a very acceptable beverage in the summer months when the English beer is too heavy to be approved of in this climate.' Bottling plant had been installed, and bottling was expected to be started shortly. The brewing plant had a modest capacity of twelve hogsheads of beer daily, and a weekly output of 60 hogsheads was reached early in 1887. The official records reveal that the West End Brewery produced 62,532 gallons of beer in its first seven months to 31 March 1887.<sup>102</sup>

The brewing partner in Lanfear, Nicol and Co. was Albert Thomas Lanfear (1857–1924), an Englishman who had come to Victoria in 1878 to work for his uncle, Albert Duncombe Terry, who owned the West End Brewery in Flinders Street, Melbourne. Lanfear had also had some experience in the Bulimba Brewery before he teamed with George Bruce (usually just Bruce) Nicol, a Queenslander of Scottish descent, in establishing the West End Brewery in Brisbane. The *Courier* thought that they had shown 'a great deal of pluck in starting against [Brisbane's] old and well-established houses', namely the City, Castlemaine and Bulimba breweries.<sup>103</sup>

99 *Brisbane Courier*, 31 August 1894; *Townsville Evening Star*, 25 September 1894.

100 The cross-river rail link from South Brisbane to the city, which incorporated the Merivale bridge, and which opened in November 1978, passes close to the West End Brewery site.

101 *Queensland Police Gazette*, 1886; *Brisbane Courier*, 21 September 1886.

102 *Brisbane Courier*, 21 September 1886; Report of the Chief Inspector of Distilleries, 1887; *Queensland Figaro* (Brisbane), 2 April 1887.

103 *Brisbane Courier*, 21 September 1886. The present Lanfear Street is close to the site of the brewery.

Typically for the time, the West End Brewery was designed to operate by gravitation. In the upper floor of the tower was the hot liquor vat, of 1,200 gallons capacity, and a hopper containing crushed grain. The hot liquor and the malt then ran under gravity to the third storey through a mashing machine and into a mash tun, thence to a copper in which the wort was boiled with sugar and hops. The most striking feature of the second floor was the refrigerator, consisting of a series of horizontal and toothed cylindrical tubes, fixed in a frame. Cold water was pumped through the tubes, while the hot wort from the copper dripped over them in succession, cooling from almost 212°F to almost as low as 80°F in the process. The cooled wort was next conducted to the fermenting tun, of 1,200 gallons capacity, on the 'first floor' (actually at ground level). The temperature during fermentation was regulated by means of a metal coil in the vessel, through which cold water was kept constantly running. Beer from the fermenting tun was supplied to hogsheads in the cellar below by means of a hose.<sup>104</sup>

The West End Brewery made rapid strides, achieving an output of 162,669 gallons in the full year ended 31 March 1888.<sup>105</sup> New plant had been added in 1887 to double the daily capacity to 24 hogsheads, enabling the company to commence sending its manufacture out west and up north. By the end of 1888 a new bottling machine had been installed, capable of bottling twenty dozen per hour, and adjoining land had been purchased with a view to further extending the premises. A brick tower was erected in 1889.<sup>106</sup>

A new limited liability company, West End Brewery Limited, was formed in 1890 to take over the operation of the business.<sup>107</sup> Later that year, the company's joint managing directors, Albert Lanfear and Bruce Nicol, felt the need to announce that they were 'in no way connected with or interested in' the firm of Lanfear and Nicol who were simultaneously carrying on business as the Phoenix Brewery Company elsewhere in Brisbane. The latter firm comprised Walter Lanfear, Albert's brother, and John Ferry Nicol, who similarly disassociated themselves from the West End Brewery.<sup>108</sup>

A year later, the West End Brewery started a price war by departing from an agreement that was then in place between Brisbane brewers to charge £4 per hogshead for beer. West End reduced its price to £2 10s in October 1891, in response to which Perkins and Co. reduced its to £2, determining to keep to that price 'until the other concerns were taught such a lesson that they would see it

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104 *Queensland Figaro* (Brisbane), 2 April 1887.

105 Report of the Chief Inspector of Distilleries, 1888.

106 *Queensland Figaro* (Brisbane), 2 April 1887; *Brisbane Courier*, 8 October 1888, 6 July 1889.

107 *Brisbane Courier*, 8 October 1888, 6 July 1889; *Australian Brewers' Journal*, September 1890. West End Brewery Limited was registered on 2 August 1890.

108 *Brisbane Courier*, 25 December 1890; *Northern Miner* (Charters Towers), 9 February 1891.

was to their interest to maintain any agreement they again entered into.' Order was soon restored.<sup>109</sup>

In addition to catering for local demand for its products, West End Brewery developed an extensive provincial trade through a network of agencies extending from the Condamine to Cape York and the Gulf of Carpentaria. The large-consuming Townsville and Charters Towers districts were especially important outlets. The firm's advertising employed the tactic of promoting not only its own products, but beer in general as the most suitable beverage for Queensland's climate.<sup>110</sup>

'Slain by strong drink,' are words which might well be written as the epitaph of hundreds of men and women who, in ignorance of the folly and suicidal conduct of drinking spirits in a tropical climate, have met with the usual melancholy fate of an early and wretched death. Had they stuck to the bright and sparkling West End Brew, and made it their sole drink, they might now have been in 'health, wealth, and prosperity.'

'When the wine is in the wit is out' is a common expression to show that a plentiful supply of the juice of the grape in the inner man injuriously affects the brain power. This, however, is not the case with a judicious and constant imbibation of the beautiful West End Beer, for, instead of robbing the clever man of his brilliancy, it made him brighter than ever; and, under the marvellous charm of this pure beverage even the dull man expands and becomes interesting.



**Figure 18:** The West End Brewery surrounded by flood water, March 1890.

Source: State Library of Queensland, image no. 2795-0001-0001.

109 *Brisbane Courier*, 2 March 1892, 26 March 1892.

110 *Charters Towers Times*, 23 February 1891.