



SETTLEMENT

Hunter St is built on the old Hobart Town causeway which once joined Hunter Island to the shores of Sullivan's Cove.

Originally the island was connected to the shore at low tide. Passengers disembarked from ships on the island then walked, waded, or were carried to foreshore.

The island was the centre of the new settlement established by Governor David Collins in 1804. It was here stores were kept under guard, and in the early years it was the site of the gallows and gibbet where remains of those executed were in full view of new arrivals to the colony.

Collins had a track built to the island, and roadwork excavations undertaken in 1987 uncovered footprints of adults, children and oxen, along with deep impressions of cart ruts left in the mud of the old roadway.

In 1820-21 a substantial stone causeway wide enough for two carts to pass was built by convicts over the original roadway and the first warehouses, including the Drunken Admiral building, were constructed on the island to cater for the increasing number of ships docking at the harbour. Brass plaques set in the footpath today mark the route of the causeway.

Whale oil, timber, wool, wheat, flour, wattle bark, hides and meat for export were carried to ships in bullock drawn carts. In the first years of the settlement whales were plentiful in the Derwent River and by 1836 there were nine different whale oil factories employing almost 400 people. However the whales were over exploited and the industry soon collapsed.

The carts also transported imported goods including plentiful supplies of rum, tea from China, spices from the East Indies, domestic and industrial products from England and luxury goods from Europe.

DRUNKEN ADMIRAL/AUSTRALIAN COMPANY STORE

The present day Drunken Admiral building was constructed in 1825-26 on the northwest shore of Hunter Island, partly on reclaimed land. It was built for the Leith Australian Company which was initially established to encourage Scottish families to migrate to Australia. The company imported rum, gin, wine, ale, pork, herrings, hams, tea, coffee, mustard, stationery, saddlery, snuff, and hardware such as paint, whitening, tar, chalk, nails, implements, iron and cedar.

The building was considered one of the finest in the colony, built of brick with a stone façade and roofing slate imported from Scotland, which was considered quite an extravagance at the time. The building included four store rooms, two offices, a sample room and a three-bedroom residence.

The company's Hobart agent, Charles McLachlan, who lived in the residence, helped establish the Hobart stock exchange and chamber of commerce, was a director of the Bank of Van Diemen's Land, and a member of the Legislative Council.

The building was later leased to Ordnance Corps for storage, and subsequently as a barracks for its officers and men. It was then used as a receiving depot and temporary accommodation for military pensioners enticed by the promise of a grant of land and a horse in return for undertaking a short term of military service each year.



By 1851 it was used by the Immigration Association as a depot for new arrivals.

Advertisements of the day in Britain encouraged single women and widows of good character from 15-30 years to better their condition by emigrating. The first passengers to be housed at the depot were from the Beulah and included 12 married couples and 10 children along with 169 single women who were brought to the colony, mostly from Ireland, to work as domestic staff.

The Hobart Town Advertiser of September 2, 1851 reports the ship and depot were inspected by Governor Denison and his wife who were impressed by the women and their accommodation. Domestic servants were in high demand and most soon found work.

In the 1880s the building was occupied by brothers John and James Murdoch who ran it as a flourmill and warehouse and built an additional loft.

In 1923 it was acquired by Henry Jones and Co and was converted it for staff facilities with separate dining rooms for men and women.

It became the Drunken Admiral Restaurant in 1978.

GHOSTS

Several patrons and staff of the ground floor Drunken Admiral Restaurant have related encounters with the supernatural.

Restaurant owner Craig Godfrey says glasses have exploded in people's hands, bottles have slid off the shelf of their own accord, and several people using the women's toilet have run out saying they have been overcome by a feeling of asphyxiation and of being strangled.

Alone in the building one night Godfrey himself was hit in the back by a plastic container which inexplicably flew several metres across the room.

The source of the unusual encounters has been attributed to the spirit of a Chinese market gardener who was found hanging in the courtyard behind the building in the 1880s.

One man who worked in the building in the 1960s, but knew nothing about the hanging, claims to have seen a Chinese man drifting through the walls.

SHADES ROW

Running alongside the Drunken Admiral was Shades Row, a narrow passage with eight tiny cottages typical of the working class area of Wapping of which it was part. Wapping was likened to the area of the same name in London and was considered to be dirty, full of rubbish, miserable homes, drunkenness and obscenity, although research suggests its reputation was largely undeserved.

However the houses were interspersed among industries such as tanneries, slaughter yards, the gas works, open sewage pits, chemical and soap factories.

