

1948
NEW ZEALAND

MASTERTON LICENSING TRUST

FIRST ANNUAL REPORT FOR PERIOD ENDED 31st MARCH, 1948

Presented to Both Houses of the General Assembly Pursuant to Section 43 of the Masterton Licensing Trust Act, 1947

MEMBERS OF THE TRUST

J. A. Betts, Esq. (Chairman); E. W. Cheetham, Esq.; H. H. Ewington, Esq.; S. J. Gilman, Esq.;
R. P. Levien, Esq.; J. C. D. Mackley, Esq.

SIR,—

29th April, 1948.

I have the honour to forward herewith the report of the Masterton Licensing Trust for the period ended 31st March, 1948.

J. A. BETTS, Chairman.

The Hon. the Minister of Justice.

REPORT

CONSTITUTION

THE Trust is constituted under the Masterton Licensing Trust Act, 1947, and the members thereof were elected by popular vote at an electoral poll held on the 10th December, 1947.

GENERAL POLICY OF TRUST

The Trustees held their inaugural meeting on the 18th December, 1947, and in the succeeding four months met on fourteen occasions, and committees have met on a large number of occasions. The appointment of a General Manager, a Secretary-Treasurer, managers for two bottle-stores, and the necessary office and store staff has been decided on, and certain of these have now taken up their duties. For the first four months the executive duties were carried out by an Acting-Secretary, and the Trustees desire to record their deep appreciation of that officer's devotion to the Trust's interests. There have also been appointed consulting architects and solicitors.

The experience already gained by the Invercargill Trust was freely offered by that organization, and freedom from the effects of the restrictive time factor, under which the Trustees in Invercargill commenced, was regarded as of the greatest importance to the welfare of the Trust. The Trust has received valuable assistance and support from some of the largest importers of liquor and has had technical assistance offered from many quarters. The Trustees were conscious, from their first meeting, of the importance of their responsibility—both to the citizens of the trust district and to the whole of New Zealand—in their position as the first administrators of the Licensing Trust wholly elected by the people of the district. While fully conscious that they were in duty bound to consider giving improved accommodation, they were quite clear that their first responsibility was to provide proper facilities for the purchase of liquor, and have given first consideration to this subject. The project of accommodation has been discussed as one of major importance, second only to liquor sales because of the imperative need for creating at the earliest possible opportunity a source of revenue for the Trust.

As a result of the earthquake-wrecked state of the available buildings of the town and district there were, in fact, no buildings suitable for the Trust's operations and fit for immediate occupation without dispossessing existing occupants and disrupting business, and the Trustees were convinced that they had no mandate for such action.

POLICY RELATING TO PUBLIC BARS

It was clear that the Trust could expedite operations by opening up, in a number of disused buildings, bars for public use. Apart from the difficulties of administration, the sites available were badly located, unhygienic, and too small, would have made proper service almost impossible, and would have been, in the Trust's opinion, the subject of severe criticism from citizens and the public throughout the country through reintroducing all the worst features of the period prior to no-licence being carried in Masterton. The Trust is agreed on the unsuitability of the conditions under which liquor is sold generally, is determined to effect the greatest improvements possible within the law, and—with the good will of all sections of the public—decided that there must be no return to the bad features of the pre-no-licence period, even at the cost of postponing opening public bars.

Moreover, in view of the shortage of essential building-materials, the Trust realized that if temporary bar facilities were provided, justification for buildings of a more permanent type would be lost meantime. A policy decision was therefore made that the opening of bars would be postponed until a desirable type of buildings and appointments were available. This was a difficult decision which was made easier in the knowledge that the Trust had the expressed support of most organizations in the district.

A survey of the available sites and buildings was made and wide publicity was given to the Trust's needs. A special problem was the substantial floor space required for the establishment of suitable types of bars. The Trust's architects and structural engineers investigated a number of projects, and from their reports it became clear that only one building was capable of a reasonably quick conversion to bar facilities, but that even this suffered from a number of deficiencies which would greatly slow down the work.

