

Tea-totallers welcome at Panmure pub



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Putting the kettle on at the Panmure pub: Annie Lenahan has added a tearooms to the historic hotel as part of a change of direction that attracts a whole new clientele.

Words and pictures by Carol Altmann

[dropcap style="font-size: 60px; color: #A02F2F;"] T
[/dropcap]eetotalling has taken on a whole new meaning at the Panmure Hotel, with owner **Annie Lenahan** offering beer in the bar and a Bushells out the back.

In what might seem an unusual mix that actually works, Annie and partner **Graeme Throckmorton** have added a retro-style tearoom to the back of the pub where women – and it is mostly women – can enjoy an afternoon tea or even high tea.

“One older lady said to me that nobody serves scones with jam

and cream anymore – well they do at the Panmure pub,” Annie says with a laugh.

Annie bought the historic hotel (built 1871) five years ago, but took over the lease in August 2012. She has since worked hard to make it very much a family friendly place and a country pub with a point of difference.

“It was a very traditional pub in the sense that it wasn’t the sort of place you could walk into and feel entirely comfortable,” Annie says.



The back of the Panmure Hotel will be unrecognisable to most, where pots refer to teapots rather than beer.

[dropcap style="font-size: 60px; color: #A02F2F;"] I
[/dropcap]n earlier times, a hotel could get by offering cold beer, a bed and a basic meal, but expectations have changed.

“These days, pubs can’t survive by just selling beer over the bar anymore, you need to be able to cater for a very different

clientele,” Annie says.

A tearooms decorated in rose pink and an eclectic mix of retro and vintage items collected over the years is about as different as it gets.

“Nothing in here matches,” Annie laughs, “but it works.”

The tearooms also contain a sample of the more than 200 teapots that Annie has collected for many years, despite being a non-tea drinker for most of her life.

“I only started to drink tea about five years ago,” she says.

“But I have always loved teapots!”



Annie with partner Graeme Throckmorton: together they are transforming the old Panmure Hotel which Annie bought in 2012.

[dropcap style="font-size: 60px; color: #A02F2F;"] A
[dropcap]nnie was born in Panmure and moved around the south-west quite a lot as a child and, later, in her 30-year career

in hospitality.

She was living and working in Port Campbell when she decided to make the move back to her home town.

"I am a country girl. I really don't like the city and can't wait to get out of it when I go," she says, and I assume she is talking about Melbourne, until she reveals it is Warrnambool.

Shortly after opening her tearooms, one of Panmure's local identities, artist **Glenda Hirth**, dropped in to welcome her to the town and to see if she could host an event for the local Country Women's Association.

"Glenda ran it by the CWA committee and they agreed. They had an absolute ball and have been coming here ever since," Annie smiles, knowing endorsement by the local CWA is high praise indeed.

This more genteel side of the Panmure pub would surely meet the approval of the late **Violet Meere**, who helped her husband, **Herbert Walsh**, run the hotel in the early 1900s after being initially reluctant to work in such a male-dominated domain.

Annie hopes the tearooms will see the pub thrive into the future.

"Too many country pubs are closing down: well this one is not going to."



Violet Meere, who helped her husband Herbert Walsh to run the Panmure pub in the early 1900s. Image: [Museums Victoria](#).

[box]The afternoon teas, which are served at weekends, can be stylish or simple: Devonshire tea, mini high tea and a full high tea, with or without champagne. Groups by arrangement. Panmure Hotel, Princes Highway, Panmure. Ph: (03) 55 67 6270 [/box]

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