The Hobart Rivulet ran behind Hunter St and was known as the Gas Works Straits. It was polluted with domestic and industrial wastes, including raw sewage and dead animals, and epidemics of diseases like cholera and typhoid swept through the community.



People living in the area were mostly sailors, fishermen and labourers whose wives and daughters tried to make ends meet while the men were away by taking in washing and sewing, and going out to do domestic service. They also worked seasonally at hop picking or in the local jam factories and a few kept small shops, or pigs and poultry.

GREAT FIRE

The 1987 roadwork excavations also revealed a thick layer of charcoal and the foundations of burnt buildings from the Great Fire of 1890.

The fire started in Ikin's Fruit Store and fuelled by stacks of wooden crates spread to neighbouring buildings. The whole of Hunter St from the Drunken Admiral down to the old gas works (next to the site of the present Federation Concert Hall) was affected by the fire.

Most of the men were away and it was left to the women and children to try to save what they could, with some managing to drag a few pieces of furniture to the edge of Fishermen's Dock.

Firemen could do little as the lanes were too narrow for their fire-fighting equipment. A total of 22 families were left homeless. Many of the women also lost their livelihoods as their mangles and sewing machines had burned along with everything else.

All but one of the horses kept in a nearby stables were saved. A mare perished when she had to be abandoned in her stall despite the brave efforts of a volunteer to blindfold her and drag her to safety. Some pets and small livestock such as chickens were also killed in the fire.

After the fire homes were not rebuilt, and others were sold or demolished, and were largely replaced by commercial development, marking the end of Wapping as a residential area.

ANTHONY FENN KEMP

A neighbouring building to the Drunken Admiral was at one stage owned by Anthony Fenn Kemp who built the Kemp and Co store which sold a variety of imported items ranging from bonnets and sugar to carriages and agricultural machinery.

It is also thought Kemp may have at one stage owned the Drunken Admiral building.

Kemp had a notorious reputation throughout the colonies.

He was an officer in the New South Wales Corps, was part of a campaign against Governor King, for which he was court martialled but acquitted, and was a thorn in the side of, and instrumental in the dismissal of Governor Bligh.

Kemp settled in Tasmania in 1816 and was granted 700 acres at Green Ponds, now known as Kempton. In the following years he acquired more than 4000 acres where he bred sheep and helped establish the Tasmanian wool industry. He also bred horses, raised cattle and introduced a hardy, drought-resistant variety of corn for livestock.



He was a foundation director and later president of the Van Diemen's Land Bank. His run-ins with successive governors including Davey, Sorell and Arthur indicate he had a rather unpleasant and irascible character. He railed against official policy in newspapers, at public meetings and through petitions and letters. However he also advocated a number of enlightened changes including the independence of Van Diemen's Land from New South Wales, the establishment of an elected Legislative Council, the abolition of press censorship, and the adoption of the English jury system. Kemp died at the age of 95 and is buried at St George's Church in Battery Point. He is a central character in the novel *In Tasmania* written by internationally-acclaimed author Nicholas Shakespeare who is a distant descendent of the colourful colonial identity.

HENRY JONES AND CO

The Henry Jones and Co jam factory was established by Jones in Hunter St in the 1890s after he took it over from his former employer George Peacock. It was claimed to be the largest and most modern factory of its kind in the southern hemisphere.

Not only did it produce jams, canned fruit, pulp and juices, tomato and Worcestershire sauce, canned fish and vegetables, but the factory also made its own cans, cases and machinery.

Fruit was initially brought to the factory by boat from the Huon Valley in the south and later by carts and trucks from there and the Derwent Valley to the north, with queues backing up for more than a kilometre waiting to unload their cargo.

Between 250-300 women worked during the jam season cutting and stoning apricots, peeling pears and sorting gooseberries, raspberries and currants. The boilers were kept burning by gangs of men who fed them with 1.5 metre logs. Up to 2000 tons of apricots and 300 tones of gooseberries would be processed in a season.

The factory was closed in the 1970s and the buildings bought by the State Government.

TODAY

Today Hunter St is one of the most picturesque areas of Hobart.

Its hotels, bars and restaurants, including the award-winning Henry Jones Art Hotel which is just a few doors along from the Drunken Admiral.

Further along is the Tasmanian School of Art, as well as several art galleries with a wide variety of artwork on display and for sale. The area also has a number of public art installations.

Cruise ships anchor at the dock at the end of the street in the summer and working fishing boats still find safe harbour and add to the atmosphere of Fisherman's Dock across the road from the Drunken Admiral.