It was therefore decided to acquire and convert the Cosy Theatre building to provide a public bar, lounge, and offices for the Trust administration, and negotiations were commenced for its purchase. In order to obtain the balance of the space needed for bar facilities it was found necessary to plan an additional building, and as the Trustees were advised that oregon pine was the only material which would not conflict with the needs of housing, it became necessary to go outside the borough "brick area," and a site was selected which has since become known as the "Northern Approach Project," and the erection of a wooden-frame building was decided on. Here it is intended to erect a bar and lounge in an area which lends itself to landscape gardening and in a

valuable position at the entrance of the town. This proposal excited very favourable public interest--the Trustees were offered, and accepted, recommendations that the area be developed in accord with a general town-planning scheme, and to this end a co-ordinating committee which includes representatives of the Masterton Borough Council, Licensing Trust, War Memorial Committee, and Beautifying Society has been set up. The Trust's architects suggested that the scheme, which has since been expanded to include the Trust's main residential hotel, was worthy of a very much better building than was then in view, and expressed the hope that, with careful planning, a dignified and fitting block could be designed which would incorporate a number of far-reaching amenities already discussed. With some reluctance the Trustees agreed to a further postponement, and the building as now designed appears to be a great advance on anything so far attempted in New Zealand and incorporates features which may well tend to introduce badly needed improvements into the retail sale of liquor. The Trust does not consider that the total space available in the "Northern Approach" and Cosy projects will be entirely adequate, but will enable them to judge the needs of other areas.

When it became apparent that in obtaining permits and completing specifications alone the conversion of the Cosy and the buildings of the "Northern Approach" would absorb much time, the Trust cast about for some other means of supplying liquor to the public.

POLICY RELATING TO BOTTLE-STORES

It appeared that the majority of the citizens who desired it could obtain bottled beer in dozen lots, and the most urgent demand was for smaller quantities and for the sale of spirits and wines. The provision of bottle-stores was decided on, and two sites were obtained and are in process of conversion. Good stocks are in view, and it is hoped to open these stores during May--one could be opened earlier, but excessive congestion at rush hours was feared, and the two will be opened simultaneously. If the need is established, other stores will be considered. It is quite well understood that this does not touch the real need of public bars, but the Trustees, in setting a high standard of development, believe that they are carrying out the wishes of the majority, and that after forty years without these facilities another year will not be unreasonable.

The alternative, it must be stressed, is to open rough, temporary bars which the public and the Trust would be required to put up with for a period of several years at least. The Trustees are not prepared to be responsible for such conditions.

POLICY RELATING TO ACCOMMODATION

A great deal of exploratory work has been done on the subject of accommodation. Only one "hotel" exists in Masterton, and this, together with a number of boarding-houses, can barely cater for the travelling public, most of the accommodation being of a semi-permanent nature. None of these buildings give scope for immediate expansion, and the Trustees formed the opinion that any interference by the Trust would tend to decrease the total accommodation available. Estimates showed that the provision of thirty to forty bedrooms of a first-class type would meet the immediate demand, but that a much larger hotel, catering for tourist and holiday traffic, would later be justified and would assist in the development of the district by attracting and encouraging visitors.

Consideration was given to the use of a number of earthquake-wrecked buildings, but, in general, the engineer's reports were unfavourable. Critical examination of plans previously prepared for conversion of the Empire Building to a block of flats satisfied the Trust's engineers that the greater part of the shell of this building could be used and converted at a cost which would appear high, but would, in fact, be very reasonable compared with the present expense of erecting anything similar—even if such volume of materials was available. This shell would enable the required immediate volume of

accommodation to be provided with first-class amenities. Other sites were, at the same time, under consideration for the erection of a new building, and after considering various sites the Trustees were so greatly attracted by the possibilities indicated by their architects in the “Northern Approach” site, that it has been decided to erect there the Trust’s major first-class hotel. It is clear that this project may have to stand over for some time, although it is intended to proceed steadily with design and specifications in the hope that conditions in the building industry may change for the better earlier than is expected.

The Empire project has been approved in principle and negotiations opened for purchase of this property. Design and specification will be pressed on with the hope that the work can be put in hand as soon as the “Northern Approach” and Cosy bars are commenced.

As soon as the Empire project is completed and the strain removed from the accommodation viewpoint, it will be possible for the Trust to concentrate on the renovation and further modernization of the existing Midland Hotel premises, and the Trustees have opened negotiations with the owners for the acquisition of this property.

