



Some of the 5,000-plus cans and bottles collected



FOX HOTEL

Chris Canty finds this corner pub in Collingwood has thousands of cans and bottles, but there's no need to pace yourself.

From the outside, the Fox Hotel looks like any other corner pub that dots the suburban, inner-Melbourne landscape.

Located on the corner of a busy street and near a busier freeway entrance, it's the kind of spot tens of thousands of motorists would drive by every day, never knowing what awaits inside.

If only they did venture in, they would discover a much-loved local, an awesome beer list, and one of the most impressive bottle and can collections in Melbourne.

"My grandfather pulled a really old Guinness bottle from his shed one day and I became infatuated with collecting," says Clodagh Harris, co-owner of the Fox. "Their design and products show a lot of what life was like back then and how things change."

Together with business partner and fellow collector Tracy Walsh, Clodagh has built an impressively large and diverse collection. "We now have around 5,000 cans and bottles," Clodagh says. "Some are the same, some one-offs, and some prototypes that never made the shelves. We have cans from all over the world."

Tracy says her most surprising discovery happened five years ago. "My boyfriend was renovating and found 60 old-school, 750ml, solid-tin Fosters and Carlton cans under the decking!"

When asked about their favourites, their responses are immediate. "It would have to be a numbered Guinness bottle, limited-edition for the Queen in 1953-4, commemorating a royal visit," Clodagh says. "The bottle is etched with the crown at St James Gate, which I find quite ironic."

Tracy says she loves her Japanese beer cans, especially the TAA Airbus collection. "I think it's because of the travelling theme."

bending necks and forgetting drink orders as they scramble to see those hard-to-reach cans. Groups are often found in deep discussion, perusing the wall, remembering when they had one last, or laughing at the crude pictures on others.

"It's a great talking point and customers love it, because it brings back memories for some," Clodagh says.

"I also love the visual display it gives to a warm and friendly pub," Tracy adds.

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When talk turns to the most valuable beer collected, Clodagh says that value is in the eye of the beholder. "Personally my most valuable one is the Guinness bottle my grandfather gave me," she says. "We have a Duff can that people always want, a South Africa Lion set that seems to be in demand, some of the prototypes are rare and the premierships AFL cans are very popular."

Tracy agrees that the Duff can would be the most valuable, referring to when Lion Nathan produced it in the early 90s, before it was withdrawn under protest by the Simpsons creators, 20th Century Fox. A slab reputedly sold for US\$13,000 in 1999.

But how do they keep finding new beers to add to their collection?

"We collect from odd shops, swap marts, old derelict buildings, some very nice friends all over the world, and most recently people bring them into the Fox," Clodagh says. "And of course the biggest shop around, the internet."

Their collection means a whole lot more than just empty bits of tin stuck up around a corner pub. Enter the Fox and you will see people



Premiership commemoration cans are very popular