SUMMARY OF PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

The Trust’s plans, therefore, as far as they have been decided, and in order of urgency, may be summarized as follows :—

- (a) To open two bottle-stores (immediate).
- (b) To establish first-class public bars, lounges, and ancillary amenities at the Cosy and “Northern Approach” sites (first priority—the work estimated to take a minimum of fifteen months, provided materials can be made available at once).
- (c) To establish a first-class residential hotel on the Empire site, with full bar and lounge facilities for guests, and possible extension to the public (second priority, to be undertaken immediately materials are available).
- (d) To renovate and modernize the Midland Hotel, including the installation of such bar facilities as may prove necessary (upon completing of the Empire Hotel).
- (e) To erect a first-class hotel unit on the “Northern Approach” site in conjunction with the bar and lounge unit.

POLICY RELATING TO FUTURE DEVELOPMENT

The Trust is now proceeding to a survey of the portion of the district not so far catered for. It is obvious that some facilities must be offered to the farming areas, but of what kind and where the Trust have so far not received any clear indication. The Trust is not yet satisfied with two particular features—the provision of bars and accommodation in the southern area of the borough, and the time-lag between opening bottle-stores and opening bars. This latter has given much concern, but so far no scheme has been suggested which satisfied the Trustee’s broad policy and is in keeping with what appears to be the general desire of the citizens.

The Trust is making use of the provisions of the Act which permit the opening of temporary bars detached from accommodation, and while regarding this as purely experimental, trust that the Government will grant them ample opportunity to explore the needs of the community before being committed to unnecessary expense. It is a fact that it is hoped to show, by these experiments, that in the hands of a popularly elected Trust the need for public bars to be attached to hotel accommodation has passed : that, in fact better accommodation and more satisfactory facilities for public drinking

can be provided, in some instances, by separating these. When these experiments are sufficiently advanced to enable sound opinions to be formed, the Trust may feel justified in suggesting suitable legislative amendments.

The Trust is intensely interested in the whole great experiment of a Licensing Trust subject to popular election; is determined to apply the best principles for the benefit of its own district, and of New Zealand as a whole; is conscious of the fact that its success will be observed with great interest by people of diverse views, and hope to produce results which may be of historical importance.

TRADING OPERATIONS AND ACCOUNTS

As trading operations had not actually commenced at the 31st March, 1948, no Profit and Loss Account or Balance-sheet is presented, but a financial statement has been prepared and is appended hereto showing merely a statement of receipts and payments and a statement of assets and liabilities.

This statement is presented in the form required by the Controller and Auditor-General. It will be noted that the totals of "assets" and "liabilities" are not similar and that neither "working loss" nor "establishment costs" are shown.

FINANCIAL STATEMENT

Receipts and Payments as at 31st March, 1948

						Receipts.			Payments.		
						£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.
Fee for permit	..	..	..	..	..	2	2	0	..	..	..
Stock purchases	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	888	10	11
Stationery	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	15	19	3
Sundry expenses	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	55	7	9
Staff appointment expenses	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	79	10	4
						<hr/>			<hr/>		
						2	2	0	1,039	8	3
Balance ..	..	..	..	..	..	1,037	6	3	..	..	..
						<hr/>			<hr/>		
						1,039	8	3	1,039	8	3
						<hr/>			<hr/>		
Balance ..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	1,037	6	3

Assets and Liabilities as at 31st March, 1948

<i>Assets</i>			£	s.	d.	<i>Liabilities</i>			£	s.	d.
Stock on hand	..	..	1,408	17	8	Bank of New Zealand	..	..	872	12	3
Office equipment	..	..	70	0	0	Unpresented cheques	..	..	164	14	0
						<hr/>			<hr/>		
						Sundry creditors	..	..	1,037	6	3
						<hr/>			<hr/>		
						..	..	..	1,146	10	10
						<hr/>			<hr/>		
						£1,478	17	8	£2,183	17	1

Pp. Masterton Licensing Trust :

C. CRAWFORD, Secretary-Treasurer.

Examined and found correct. — J. P. RUTHERFORD, Controller and Auditor-General.

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